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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Rape: Prosecutions

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[92683\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to CPS data summary Quarter 4 2019-2020, what recent assessment he has made of the reasons for the decline in rape prosecutions.

Michael Ellis:

Over the last financial year 2019-20 the charging rate increased by over 10% and there was a 6.2% rise in the volume of rape cases proceeding to prosecution following a decision to charge. Although this is a promising trend which the CPS is seeking to maintain, there is clearly more to be done.

The reasons behind the recent declines in prosecutions are complex and a whole system approach is necessary to address them. There is ongoing work to improve the handling of these sensitive cases and narrow the disparity between offences reported and cases going to court.

In July the CPS published its own rape strategy, the first of its kind for any department. There is also an ongoing cross-Government review of the criminal justice response to rape. This is examining evidence across the system about the causes of the falls in outcomes for rape and identifying solutions to reverse the trend. The CPS is actively engaged in this review and will address any issues raised honestly and openly.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Batteries: Technology

Bill Wiggin:

[\[94348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to make the UK a leading producer of battery technology.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In order to meet the anticipated global demand for batteries for electric vehicles, production needs to increase significantly worldwide. Lithium and associated Li-ion technology is a key component. The Faraday Battery Challenge is supporting the increase in production of current Li-ion technology - from early stage research, through innovation, to scale-up - to help position the UK to best capture this market.

The Faraday Battery Challenge is looking at the feasibility of extracting lithium in the UK, including in Scotland and Cornwall. Research suggests that domestic sources of lithium have the potential to provide a substantial portion of the UK's future demand, allowing us to develop a domestic, environmentally responsible, lithium supply. In

order to ensure that the full value that we expect this new industry to generate is captured in the UK, it is essential to build the rest of the downstream supply chain domestically, so that battery-quality chemicals and batteries can also be produced here.

■ Business: Females

Seema Malhotra: [\[94434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is providing to help (a) women business owners grow their business online and (b) women wanting to start their own business in Feltham and Heston constituency.

Paul Scully:

Support is available to all business owners wishing to grow their businesses online through the Growth Hub network and programmes such as Be the Business. Advice and support on adapting to and recovering from the disruption caused by Coronavirus, including through digital means, is also available through the Recovery Advice for Business Scheme, hosted on the Enterprise Nation website and supported by BEIS.

The Start-Up Loans Company provides funding and intensive support to new entrepreneurs. Since 2012 40% of Start Up Loans have gone to women, worth well over £210m. Of these, 12 start-up loans valued at £160,150 have been provided to businesses in Feltham.

More widely, there are now 1.2 million female-led small and medium-sized businesses in the UK. This accounts for 22% of SMEs in the UK. Innovate UK have launched the Women in Innovation Awards to find and support the UK's most promising female innovators to develop their ideas and scale up their businesses. The 2020/21 Awards competition is currently open and closes on 14th October 2020. 10 female innovators will be awarded with a cash boost of £50,000 each, as well as receive vital business support to help them develop and grow their business, including coaching and mentoring.

■ Galileo System

Owen Thompson: [\[94471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for the UK to access to the EU's Galileo system.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK will not seek to access Galileo as we will not be able to assure its services for use in defence and critical national infrastructure.

Dedicated work is ongoing across Government to determine the UK's positioning, navigation, and timing requirements, and to assess options for meeting them.

■ Mining: Lithium

Bill Wiggin:

[\[94347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of mining lithium in the UK to produce responsibly sourced electric vehicle batteries.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In order to meet the anticipated global demand for batteries for electric vehicles, production needs to increase significantly worldwide. Lithium and associated Li-ion technology is a key component. The Faraday Battery Challenge is supporting the increase in production of current Li-ion technology - from early stage research, through innovation, to scale-up - to help position the UK to best capture this market.

The Faraday Battery Challenge is looking at the feasibility of extracting lithium in the UK, including in Scotland and Cornwall. Research suggests that domestic sources of lithium have the potential to provide a substantial portion of the UK's future demand, allowing us to develop a domestic, environmentally responsible, lithium supply. In order to ensure that the full value that we expect this new industry to generate is captured in the UK, it is essential to build the rest of the downstream supply chain domestically, so that battery-quality chemicals and batteries can also be produced here.

■ Redundancy Payments Service

Seema Malhotra:

[\[94435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many HR1 forms have been received by the Redundancy Payments Service in each of the last 12 months.

Paul Scully:

The monthly breakdown of HR1s received is as follows:

September 2019 - 303

October 2019 - 343

November 2019 - 305

December 2019 - 196

January 2020 - 372

February 2020 - 329

March 2020 - 485

April 2020 - 447

May 2020 - 871

June 2020 - 1,888

July 2020 - 1,784

August 2020 – 966.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Border Delivery Group: Northern Ireland**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[92635\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the next meeting is scheduled for the Border Delivery Group with representatives of (a) ports and (b) airports in Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Border and Protocol Delivery Group holds regular meetings with representatives of Northern Ireland ports and airports alongside representative bodies. The group is scheduled to meet with airports and ports in September.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries**

Fay Jones: [\[87674\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK nationals can stay in the Schengen Area for periods of longer than 90 days without a visa.

Penny Mordaunt:

After the end of the transition period the EU will grant UK nationals visa free access for short-term visits, subject to reciprocity. This means that UK business visitors and tourists will not need a visa when travelling to the Schengen area for short stays of up to 90 days in every 180-day period. UK nationals will require permission from the relevant Member State to stay longer than 90 days in a rolling 180-day period.

■ **Civil Service: Sustainable Development**

Paula Barker: [\[91175\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the next meeting of the Sustainability Forum of Civil Service unions and the Civil Service will be held.

Julia Lopez:

Sustainability issues can be raised through the Civil Service Forum, which engages nationally with the National Trade Union Committee. Departments are responsible for determining their own sustainable development plans, and their engagement on these matters with relevant departmental trade unions.

■ **Committee On the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[91001\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Advisory Military Sub Committee is next scheduled to meet.

Johnny Mercer:

The AMSC meets regularly to discuss cases, and will be meeting in due course.

■ Government Departments: York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[92814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) Government departments and (b) other public bodies his Department has considered for relocation to York while assessing the potential merits of creating a Government hub in that city as part of the Government's levelling up agenda.

Rachael Maskell:[\[92815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the suitability of York as a location for a Government hub as part of the Government's levelling up agenda.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ73093 on 21 July 2020](#). Further details will be announced in due course.

■ Outdoor Recreation: Coronavirus**Luke Pollard:**[\[89855\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Ministers he consulted on those outdoor activities that are exempt from the rule of six covid-19 regulations.

Julia Lopez:

As has been the case under successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not usually disclosed.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Louise Haigh:**[\[93622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's timescale is for providing guidance to businesses in Northern Ireland on the (a) process for and (b) frequency of sanitary and phytosanitary checks after the end of the transition period.

Louise Haigh:[\[93623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a trusted trader scheme to reduce the friction in trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Louise Haigh:[\[93624\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether businesses will be required to determine whether their goods fall under the tariff regime for at-risk goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol from January 2021.

Louise Haigh: [\[93626\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) guidance and (b) public information the Government has issued to businesses in Northern Ireland seeking to import fluorinated gases from Great Britain to Northern Ireland on changes that they will be required to implement from 1 January 2021.

Louise Haigh: [\[93627\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions his Department has had with retailers in Northern Ireland on the notification required to sell (a) tobacco and (b) e-cigarette products after the end of the transition period; and when his Department plans to issue guidance on that subject.

Louise Haigh: [\[93628\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) guidance and (b) information the Government has issued to businesses and public authorities on the notification requirements for transferring green and amber waste from Great Britain to Northern Ireland on 1 January 2021.

Louise Haigh: [\[93630\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when his Department plans to publish its policy on the transfer of organic goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland after the end of the transition period.

Louise Haigh: [\[93632\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government plans to begin its trials of the Trader Support Service.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the answer given to [PQ52196 on 4 June 2020](#) and the approach set out by the Government in the Commons Paper of 20 May, guidance for Northern Ireland businesses was published on 7 August. This is available on gov.uk, and already includes some information on fluorinated gases, the movement of green and amber waste, tobacco and e-cigarette products.

We have established the Business Engagement Forum, and have heard the call for further clarity from business on the requirements of the Protocol, and on the support that the UK Government will provide. We recognise that with implementation work and Joint Committee discussions still underway, we cannot provide all details at this stage. We will set out further information as soon as possible.

We have established a new and unprecedented Trader Support Service backed by funding of up to £200m, providing end-to-end support for businesses engaged in new processes under the Protocol. The service will start to go live later this month so that businesses can register and begin to receive information about preparing for the end of the transition period. In the meantime, all traders who wish to draw upon its support can register their interest on gov.uk.

We have also committed to exploring further support to those agrifood producers engaging with new sanitary and phytosanitary processes, with further detail to be set out in due course.

■ Veterans: Suicide

Grahame Morris:

[\[93577\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 September 2020 to Question 88289 on Veterans: Suicide, if he will make representations to the Secretary of State for Justice on amend guidance to help ensure that (a) coroners reports and (b) death certificates record whether deceased served as a member of the armed forces.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government takes the issue of suicide among the Armed Forces community very seriously. As set out in the previous answer, we are exploring how improvements could be made in recording of veterans suicide, to inform support services and interventions aimed at prevention. Officials at the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and the Ministry of Justice are working to identify possible options.

DEFENCE

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[92714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the track miles or equivalent figure for (a) Mastiff, (b) Ridgeback, (c) Husky, (d) Wolfhound and (e) Jackal in (i) 2017-18, (ii) 2018-19 and (iii) 2019-20.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[92715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish track miles or equivalent figure for (a) Mastiff, (b) Ridgeback, (c) Husky, (d) Wolfhound and (e) Jackal in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[92716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for how many years his Department holds the data on the track miles of (a) Mastiff, (b) Ridgeback, (c) Husky, (d) Wolfhound and (e) Jackal.

Jeremy Quin:

The tracked miles from each platform requested can be found in the table below:

VEHICLE	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
HUSKY	287,874.20	156,281.60	197,554.40	75,023.70	96,115.90	82,578.30 Miles
JACKAL	281,191.63	78,711.25	74,371.44	232,458.38	242,481.75	248,274.50 Miles

VEHICLE	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
MASTIFF	435,680.00	332,265.60	303,496.10	172,311.20	107,641.90	130,641.30	Miles
RIDGBACK	26,805.90	67,343.50	118,179.60	43,750.60	27,984.50	17,681.90	Miles
WOLFHOUND	117,902.40	18,000.10	43,770.10	19,039.80	29,226.00	17,116.80	Miles
OVERALL	1,149,454.13	652,602.05	737,371.64	542,583.68	503,450.05	496,292.80	

Tracked mile data has been held on the James accounting system since 2010, this is the most accurate method available to us to confidently report this data from.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[92921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the castings (a) in the initial production and (b) for replacement parts of the new Boxer will be made in the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

The supply and integration of UK equipment sub-contracts for Boxer is progressing in line with ARTEC, the Prime Contractor's, commitment that 60% by value of the contract is planned to come from the UK. ARTEC is responsible for the award of equipment sub-contracts and is still in the process of developing its supply chain.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[94579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Main Battle Tanks his Department has; and how many of those tanks are fully operational.

Jeremy Quin:

There are 227 Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks. We are unable to disclose the number that are fully operational, as to do so would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

■ AWACS: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what capability gap would be created for the Royal Air Force in the event that the order for five E-7 Wedgetail aircraft is reduced to three.

Jeremy Quin:

None. The E-7 Wedgetail is a step change in capability and reliability and meets the urgent need for an Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capability as a critical enabler to UK military capability.

The transition from Sentry to E-7 Wedgetail will not result in any reduction in current capability.

■ Military Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[93544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Answer of 21 September to Question 90952 on Military Aircraft, by what authority his Department is withholding this information.

Jeremy Quin:

The information requested was withheld on the authority of Ministers, on the basis that its release could prejudice the commercial interests of the Ministry of Defence when dealing with companies or outside organisations.

■ Nuclear Submarines: Nuclear Weapons

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[94580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent comparative assessment he has made of the viability of maintaining the continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent with a (a) three and (b) four submarine nuclear weapons fleet.

Jeremy Quin:

The United Kingdom's nuclear deterrence posture is continually reviewed to ensure we can meet the current security threats. Continuous At Sea Deterrence requires four nuclear-armed submarines to ensure at least one is on patrol at all times, taking account of the cycle of deployment, training, and routine and unplanned maintenance. Three submarines cannot deliver an assured deterrent against current policy.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance

Emma Hardy:

[\[94528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce a decision on the mid-life extension and upgrade of the Watchmaker Unmanned Air System.

Jeremy Quin:

The planned mid-life extension to Watchkeeper will be considered as part of the Integrated Review, which will be published later this year and no announcement will be made before that.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband: Standards

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[93588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the minimum levels of connectivity required for assistance under the universal service obligation.

Matt Warman:

The speed and technical requirements of the Universal Service Obligation (USO) were set on the basis of advice from Ofcom that they would meet broadband requirements of a typical household, including both voice and video calls, and the government's consultation on the USO. The USO acts as a digital safety net for households unable to access a broadband service that meets these requirements at present. The government is committed to keeping the USO specification under review in light of consumer's evolving needs and connectivity usage trends.

■ **Football: Coronavirus****Sajid Javid:**[\[92749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of above Step 5 (a) football clubs and (b) governing bodies of English football on supporting a safe return to (i) playing and (ii) spectating as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

The safety and security of players and spectators is of paramount importance.

On Tuesday 22 September it was announced that all sports pilot events currently ongoing would be paused with immediate effect. The Government has taken the decision to pause test events due to the sharp upward trajectory of Covid-19 cases. As set out in our Roadmap, sports events pilots, and the full return of fans to stadia would only ever take place when it was safe to do so.

The Government remains in regular dialogue with all the football authorities to understand their current circumstances and is keen to see the safe return of spectators to live sports events. The Government fully understands that fans want to be back watching live sports and we are continuing to work with the sector on solutions and innovations.

I was delighted that we were able to see the safe return of competitive grassroots football from 18 July.

Daisy Cooper:[\[94556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the statement by the Prime Minister on 22 September setting out further covid-19 lockdown restrictions, whether non-league football clubs can begin playing games from 1 October 2020 without fans present.

Nigel Huddleston:

Decisions on whether to start playing competitive fixtures is a matter for the leagues themselves.

The FA have defined non-elite football as the leagues below the National Leagues North and South. Those leagues continue to be able to admit spectators in line with government's overall framework on the Return to recreational team sport framework and the FA's supplementary guidance.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[94557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make financial support available to (a) St Albans City FC and (b) other non-league football clubs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs, at all levels, form the bedrock of our local communities. There have been countless examples during the pandemic of football clubs across the country demonstrating their importance to their local area, volunteering both time and money during these difficult times.

The Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses throughout the pandemic, including a comprehensive and sizable package of direct fiscal support for business through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support. Many football clubs have benefited from these measures.

Where it can, we will expect the top tiers of professional sport to look at ways in which it can support itself, with government focusing on those most in need. I also welcomed the Premier League announcement to advance funds of £125 million to the EFL and National League to help clubs throughout the football pyramid.

As the Prime Minister said on 22 September, the government recognises the implications of being able to admit spectators on sports clubs and is working urgently on what the government can do to support them.

■ **Football: Taxation**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[94333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with HMRC on providing guidance to professional football clubs on the effect that reduced revenues will have on the taxation requirements for those clubs.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses throughout this period, including a comprehensive and sizable package of direct fiscal support for business such as the business rates relief. Many football clubs have benefited from these measures.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport continues to work closely with other Government Departments as part of our coordinated response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Guidance on tax requirements can be found on gov.uk.

■ Music: Coronavirus**Sarah Champion:**[\[89711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of including community music group rehearsals in the list of activities exempt from the rule of six 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.

■ Sports: Coronavirus**Conor McGinn:**[\[94466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the advice he has received from Public Health England on live sports and covid-19 in relation to (a) participation and (b) spectators.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of lockdown - and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so. However, we have always made clear that we will adopt a phased approach to reopening based on scientific and medical advice, with the primary goal of protecting public health. Public Health England agreed our approach to the phased return of recreational sport.

Organised outdoor team sport, outdoor and indoor exercise classes and outdoor licensed physical activity are still exempt from the rule of 6, and can happen in any number. Social interaction before and after playing any sport should be limited and only be in groups up to six.

In terms of spectators, we recognise the news that stadia won't be reopening from 1 October will be disappointing to many fans and sports, particularly after all the work on test events and preparations. However we have to take difficult decisions that give us the best chance of containing the virus this winter.

■ Theatres: Coronavirus

Tracy Brabin:

[\[92850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a scheme to support theatres similar to the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme.

Caroline Dinenege:

We are working closely with the sector to understand any issues they may have on reopening and looking at ways to address these, including the issue of insurance cover. Socially distanced indoor performances can now take place and we encourage people to support venues that are opening up by booking tickets and visiting our wonderful theatres once again.

The government's £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund – the largest ever one-off investment in culture – will help our arts institutions and organisations through these challenging times.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Digital Technology

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[91568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 81506, if he will make it his policy to extend the eligibility for technology support for 16 to 19 year olds to under-16-year olds who are not eligible for a student bursary.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has already delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers to children and young people who would not otherwise have online access, as part of over £100 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care. This included devices for children aged 0 to 19 with a social worker, care leavers and disadvantaged pupils in year 10.

The Department is now supplementing this support by making available additional devices – initially 150,000 – in the event that face to face schooling is disrupted as a result of local COVID-19 restrictions and children become reliant on remote education. This scheme is intended to enable schools to support disadvantaged children in year 3 to year 11 who cannot afford their own devices. Schools will also be able to order devices for disadvantaged children across all year groups who are

shielding as a result of official or medical advice, all year groups who attend hospital schools and those completing their Key Stage 4 at a further education college.

In addition to providing laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers, the Department is piloting two methods to provide internet connectivity to families with children and young people up to 16 years old. In partnership with BT, we are piloting a service to provide children and young people free access to BT Wi-Fi hotspots. Through the pilot, up to 10,000 families are able to access a BT Wi-Fi connection. We are also working with the major telecommunications companies to pilot an approach where mobile network operators are providing temporary access to free additional data, offering families more flexibility to access the resources that they need the most.

■ English Language: Education

Kate Green: [\[94414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support for English language teaching centres during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

English Language Teaching Centres are private language schools, and as such are not in receipt of any funding from the department. We have therefore made no assessment of the adequacy of support for them during the COVID-19 outbreak. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced an extensive and unprecedented package of support measures for businesses across the county such as loans, tax relief and cash grants.

■ Languages: GCSE

Gareth Thomas: [\[91816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools have dropped teaching of one or more foreign languages at GCSE in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Gareth Thomas: [\[91817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with (a) school and (b) university leaders on the effects of reduced numbers of students being offered a GCSE in a modern foreign language as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gareth Thomas: [\[91818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase the number of students who study a modern foreign language to (a) GCSE, (b) A-Level, and (c) undergraduate degree level.

Nick Gibb:

The guidance for the full opening of schools makes clear that, for pupils in Key Stage 3, the curriculum should remain broad so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of subjects over the year, including languages. In Key Stage 4 and 5, the majority of GCSE, AS and A level students are expected to continue to study their

examination subjects, including those who are due to take examinations in languages, to support them towards their preferred route to further study.

In exceptional circumstances, schools may consider it appropriate to suspend some subjects for some pupils to support catch up. Schools should be able to show that this is in the best interests of these pupils and this should be subject to discussion with pupils and parents during the autumn term.

Since the introduction of the English Baccalaureate performance measure, the proportion of GCSE entries from pupils in state-funded schools in a modern foreign language (MFL) has increased from 40% in 2010 to 47% in 2019. The Department is due to publish GCSE entry data for 2020 later this year.

The Government has every confidence that GCSE entry in MFL will continue to improve over the coming years. No specific discussions have taken place between Ministers with schools or university leaders on the take up of GCSEs in a MFL since the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department are continuing to invest in a range of programmes to further increase uptake of languages at GCSE. Our £2.41 million MFL Pedagogy Pilot commenced in December 2018 and is designed to improve uptake and attainment in languages at Key Stages 3 and 4. In May 2020, the programme was extended to December 2021, receiving an additional £1.45 million funding.

A review into the subject content for GCSEs in MFLs was announced on 5 November 2019. The review will seek to align the subject content with the recommendations of the 2016 MFL Pedagogy Review, making languages more accessible at GCSE and encouraging more students to study a foreign language at A level and undergraduate level.

■ Secondary Education: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas:

[\[91815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools have dropped the teaching of one or more GCSE subjects in response to the situation caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The majority of Key Stage 4 pupils are expected to continue to study all of their examination subjects. This is more likely to secure their preferred route to further study. Schools and academy trusts should not have a blanket policy of reducing the number of GCSEs being studied.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be in the best interest of a Year 11 pupil to discontinue an examined subject because the school judges that, for example, they would achieve significantly better in their remaining subjects as a result, especially in GCSE English and mathematics. School leaders are expected to make such decisions in discussion with pupils and parents, using the existing discretion that schools already apply on these matters.

During the autumn term, Ofsted inspectors will visit a sample of schools to have collaborative discussions with them, taking into account the curriculum expectation on the breadth of GCSE study.

■ Training: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[91826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to protect learners against fraudulent remote-learning training providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to the continuation of high-quality education for all pupils during this difficult time. Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. We have asked schools to monitor engagement with this activity, which should align as closely as possible with in-school provision.

The Department has provided a range of resources to support schools in delivering remote education. This includes our work with sector-led initiatives such as Oak National Academy. 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 includes specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Oak National Academy will remain a free optional resource for 2020-21.

COVID-19 guidance for schools is clear that it is crucial for remote education provision to be set up so that it is safe for pupils. Schools have been encouraged to share online safety information and best practice with parents and carers. The Government has published support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online>.

Initial Teacher Training (ITT) is controlled and regulated by the Department. In order to undertake training leading to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in England, a person must train at an accredited ITT provider in England. ITT providers can only be accredited by the Secretary of State consistent with the relevant Regulation.

The process by which a person may access and apply for a teacher training place at an accredited provider is clearly set out on the Department's dedicated 'Get Into Teaching' web pages at:

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/>.

A person will only be able to access tuition fees for a place at a provider that is accredited by the Department and is designated for student support. A person will

only be able to access any bursary payments for which they might be eligible if they are on a course leading to QTS at an accredited ITT provider in England.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Sustainable Development

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[92687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prioritise (a) sustainable farming and (b) environmentally responsible policies.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra group's mission is to protect and enhance the environment – with policies and actions that are also key to sustainable national growth. Defra has four objectives, two of which are to pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future and to lead the world in food and farming with a sustainable model of food production. So our approach to farming going forward is designed to move away from direct payments, and to focus on environmentally sustainable and responsible policies.

We believe that agriculture has a key role to play in the protection of the environment and helping us achieve our targets set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Government is committed to maintaining and improving environmental standards.

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

Farmers and other land managers may enter into agreements to be paid for delivering the following public goods set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan:

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

Moreover, during the seven-year agricultural transition period, the Government will introduce a range of measures and new schemes to help the industry adapt. This will give farmers time to adapt and restructure their farming business. We will provide grants to farmers, foresters and growers so that they can invest in equipment, technology, and infrastructure that will help their businesses to prosper while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment. The grants scheme will open in 2021 and will offer grants for a proportion of the total cost of the investment.

We will also reform our regulatory system for farming and land management to better meet our domestic objectives of protecting and enhancing the environment, animal welfare, and plant and animal health, as well as supporting a sustainable, productive and resilient agriculture sector.

The Government is committed to ensuring that those engaged in agricultural or horticultural activities meet the rules which protect environmental standards and animal and plant health and welfare. But, we want to break the ties between access to financial support and regulation and focus on the critical outcomes – protection of animals, plants and the environment.

■ Fisheries: Public Consultation

Stephanie Peacock: [\[94515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to undertake a formal public consultation on economic link reform in relation to fisheries management and landing a higher proportion of fish in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government will consult on proposals for reform of the economic link imminently. As fisheries management is a devolved matter the consultation will cover England only.

■ Fisheries: Quotas

Stephanie Peacock: [\[94512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, under what statutory authority Ministers may dispense with the Fish Quota Allocation to the commercial fishing sector on behalf of the Crown.

Victoria Prentis:

The fish quota is distributed by the Secretary of State under common law powers. This is set out in the publicly available UK Quota Management Rules and in the Quota Management Rules for of the Fisheries Administrations.

We are also seeking related powers in the Fisheries Bill which would supplement these common law powers in future. Clause 2(2) provides for the Joint Fisheries Statement to include policies relating to the distribution of quota. Clause 25 sets out criteria for the distribution of quota.

■ Flood Control: South Yorkshire

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[94514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September to Question 91696, which hon. Members from the South Yorkshire Area the Minister has been in contact with and when on the issue of a roundtable.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises the impact that flooding has had on individuals, local communities and businesses and sympathises with all those affected.

The hon. Member for Sheffield South East and the hon. Member for Barnsley Central have written to my office, and I replied, discussing the issue of holding a roundtable.

In addition, I have engaged in the House with the hon. Members for Barnsley Central and Barnsley East on the issue of a roundtable through Parliamentary Questions on this and in a Westminster Hall debate.

■ Plastics

Selaine Saxby:

[\[91193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the (a) production and (b) sale of single use plastics.

Rebecca Pow:

It is the Government's ambition to have zero avoidable waste going to landfill by 2050. The Resources and Waste Strategy sets out how we will eliminate avoidable plastic waste and move towards a more circular economy.

We have already made significant progress, by introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and significantly reducing the use of single-use carrier bags in the main supermarkets by 95% with our 5p charge. We have announced our plans to increase the minimum charge to 10p and to extend the charge to all retailers from April 2021. We will also introduce a ban on the supply of single-use plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds from October 2020. The Government also remains committed to introducing the Plastic Packaging Tax in April 2022, which will apply to plastic packaging manufactured in or imported into the UK containing less than 30% recycled plastic.

Our landmark Environment Bill will enable us to go even further. The Bill will include powers to create extended producer responsibility schemes; introduce deposit return schemes; establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and allow us to set new charges for other single-use plastic items. Further information can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/news/stronger-protections-for-the-environment-move-closer-as-landmark-bill-takes-shape.

■ Squirrels: Conservation

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[94340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will set a target for increasing the red squirrel population by the end of this Parliament.

Rebecca Pow:

The protection of species and the setting of targets for biodiversity are devolved matters.

In England, the Government remains committed to taking action to recover our threatened native species. Defra, Natural England and the Forestry Commission are signatories to the United Kingdom Squirrel Accord, working with over 30 other signatories to secure and expand red squirrel populations.

The 25 Year Environment Plan marked a step-change in ambition for wildlife and the natural environment. We are already taking action to fulfil this ambition. We are exploring the use of powers in the Environment Bill to strengthen our commitment to improve the status of threatened species by setting at least one biodiversity target in law, as set out in our recently published policy paper on environmental targets.

■ Water: Conservation

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[94513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference his Department's 25 year environment plan progress report of 11 June 2020, what recent assessment he has made on progress towards meeting the Government's long-term target of at least three-quarters of water bodies, including rivers, lakes, canals, coastal waters, and groundwater, to be restored to as close as possible to their natural state.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency's latest water body classification results 2019 showed that 16% of waters overall and 14 % of rivers are at Good Ecological Status. This is the same result as the data for 2016 which means progress in improving the ecological status of England's surface water has plateaued. More needs to be done and we need to go further and faster. The Government remains committed to bringing at least three quarters of our water to as close as possible to its natural state as soon as is practicable and in support of this, we will be bringing forward a further legally binding target in the Environment Bill. We are tackling pollution from poor farming practice with regulation, financial incentives and educational schemes for farmers. Water company investment is being scaled up to £4.6 billion, the highest yet, in the next five-year period. A new task force comprising the Government and water companies will help address the problem of sewage discharge from storm overflows and our new chemicals strategy will build on a robust statutory regime to ensure chemicals are managed and handled safely.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Reorganisation****Hannah Bardell:**[\[94473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much the merger of his Department with the Department for International Development cost; and how many roles will be (a) lost and (b) created (i) in the UK and (ii) overseas as a result of that merger.

James Duddridge:

The creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has unified our international efforts so we can maximise the UK's influence around the world.

As the Foreign Secretary has said, we will implement the merger in the most cost-effective way possible. The ultimate shape of the FCDO will depend on the outcomes of the Integrated Review and Spending Review which will define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world and the long-term strategic aims for our national security, defence, development and foreign policy. As such, it is not possible to determine yet the anticipated final costs of the merger or the size of the department needed to deliver against those ambitions. We anticipate there may be cost savings in the long term as a result of using our resources more effectively and efficiently, though this is not the primary goal of the merger.

The Foreign Secretary has said there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger, but that some roles and responsibilities may change. We will continue to engage with staff throughout this process.

Greece: Migrant Camps**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[92647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has offered support to the Moria refugee camp in Greece.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is responding to requests by the Greek Government to provide specific humanitarian goods and are urgently making plans for their delivery.

International Development Act 2002**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[91693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister to the Liaison Committee on 16 September 2020, HC 744, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to amend the Development Act 2002.

James Cleverly:

As the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have said, the UK is committed to maintaining the 0.7 per cent of national income spend on development assistance. This commitment is enshrined in law and there are no plans to change this.

■ Mexico: Freedom of Religion**Brendan O'Hara:**[\[94440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of freedom of religion or belief in Mexico.

Wendy Morton:

The Mexican Constitution guarantees freedom of religion or belief for all its citizens. States as well as federal officials have responsibility for ensuring non-discrimination, and we welcome the 2019 launch of the National Strategy for the Promotion of Respect and Tolerance of Religious Diversity. The assessment by the Mexican Government, the local UN Human Rights office, and local civil society organisations is that while there are some cases of individuals being targeted because of their religion or beliefs, people are more often targeted for their work and activities in defence of human rights or because of religious intolerance between faith groups in Mexico.

The UK Government continues to engage regularly with Mexican authorities at ministerial, official, and state level to discuss human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, and to support a broad human rights agenda in Mexico. Most recently, on 28 July, Lord Ahmad, the Minister for human rights, discussed human rights with his Mexican counterpart.

■ Turkey: Natural Gas**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[92721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on Turkey's militarily supported exploration for gas in waters recognised by UNCLOS as Greek territory; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is in regular contact with European partners with regard to the ongoing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. On 10 September, the Foreign Secretary discussed this with the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany. On 8 July, the Foreign Secretary raised this with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. I have raised this with my Turkish, Greek and Cypriot counterparts in recent weeks. Officials continue to raise the issue with the parties concerned.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Ambulance Services: Greater London**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[78533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support local ambulance services in (a) Havering and (b) other outer London boroughs.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[78534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to issue guidance on the reopening of (a) Romford Ambulance Station and (b) other local ambulance stations temporarily closed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

In order to operate more effectively and safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, London Ambulance Service (LAS) consolidated staff from smaller sites across London to larger stations. These co-located facilities facilitated improved vehicle preparedness, staff engagement and cohesiveness, and ensured reliable distribution of personal protective equipment to keep frontline staff safe at all times. The model ensures that LAS continues to provide outstanding care for patients whilst the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. Response performance in the North East London Sector is meeting all national performance standards and this will continue to be monitored closely to ensure patients' needs are met.

■ Bisphenol A: Fertility

Martyn Day: [\[82167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether an assessment has been made of links between bisphenol A and fertility problems in the UK.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England has not made an assessment of the links between bisphenol A and fertility problems in the United Kingdom.

Bisphenol A continues to be risk assessed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The Food Standards Agency agreed with the EFSA conclusion that bisphenol A currently poses no risk to health, based on dietary exposure.

■ Care Homes: Kingston upon Hull North

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[81658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 test kits were (a) requested by and (b) delivered to care homes in Kingston Upon Hull North constituency in July 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: 3,892 tests were requested and 10,380 tests were despatched to 30 care homes.

We have interpreted the hon. Member's question to refer to the following postcodes for Kingston upon Hull North constituency - HU3, HU5, HU6, HU7 and HU8.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[91691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that children's well-being is prioritised in the Government's covid recovery strategy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: We have provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities including charities like Young Minds to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

We are taking action to ensure that children and young people have access to support in schools. Our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

On 8 September, the Government launched a mental wellbeing campaign for children and young people. This involves an extension of Public Health England's Every Mind Matters webpage with content specifically for children and young people and their parents and carers. The campaign will raise awareness of the guidance and tools available to support mental wellbeing and ensure children and young people who need urgent support are directed towards the right services.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Julian Sturdy:

[\[86645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when an effective test, track and trace app will be available to the public.

Helen Whately:

The NHS COVID-19 app was made available in England and Wales on 24 September.

■ Coronavirus: Children

Stuart Anderson:

[\[91722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he is providing to children in the high-risk vulnerable category who were advised to shield during the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak with any mental health issues they may have upon returning to school.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Shielding for the clinically extremely vulnerable has been paused since the start of August in most of the country. Shielding is still advised in specific areas of the country where prevalence of the virus is higher.

We are taking action to ensure that children and young people have access to support in schools. Our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents. On 8 September, the Government extended Public Health England's Every Mind Matters webpage with content specifically for children and young people and their parents and carers. The campaign will raise awareness of the guidance and tools available to support mental wellbeing and ensure children and young people who need urgent support are directed towards the right services.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**Sir Mark Hendrick:****[81548]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many companies tendered for the Covid-19 contact-tracing system contract for England.

Helen Whately:

Guidance on how contracting authorities should respond to COVID-19 was published on 18 March at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0120-responding-to-covid-19>

Authorities are allowed to procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency in exceptional circumstances using regulation 32(2)(c) under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. These include a direct award due to extreme urgency or the absence of competition. Under the regulation contracting authorities may enter into contracts without competing or advertising the requirement.

Over 1,000 purchase orders have been raised with suppliers for COVID-19 related work, the majority through a direct award, this includes the contracts for the contact tracing system.

Justin Madders:**[86089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of calls (a) made to, (b) answered by and (c) that were answered within 60 seconds by the 119 test and trace services in each month since it was introduced.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The information requested is shown in the following table:

	OFFERED TO AGENTS	ANSWERED BY AGENTS	PERCENTAGE ANSWERED	ANSWERED IN 60 SECONDS
May	314,438	313,570	99.7%	98.7%
June	356,340	355,454	99.8%	99.1%
July	456,238	454,491	99.6%	98.6%
August	991,857	939,020	94.7%	82.2%
Total	2,118,873	2,062,535	97.3%	91.2%

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell:

[\[86099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the education sector on securing a safe and localised covid-19 test and trace service to support cities where there is a significant student population.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education and education providers to ensure clear local arrangements whereby local Health Protection Teams work with schools, colleges, universities and other education providers to provide advice and guidance where new cases of COVID-19 are linked to education settings. Advice and information on the NHS Test and Trace service, including eligibility for testing, access to testing and arrangements for contact tracing, forms an integrated part of overall guidance for education providers.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[86107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason there is a spike in covid-19 infection rates of people (a) under 30 years old and (b) under 25 years old in (i) York and (ii) the UK.

Helen Whately:

Recent national increases in case numbers reported among under 30 year olds are reflected in the pattern of cases seen in York.

There has been a particular increase in both incidence and test positivity in 17-21 year olds across the country which is not seen in younger age groups.

The increase in the number of cases over the past few weeks affecting particularly young age groups is not accounted by an increase in testing and indicate a real increase in incidence.

Rachael Maskell:

[86108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to conduct a learning exercise from Government decisions taken during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

COVID-19 is the biggest challenge that the United Kingdom, together with nations around the world, has faced in decades. The Government has always been clear that there will be opportunities to look back, analyse and reflect on all aspects of the response to COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[58721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) covid-19 tests that were sent to the US for analysis require re-processing and (b) individuals that took those tests require re-testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 June 2020]: 66,648 test samples were sent to a laboratory in the United States of America. 38,196 were successfully completed and 28,452 were void.

We worked hard to get complete tests for people under difficult circumstances. In many cases this worked and we are grateful for the team for their efforts. In some cases, it did not and the correct judgement was made to void the tests. Everyone affected was offered a new test immediately and we worked quickly to restore full capacity in the United Kingdom.

Helen Hayes:

[68733]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy and reliability of antibody testing to test whether a patient has previously contracted covid-19 and whether they have some immunity to the virus.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 July 2020]: A positive antibody test result indicates that you have previously had the virus and have developed some form of immune response.

However, we do not yet know how long the antibody response lasts, so we do not know how long it might help someone resist the virus.

We also do not know whether having antibodies means someone cannot transmit the virus to others. Serology assays deployed by the National Health Service have been independently validated by Public Health England (PHE), and the results of PHE's assessment for the assays are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-laboratory-evaluations-of-serological-assays>

All the tests met the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency recommendation of 98% specificity and 98% sensitivity when the assay was performed on samples taken 30 days post-symptom onset.

Lilian Greenwood:

[69520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the article in the British Medical Journal entitled, Covid-19: Timing is critical for antibody tests, published on 25th June 2020, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Government's antibody testing strategy.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 July 2020]: Antibody testing is a key part of the Government's testing programme and will play an increasingly important role as we move into the next phase of responding to COVID-19. On 21 May the Government announced plans for a national roll-out of antibody testing in the National Health Service and care sector.

Although we do not yet know whether antibodies indicate immunity from reinfection or transmission, antibody tests are helping us better understand how COVID-19 is spreading across the country.

Mr Mark Harper:

[81647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish the (a) proportion of people tested who test positive for covid-19 and (b) red, amber, green risk rating assessed by Public Health England for each geographical area as part of the regular publication of covid-19 testing data.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: Since July 2020, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England (PHE) have published the Contain Framework Lower Tier Local Authority Watchlist weekly, which list the lower tier local authorities with the highest weekly incidence rates alongside trend, and a range of other supporting evidence and analysis. This list is published as part of PHE's Weekly 2019 COVID-19 Surveillance Report. Additionally, NHS Test and Trace publishes weekly statistical bulletins which includes weekly data on people tested for COVID-19 and those who tested positive in England. The reports are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Mr Toby Perkins:

[89670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 83753, on Coronavirus: Chesterfield, tabled on 1 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Chesterfield.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[89671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 83754, on Coronavirus: Chesterfield, tabled on 1 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Chesterfield.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's questions will be answered as soon as possible.

■ **Endometriosis: Diagnosis**

Alex Norris:

[\[91705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of improvement in diagnosis and management of endometriosis in women since the publication of the 2018 NICE quality standards.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: There has been no assessment of improvement in the diagnosis and management of endometriosis since the publication of the 2018 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standards.

■ **Endometriosis: Health Services**

Alex Norris:

[\[91706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the capacity of NHS endometriosis specialist centres.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: There has been no assessment of the adequacy of the capacity of National Health Service endometriosis specialist centres.

NHS England leads on commissioning specialised services and has developed a service specification for severe endometriosis, but it does not record the number of specialist centres currently available. NHS England expects all NHS centres treating women with severe endometriosis to provide care that meets the standards laid out in the specification.

■ **Endometriosis: Medical Treatments**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[92782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of treatment provision for people diagnosed with endometriosis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: There has been no recent assessment of the adequacy of treatment provision for people diagnosed with endometriosis.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published a range of information and guidance on diagnosing and managing endometriosis and it is expected that all clinicians use NICE guidelines to inform their clinical practice.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[87563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the (a) financial, (b) emotional and (c) medical implications for couples experiencing infertility problems of IVF services being decommissioned by clinical commissioning groups.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2020]: No such assessment has been made by the Department.

The level of provision of local health services available to patients, including fertility treatment is a matter for local healthcare commissioners. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory responsibility to commission healthcare services including fertility services that meet the needs of their whole population. In respect of National Health Service fertility services, the Government has been consistently clear that we expect CCGs to commission fertility services in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, so that there is equal access across England. The Government have been consistently clear that not providing any routine fertility service for in vitro fertilisation is unacceptable.

Discussions are continuing with NHS England about how these equity issues can best be addressed.

■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review**Richard Fuller:**[\[89660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, what proportion of patients identified to have suffered the effects of the prescribed drug sodium valproate reported that their medical records between the years 1958 and 1978 have gone missing, what assessment he has made of the difficulties presented to patients as a result of those missing records; and what investigations his Department has undertaken in respect of those missing records.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department does not hold data on the proportion of patients identified to have suffered the effects of sodium valproate who reported their medical records missing between the years of 1958 and 1978. There has been no assessment or investigation into this issue.

■ Mothers: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[91783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the (a) mental and (b) physical health of new mothers during 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]: Health visitors as leaders of the Healthy Child Programme work closely with children and families and are well placed to address issues relating to mental and physical health. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Health visiting services remained in contact with families either through face to face visits (with personal protective equipment) where clinically indicated, or virtually. Priority contacts included vulnerable families, providing support to perinatal mental health and physical health and wellbeing of mother and baby. Other key priority contacts were the antenatal and new baby scheduled contacts.

Public Health England worked with NHS England on guidance to reinstate the six to eight weeks contact and prioritised caseload contacts at the earliest opportunity. This can be viewed at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/covid-19-prioritisation-within-community-health-services-with-annex_19-march-2020/

Support for parents is also available through Start4Life and the Information Service for Parents at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/pregnancy/>

Support for professionals can be found through the Early Years High Impact Areas at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-of-public-health-services-for-children>

■ NHS: Staff

Marsha De Cordova:

[89838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS organisations completed and published risk assessments for high-risk staff within the four-week deadline of the NHS England and NHS Improvement letter dated 24 June 2020 requesting them to do so.

Helen Whately:

All 217 National Health Service trusts submitted data on 31 July and 81% of known at risk staff and 92% of known black, Asian and minority ethnic staff had received risk assessments with mitigating steps agreed where necessary.

Also on 31 July, Sir Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive for NHS England and NHS Improvement, wrote to NHS organisations regarding the third phase of the NHS response to COVID-19 and supplementary material to support implementation was

published on 7 August. This makes it clear to NHS systems that the continued deployment of risk assessments on an ongoing basis must remain a priority for the duration of the pandemic.

■ Obesity

Luke Pollard: [\[91719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to consult with experts on eating disorders in (i) adapting and (ii) implementing a strategy on obesity to ensure that any such strategy acknowledges obesity as a complex interaction between multiple factors.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Eating disorders are serious, life-threatening conditions and it is important that people have access to the right mental health support, in the right place, at the right time.

We know that obesity is a complex public health issue and there are many factors which impact upon and make it difficult for many people to maintain a healthy weight, which is why we carefully consider all views on our measures to reduce obesity. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts in response to our public consultations on specific policy proposals.

■ Organs: Plastics

Martyn Day: [\[82166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of recent research that found micro- and nano-plastics in human organs; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England (PHE) has made no assessment of the implication of recent research which reports a method for detection of micro- and nano-plastics in human organs. The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) is an independent scientific committee that provides advice to the Food Standards Agency, the Department of and other Government bodies on matters concerning the toxicity of chemicals. COT is currently considering the potential risks from exposure to microplastics in general and a Committee statement will be published when finalised.

PHE has an active research program on the impact of microplastics on human health as part of the Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU), Environmental Exposures and Health led by Imperial College London and PHE. The work from the HPRU will be reported in peer reviewed academic journals.

■ **Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate**

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[91640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients of child and adult mental health services administered by the NHS have (a) fetal valproate spectrum disorder, (b) fetal valproate syndrome, (c) fetal anti-convulsant syndrome and (d) autistic spectrum disorder primarily caused by valproate in pregnancy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are not able to provide this information as data is not held on all patients with fetal valproate spectrum disorder, fetal valproate syndrome, fetal anti-convulsant syndrome and autistic spectrum disorder.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[91641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the time taken for his Department to investigate the effects of valproate in pregnancy; and whether he plans to launch an independent review of that matter.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review was published on 8 July and one of the interventions it considered was sodium valproate. The Government has received the report and is carefully considering its recommendations. An update will be provided in due course.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is developing a valproate registry, which aims to monitor the use of valproate in girls and women in the United Kingdom, and to identify and monitor outcomes in any children born to women on valproate as well as ensuring compliance with the current regulatory requirements. There has been a gradual decline in prescribing of valproate to women of childbearing age over several years, and the MHRA is working with the National Health Service and professional regulators to ensure that women with epilepsy receive the healthcare they require.

■ **Sickle Cell Diseases: Medical Treatments**

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[82273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NICE technology appraisals for upcoming non-malignant haemoglobinopathy therapies will be rescheduled.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Two topics for non-malignant haemoglobinopathy therapies were affected by the COVID-19 pause. However, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is working to reschedule multiple appraisals back into its work programme to recover as quickly as feasibly possible.

Information regarding the current timeline for each appraisal topic is published on the individual topic webpage on the NICE website.

■ Stem Cells: Donors

Bob Blackman:

[\[85022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to encourage higher donor registration among (a) all people and (b) mixed ethnicity donors to the UK stem cell and bone marrow register.

Helen Whately:

Since 2011 the Department has provided over £26.8 million in financial support to NHS Blood and Transplant and Anthony Nolan to enable the establishment of a unified United Kingdom Stem Cell Registry and improve access to, and outcomes of, stem cell donation. This includes improving equity of access to unrelated donor stem cell transplantation for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) patients through targeted recruitment to the UK Stem Cell Registry.

There are now 1.6 million donors on the UK's aligned stem cell registry which is part of a worldwide network of 76 stem cell registries, which list over 36 million donors worldwide and co-operate to match donors to patients across the globe.

Current funding includes very specific stipulations about the numbers of newly registered bone marrow donors, and the proportion of umbilical cords stored in the UK Cord Blood Bank that must be from BAME backgrounds (35-40%). There are now 1.6 million donors on the UK's aligned stem cell registry and the proportion of BAME donors in the UK registry has gone up from 11% to 14% between 2014 and 2019. In 2018, 22% of newly registered potential donors were from BAME backgrounds.

■ Swine Flu: Vaccination

Jim Shannon:

[\[84245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to co-operate with the devolved Administrations to ensure the swine flu G4 vaccine programme is UK wide.

Helen Whately:

We continually assess significant threats that the United Kingdom and its citizens could face, including natural hazard risks such as a pandemic influenza. When novel strains of influenza are identified, Public Health England works with expert advisory groups and clinical specialists across the UK to assess the risk posed to the UK, and UK population. There is currently no evidence of effective human-to-human transmission of G4 EA H1N1 influenza.

Should the advice change, the UK has robust plans and processes in place to respond to, and mitigate the impact of, a future influenza pandemic. These plans are based on a 'defence in depth' strategy to minimise spread of infection and treat individual cases, which includes arrangements to secure access to a vaccine.

■ TransUnion: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[86037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Transunion is being used to confirm identity for NHS Test and Trace home virus tests instead of the Government's Verify ID system; and what procurement process was put in place which led to the choosing of Transunion for that purpose.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Department cannot comment on individual contracts due to commercial sensitivity, but public notices of the contracts are being published.

Information on awarded contracts are published at the following link:

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

The Government published guidance on how contracting authorities should respond to COVID-19 was published on 18 March at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0120-responding-to-covid-19>

Authorities are allowed to procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency in exceptional circumstances using regulation 32(2)(c) under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Various options are available which include:

- direct award due to extreme urgency;
- direct award due to absence of competition or protection of exclusive rights;
- call off from an existing framework agreement or dynamic purchasing system;
- call for competition using a standard procedure with accelerated timescales; and
- extending or modifying a contract during its term.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum

Sir John Hayes:

[91824]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report on Asylum accommodation and support published by the National Audit Office in July 2020, what estimate her Department has made of the potential number of asylum applications up to April 2022.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office project a range of possible asylum applications for operational and financial planning which take into account past variance and upcoming system changes.

These are subject to high levels of uncertainty due to the complex and unpredictable drivers of migration and the emerging impacts of Covid on migration patterns.

The Department have estimated that asylum applications for the period from April 2020 to March 2021 could total between 26000 and 30000, and from April 2021 to March 2022 could total between 30000 and 38000, though actual numbers of applications could fall outside these ranges.

The Home Office are taking steps to reform the asylum system by developing an asylum transformation programme that seeks to simplify, streamline and digitise processes as part of the plans to speed up asylum decision making.

■ Asylum: Homelessness

Olivia Blake:

[\[906736\]](#)

What steps her Department is taking to protect people seeking asylum from homelessness.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to house asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute, and we have met that obligation during the national crisis.

During lockdown we procured additional accommodation to ensure asylum seekers avoid homelessness despite increases in the asylum population following our decision to allow people who would ordinarily leave the asylum estate to remain.

■ Asylum: Housing

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[91770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of direct funding to asylum dispersal local authorities in recognition of dispersal area status.

Chris Philp:

Local authorities receive funding for their costs of providing support to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

However, they do not receive funding for adult asylum seekers and their dependants; this is because the costs of providing these individuals with any necessary accommodation and other support to cover their essential living needs are met by the Home Office. There are no plans to change these arrangements.

■ Asylum: Poverty

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[92762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the extent of destitution among asylum seekers; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

All asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute can apply for accommodation and other support to meet their essential living needs.

Individuals are notified of the availability of this support at the point they make their asylum claim and it can be applied for by emailing Migrant Help at:

ASCOResponse@migranthehelpuk.org or by telephone on: 0808 8010 503.

Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry**Lucy Allan:****[906719]**

What steps her Department plans to take to build on the work of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse on grooming gangs.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is committed to keeping children and young people safe from all forms of abuse.

The Inquiry's investigation into child sexual exploitation by organised networks is ongoing. We will consider the Inquiry's findings when they are published.

Our work to tackle this heinous crime continues, in the meantime, as I saw for myself when meeting victims in Rotherham recently. We will publish a strategy this year, setting out our plans to tackle all forms of child sexual abuse, including grooming gangs.

Coronavirus: Disease Control**Rushanara Ali:****[906720]**

If she will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring public understanding of covid-19 lockdown regulations and legislation.

Priti Patel:

Everyone is making huge sacrifices in the fight against coronavirus, but, the recent worrying rise in cases means we are not out of the woods yet. The work of the Home Office is critical in protecting and serving our citizens. Ensuring everyone follows the rules is vital to controlling the virus this winter.

Across Cabinet and Government we have been clear on regulations and have enshrined them in law. Engagement, explaining and enforcement of those laws will be provided by the police and local authorities.

Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes**Alexander Stafford:****[93726]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to include provisions on community-based services in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Victoria Atkins:

The Domestic Abuse Bill, as introduced on 3 March, includes a new statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation. These provisions have been designed in the light of extensive consultation and analysis about how to address the gaps in current provision.

We fully recognise the vital role played by community-based support services in helping victims of domestic abuse and their children to rebuild their lives. However, until we have undertaken a similar analytical exercise in relation to community-based support services, we believe it would be premature to legislate in this Bill.

To enable us to better understand the complex landscape for community-based support for all victims, including children, the designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner has agreed to undertake an in-depth exploration of the current community-based support landscape over 2020/21. The Government will then work with the Commissioner to understand the needs identified and develop options on how best to address them.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Coronavirus**Paula Barker:**[\[92923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that fire and rescue services conduct covid-secure home safety assessments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paula Barker:[\[92924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has provided to fire and rescue services on safety and contingency planning to tackle the reduction in the number of home safety assessments conducted by those services due to the covid-19 outbreak.

James Brokenshire:

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has provided guidance to Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), to support the safe resumption of prevention activities, including Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs)

FRSs will adopt a risk-based approach to HFSVs to avoid the spread of Covid-19 to vulnerable groups and to protect staff, while continuing to deliver their statutory duty of promoting fire safety. The NFCC guidance provides factors that FRSs should consider when working in the home setting. The guidance is available on the NFCC website: https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/COVID-19/prevention/Strategic_Intention_COVID-19_Prevention.pdf

During the pandemic the Home Office has continued to collaborate with the NFCC through the Fire Kills campaign to raise awareness of pertinent fire safety messages. Campaign materials were developed and made available online and to fire and rescue services to support local interventions addressing specific and topical issues.

■ Hare Coursing

Anthony Browne:

[\[82533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to enable magistrates to issue bans to individuals being on (a) certain lands and (b) county jurisdictions for the duration of the hare coursing season.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government supports the Rural Affairs Strategy, published by the National Police Chiefs' Council in July 2018, which sets out operational policing priorities in respect of tackling crimes that predominantly affect rural communities.

■ Hate Crime: Females

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[81895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle misogyny and racism experienced by Muslim women.

Victoria Atkins:

This government recognises the discrimination and intolerance faced by Muslim communities. We have some of the strongest legislation in the world to tackle hate crime and, where groups incite racial hatred or are engaged in racially or religiously motivated criminal activity, we would expect them to be prosecuted.

The Government has taken steps to combat anti-Muslim Hatred through supporting Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) with just over £2.8m between 2016 and 2020 to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hatred.

In addition, the Places of Worship protective security funding scheme, which provides security measures for mosques and other places of worship, has been allocated £3.2m for 2020-21, double what was awarded last year.

We also funded a national public awareness hate crime campaign in 2018 and 2019 which includes a specific example of anti-Muslim hatred to make clear the Government's position that such incidents are unacceptable and are a crime.

The Home Office have also funded specific locally targeted projects including through the Building Stronger Britain Together programme tackling both the far right and perceptions of Islamophobia

■ Immigrants: Hong Kong

Jim Shannon:

[\[92769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support Hong Kong citizens who are born after 1997 and do not qualify for BN(O) status.

Kevin Foster:

We are introducing the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Visa to give BN(O) citizens and their dependants an opportunity to settle in the United Kingdom, in

recognition of their historic ties to the UK and China's breach of its previous commitments through the introduction of new national security legislation.

Many people in Hong Kong chose to register for BN(O) status, electing to retain their ties with the UK and a British Identity. However, a child born on or after 1 July 1997 to BN(O) parents would not have had the opportunity to be registered for BN(O) status. We do not wish to split family units and therefore the children of a BN(O) citizen who fall into this category and who form part of the same household will be able to apply for this Visa alongside their BN(O) parent.

Individuals from Hong Kong not eligible for the specific route for British National (Overseas) will still be able to apply to come to the UK under the terms of the UK's new Points Based System, which will enable individuals to come to the UK in a wider range of professions than in the past. In addition, Hong Kong nationals aged between 18 and 30 are eligible to apply to the existing Youth Mobility Scheme, with 1000 places currently available each year.

■ Migrant Workers: Visas

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[906724\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of trends in the time taken by UK Visas and Immigration to process one-year visa extensions for healthcare workers.

Kevin Foster:

Mr Speaker, I would like, with your permission to group questions 30 and 31.

Up till close on Friday, provisional management information shows we have concluded 5,954 free extensions for eligible healthcare workers and dependents.

On average, straightforward cases have been concluded within four weeks of receiving necessary information from employers to enable the extension to be undertaken.

Barbara Keeley:

[\[906733\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of trends in the time taken by UK Visas and Immigration to process one-year visa extensions for healthcare workers.

Kevin Foster:

Mr Speaker, I would like, with your permission to group questions 30 and 31.

Up till close on Friday, provisional management information shows we have concluded 5,954 free extensions for eligible healthcare workers and dependents.

On average, straightforward cases have been concluded within four weeks of receiving necessary information from employers to enable the extension to be undertaken.

■ National Retail Crime Steering Group

Steve McCabe:

[\[93518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the national retail crime steering group is next due to meet.

Kit Malthouse:

No date has yet been set but the next National Retail Crime Steering Group meeting is likely to take place in early 2021.

■ Orgreave

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[906757\]](#)

If she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent inquiry into the policing of the miners' strike in 1984-85.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to undertake an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent inquiry into the policing of the miners' strike in 1984-85 in England and Wales.

■ Passports: Applications

Jeff Smith:

[\[906730\]](#)

What recent progress her Department has made on reducing the time it takes to process passport applications.

Kevin Foster:

The measures put in place to increase capacity for processing passport applications have successfully helped to reduce turnaround times.

This includes rolling out a new system which increases the ability to process applications from home, and which is now processing almost 60 per cent of UK digital applications.

On 23 September, the median processing time for passport applications received from the UK was 8 working days .

■ Police Custody: Surveillance

Alex Cunningham:

[\[82656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much police forces have spent on equipping custody suites with video technology equipment.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not collect data relating to police force spending on video equipment in custody suites. This is an operational matter for police forces.

■ Police: Coronavirus**Mike Hill:** [\[906738\]](#)

What additional funding her Department plans to provide to ensure that police forces have the capacity to enforce localised covid-19 lockdowns in addition to carrying out their other duties.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Secretary promised to stand behind the men and women of our Police to give them the resources, powers and funding they need to keep the British public safe and we are working with all police forces to capture the additional financial pressures they are experiencing as a result of COVID-19.

We will issue further detail of the support package we are providing as soon as possible.

The police funding settlement for 2020/21 set out that £168m of the additional funding for recruitment this year would be ringfenced and paid to forces. It has been agreed that half of this funding (£84m) will be flexed to allow for expenditure on both COVID-19 related pressures and continued Police Uplift Programme recruitment activity in light of the current circumstances.

■ Police: Finance**Carolyn Harris:** [\[93638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of allocating additional funding and other resources to the police to respond to the rise in internet-related crime and online fraud.

James Brokenshire:

The department is committed to tackling all forms of crime, including those that exploit technology and the internet. We are considering all routes to ensure law enforcement have the tools they need to go after these criminals and to protect the vulnerable.

Setting police budgets for 2020 to 2021, this government has prioritised £150 million to tackle serious and organised crime. This includes substantial investment in fraud and cyber crime.

■ Refugees: Children**Catherine West:** [\[91780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps have been taken to ensure that safe and legal pathways remain open from 2021 for unaccompanied children within Europe (a) with and (b) without families in the UK.

Chris Philp:

The Government remains fully committed to ensuring eligible individuals seeking asylum in Europe, including unaccompanied children, who have family members in

the UK can continue to be transferred under the Dublin III Regulation throughout the transition period. Furthermore, the Immigration, Nationality and Asylum (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 include 'saving' provisions under which transfer requests under the Dublin family reunion provisions which entered the system before the end of the transition period will continue to be processed after that date.

The UK has presented a genuine and sincere offer to the EU on a future reciprocal arrangement for the family reunion of unaccompanied children seeking asylum in either the EU or the UK, with specified family members in the UK or the EU, where it is in the child's best interests. On 19 May we published draft legal text as a constructive contribution to negotiations.

Furthermore, we continue to provide safe and legal routes to bring families together through our refugee family reunion Rules, and Part 8 and Appendix FM of the Immigration Rules. These routes have not been affected by the UK's exit from the EU.

■ **Refugees: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle:

[\[94438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 91653, what comparative assessment she has made of the barriers the UK is facing to resettlement activity due to the covid-19 pandemic with France where resettlement activity has recommenced.

Neil Coyle:

[\[94439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 91653, what discussions her Department has had with local authorities on readiness for restarting the resettlement programme.

Chris Philp:

We remain unable to undertake resettlement activity at this stage due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. We are continuing to evaluate how to respond given these restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume when safe. Our plans for restarting depend on a variety of factors, including the lifting of restrictions imposed by the governments of host refugee countries, local authority and central government capacity, and recovery of the asylum system from the impact of COVID-19.

We continue to closely monitor the situation and remain in regular dialogue with our international and domestic stakeholders. When the above conditions have been satisfied we will engage with our local authority partners on their readiness and appetite for restarting resettlement.

■ **Refugees: Resettlement**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[91778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to resume refugee resettlement schemes.

Liz Saville Roberts: [91779]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Government's policy is on accepting more refugees through the resettlement scheme each year.

Chris Philp:

In June 2019, the Government reaffirmed the UK's commitment to refugee resettlement by announcing a new, global UK Resettlement Scheme. We had anticipated – prior to the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) – that this scheme would have begun in the second quarter of 2020. Unfortunately, we remain unable to undertake resettlement activity at this stage due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

We are evaluating how to respond given these restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity when safe. Our plans for restarting depend on a variety of factors, including the lifting of restrictions imposed by the governments of host refugee countries, local authority and central government capacity, and recovery of the asylum system from the impact of COVID-19.

■ Windrush Generation: Compensation

Paula Barker: [92936]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many claims have been made to the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Paula Barker: [92937]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush compensation claims have been processed; and how much compensation each claimant has received.

Paula Barker: [92938]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time taken is from a claim being made to the Windrush Compensation Scheme and a payment being made.

Priti Patel:

Information on the amount of compensation claims made, processed and how much compensation each claimant has received, is available to view on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-august-2020>.

The data will be updated on the 28th September 2020 and cover the period up to 31st August 2020. In relation to the average time taken from a claim being made to the Windrush Compensation Scheme and a payment being made, we are processing claims as quickly as possible – this is our absolute priority.

We are making interim payments where parts of a claim can be resolved more easily and quickly than others. But this is not a one size fits all compensation scheme. Each

person's claim is deeply personal and requires detailed consideration to understand their individual circumstances and experiences.

Some claims are more complex than others and it is right we take the time to ensure each one is considered carefully. We want each person to get the maximum compensation to which they are entitled and we will work with individuals on their claims accordingly. This holistic approach necessarily takes time but ultimately is beneficial to individuals.

Daisy Cooper:

[93692]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing application forms for the Windrush Compensation Scheme that have been accredited by the Crystal Mark scheme.

Priti Patel:

The Windrush Compensation Scheme and application process was designed, with the independent oversight of Martin Forde QC, to be as clear and simple as possible. Claim forms for the scheme were tested with users to ensure they are easy to understand and complete. While the forms may appear long, people only need to complete the sections of the form that relate to their individual claims.

Guidance on how to complete a claim for compensation can be found on gov.uk at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-claim-forms-and-guidance. For those who want or need support to make a claim, the Home Office has funded Citizens Advice to provide free independent advice and support. A referral to Citizens Advice can be made via the Windrush Help Team. The team can also assist individuals should they have questions about the claim form or process.

Daisy Cooper:

[93693]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to include a statement of apology from her Department on all Windrush Compensation Scheme compensation award letters.

Priti Patel:

All individuals who receive an award of compensation from the Windrush Compensation Scheme receive an apology from the Home Office with their full and final offer of compensation. This is set out in paragraph 3.1 of the scheme rules available on gov.uk here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-full-rules.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review

Kate Osamor:

[93653]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to invite external organisations to contribute to the upcoming review of the compliant environment recommended to be undertaken by the Windrush Lessons Learned Review.

Priti Patel:

My officials are consulting external experts, community organisations and the very people the Home Office has failed in the past in an extensive programme of engagement to ensure officials understand the change that is needed and that the organisation at every level learns the lessons of what went wrong.

I have accepted the Windrush Lessons Learned review's important findings and I will be updating the House in the coming weeks.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[93710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an estimate of the total amount of additional financial support provided through (a) each local authority tier, (b) the local fire and rescue service and (c) the police in (i) County Durham and (ii) Surrey.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: The local government finance settlement for 2020-21 responded to the pressures councils are facing by providing access to the largest year-on-year increase in spending power since 2010. In addition to this, the Government has provided local authorities with an unprecedented package of support to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, allocating £4.8bn of support for spending pressures, including £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced grants and the £1.1 billion Infection Control Fund. Details of funding allocations provided by the local government finance settlement for the last 10 years, as well as allocations of emergency support provided across the course of the pandemic and support for the police service, can be found on the gov.uk website.

■ Derelict Land: Recreation Spaces**Stuart Anderson:**[\[91807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of converting brownfield sites into green spaces and parks.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) makes it clear that high-quality open space and accessible green infrastructure are vital for our physical and mental health. Each piece of previously developed land has its own characteristics, and the Government expects local authorities, in consultation with local people, to consider and plan how a particular brownfield site might best be re-used. Some brownfield sites have taken on importance as wildlife habitat, which should be protected and enhanced; other brownfield may be in the right location for a new park. Our focus is on using as much suitable brownfield as possible for new homes in layouts and

settings that incorporate, from the outset, new green space, trees and other green infrastructure. Best practice is illustrated in the recent National Design Guide to creating beautiful, enduring and successful places.

In October 2019 the Secretary of State announced a £1.35 million investment in a new Pocket Parks programme, and we provided funding to 68 successful applicants. Covid-19 has delayed some action by applicants, but the Department has now given backing to 352 pocket parks in total. The funding allows recipient groups to transform neglected urban spaces – not just brownfield but other unused and unloved plots of land - into thriving green havens the whole community can enjoy.

In the last two years we have also made more than £16 million available to support parks and green spaces including:

- £9.7 million for the Local Authority Parks Improvement Fund;
- £5.1 million for the Pocket Parks and Pocket Parks Plus programmes;
- £1.41 million to pilot new management and funding models for parks through the Future Parks Accelerator programme and to support the Parks Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne;
- £55,000 to fund a Parks Action Group Coordinator;
- £30,000 on work with Natural England to develop new standards for green spaces; and
- a £130,000 Community Empowerment Programme encouraging local people to get involved in stewardship of community parks and green spaces.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Mike Amesbury:

[\[91803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will include non-ACM cladding remediation work in the monthly data release on the building safety programme.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to publishing data and analysis related to the ongoing External Wall Systems data collection, and the Building Safety Fund, which will monitor remediation of those buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding.

■ Housing: Construction

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[94444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to increase the rate of housebuilding in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government is committed to meeting the country's housing need. We delivered over 1.5 million new homes between 2010 and 2019, including over 450,000

affordable homes, and we delivered over 241,000 additional homes in the last year – the highest level in over 30 years.

We're supporting the building of homes by committing at least £44 billion of funding since 2018, lifting the borrowing cap for councils and making more land available for housing.

This summer the Prime Minister announced that the West Midlands Combined Authority is receiving £84 million from the Brownfield Fund to unlock up to 7,500 new homes, building on the £350m housing package the Government agreed with West Midlands Combined Authority in 2018 intended to deliver 215,000 new homes by 2031.

We will also continue to provide support across the country from the Housing Infrastructure Fund, with £60 million of infrastructure across the West Midlands to unlock up to 6,400 homes, including £15.6 million to unlock 3,000 homes at Coventry's Eastern Green.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Matt Western:

[\[94516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Law Commission's report, Leasehold home ownership: buying your freehold or extending your lease, published in July 2020, what plans he has to implement the recommendations on reforming leasehold home ownership; and when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on reforming leasehold.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government asked the Law Commission to review current enfranchisement arrangements to make them easier, faster, fairer and cheaper. The Law Commission report on the enfranchisement process was published in July, alongside reports on commonhold and Right to Manage. They also reported in January on options relating to valuation, including purchasing a freehold and extending the lease of a house or flat. We are considering these in detail and will set out our preferred way forward in due course. We will bring forward legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Leisure: Facilities

Paula Barker:

[\[91186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will allocate additional funding to local authorities for investing in sport and leisure facilities.

Paula Barker:

[\[91190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect on local authority (a) budgets and (b) services of the loss of revenue from the closure of community indoor tennis facilities as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG is providing local authorities with an unprecedented package of support, including £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced grants. This direct financial support the government has provided, is just part of a comprehensive package of support which includes cashflow measures as well as grants and business rates reliefs for businesses. The Secretary of State for Communities has also announced a co-payment scheme to cover irrecoverable losses in sales, fees and charges income in 20/21; such as revenue from cultural assets which have been depressed by the pandemic.

Local Government: Elections**Cat Smith:**[\[94463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of the £4.3 billion provided to local authorities to help deal with costs due to the covid-19 outbreak has been allocated to the cost of running the May 2021 elections.

Luke Hall:

We are providing local authorities with an unprecedented package of support, including over £4.8 billion of support for spending pressures, comprising £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced grants and over £1.1 billion for the Infection Control Fund. The unringfenced funding will support the pressures councils have reported. We have been clear that councils should prioritise services such as adult and children's social care, public health services and managing excess deaths.

Mayors**Neil Coyle:**[\[91060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many meetings Ministers from his Department have had in 2020 with the directly elected Mayors or their deputies of (a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, (b) Greater Manchester, (c) Liverpool City Region, (d) London, (e) North of Tyne, (f) Sheffield City Region, (g) Tees Valley, (h) West Midlands and (i) West of England.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG Ministers have had regular discussions with the directly elected regional Mayors in 2020, both bilaterally and through fora such as the M9 Group of Mayors, the London Transition Board and the Economic Recovery Working Group. Most recently, the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government met the M9 Group of Mayors and the Leader of West Yorkshire Combined Authority on 22 September, along with the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury.

Details of Ministerial Meetings are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-january-to-march-2020>.

■ Unitary Councils

Daisy Cooper:

[\[93690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the optimal upper limit of population for unitary authorities.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: The Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper to be published this year will set out our transformative plans for economic recovery and renewal, and for levelling up opportunity, prosperity, and well-being across the country. Whilst various population ranges for unitary councils have previously been referred to, where a unitary council is proposed its particular circumstances need to be considered when assessing whether its population would be appropriate.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Corporate Hospitality

Emily Thornberry:

[\[89624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many events her predecessor attended between 1 September 2017 and 24 July 2019 at the invitation of (a) the Institute or Initiative for Free Trade; (b) the Institute for Economic Affairs; (c) the Adam Smith Institute; (d) the Centre for Policy Studies; (e) Politeia; (f) the Cato Institute; (g) the Heritage Foundation; (h) the Manhattan Institute; (i) the American Enterprise Institute; (j) the Competitive Enterprise Institute; (k) the Mercatus Center; and (l) the Legatum Institute.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[89626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many events she has attended since 24 July 2019 at the invitation of (a) the Institute or Initiative for Free Trade; (b) the Institute for Economic Affairs; (c) the Adam Smith Institute; (d) the Centre for Policy Studies; (e) Politeia; (f) the Cato Institute; (g) the Heritage Foundation; (h) the Manhattan Institute; (i) the American Enterprise Institute; (j) the Competitive Enterprise Institute; (k) the Mercatus Center; and (l) the Legatum Institute.

Greg Hands:

This information is available on the transparency register.

■ Department for International Trade: Meetings

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 87521, whether she (a) used her Ministerial car to attend the meeting at the Worzals Farm Shop and Café on 13 March 2020 and (b) paid for any expenditure incurred at that meeting using official funds.

Emily Thornberry:[\[94374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 87521, whether she (a) used staff of her Ministerial office to arrange the meeting at the Worzals Farm Shop and Café on 13 March 2020, (b) was accompanied at that meeting by (i) a Private Secretary and (ii) other officials of her Department and (c) subsequently held meetings with officials of her Department on the content of that meeting.

Greg Hands:

The Secretary of State's attendance at the Worzals Farm Shop and Café on 13 March 2020 was declared in line with the Government's transparency requirements. The engagement was 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

■ **Poultry: China****Gareth Thomas:**[\[92669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with her Chinese counterpart on the liberalisation of poultry exports to China; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government continues to seek improved access to global markets for British businesses – including for British poultry in China. We continue to seek the lifting of China's ban on British poultry and poultry products, which has been in place since 2014.

■ **Poultry: South Africa****Gareth Thomas:**[\[92670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with her South African counterparts on the liberalisation of poultry exports to South Africa; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government continues to seek improved access to global markets for British businesses – including for British poultry in South Africa. We continue to seek the liberalisation of the South African poultry market through direct engagement with the Government of South Africa.

■ **Trade Agreements****Gareth Thomas:**[\[92675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her oral contribution of 14 September 2020, Official Report, column 28, if she will publish an example of a

standard chapter on the subsidies in a free trade agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The chapter on subsidies that has been agreed between the United Kingdom and Japan is an example of the commitments that are appropriate in a free trade agreement between two sovereign nations with developed economies. On publication, I refer the Hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the Rt Hon. Lady for Islington South and Finsbury by my Rt Hon. Friend the Minister for Trade Policy on 21st September 2020 (UIN 90979).

■ **Trade Agreements: Japan**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[92671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the required level is of (a) UK inputs and (b) cumulative UK and EU inputs to meet rules of origin thresholds for goods for export to Japan under the recently agreed UK-Japan free trade agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[92674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the differences in the tariff free quotas between (a) the trade agreement agreed by the UK and Japan and (b) the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and Japan; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[92676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what visa-free quotas have been agreed to exempt Japanese employees or family members from visa quotas under the recently agreed UK-Japan trade agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

After the agreement is signed, the full text will be laid in parliament. Furthermore, a parliamentary report, setting out in detail any areas where there are material differences between the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), will be published.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[92672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether businesses that are members of the Trade Advisory Group have seen the final text of the recently agreed UK-Japan free trade agreement.

Greg Hands:

The text of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is still undergoing legal checks. After it is finalised, the agreement will be signed and then the full text will be laid in parliament. Furthermore, a parliamentary report, setting out in detail any areas where there are material differences between the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the UK-Japan CEPA, will be published.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[92673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanisms were included in the recently agreed trade deal with Japan; and if will she make a statement.

Greg Hands:

Investor State Dispute Settlement is not included in the UK-Japan agreement.

■ Trade Agreements: Parliamentary Scrutiny

Bill Esterson:

[\[94401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the recommendations on the scrutiny of international trade negotiations in the report of the Global Economic Governance Programme entitled UK scrutiny of international trade agreements.

Greg Hands:

Parliament will be able to conduct scrutiny at every stage of the process in a way that is appropriate and proportionate to the British constitutional context.

In the United Kingdom, the power to negotiate and enter into treaties are prerogative powers held by HM Government. That said, we have gone well beyond the statutory framework for the scrutiny of treaties set out in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

Our approach strikes the right balance between allowing Parliament to scrutinise our trade policy effectively, and maintaining the ability of HM Government to negotiate with agility in the best interests of the United Kingdom. We have, of course, considered the approach of other international systems, including the United States, but comparisons must focus on countries that use the Westminster model to draw meaningful best practice that is appropriate to our constitutional arrangements.

When similar parliamentary democracies are compared to the United Kingdom, it is clear our practice is very strong and entirely appropriate to our constitutional arrangements. For example, as the report the Hon. Gentlemen refers to states, the United Kingdom is one of the few jurisdictions to publish impact assessments at the outset of negotiations.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Standards

Peter Kyle:

[\[94493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications for special measures at court were (a) made and (b) granted in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

HM Courts and Tribunals does not hold the data centrally on how many applications for special measures at court were (a) made and (b) granted in each of the last five years.

Applications made at court are recorded but do not identify the type or the specific volumes of each which are received and granted.

Similarly judicial directions are made but there is no categorisation to which aspect of a case these refer or if they are in response to a particular application.

Crime: Victims**Hannah Bardell:**[\[94474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plans to comply with the Victims Directive after the UK leaves EU.

Alex Chalk:

The Victim Directive (2012/29/EU) and the Victim Compensation Directive (2004/80/EC) will cease to apply to the UK after the end of the transition period, subject to the winding down provisions contained in the Withdrawal Agreement. The common minimum standards set out in the Victim Directive have been implemented in domestic law; for example, in England and Wales primarily through the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code) issued under section 32 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. These measures are unaffected by the UK's exit from the EU. Victims of crime injured in Britain may be eligible for the Britain-wide Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme ('the Scheme'), which provides publicly funded compensation to victims who suffer a serious physical or mental injury as the direct result of a violent crime. Awards under the Scheme are a recognition of public sympathy for the pain and suffering caused by violent crime. Where the crime was committed in an EU Member State, victims may be eligible to apply to the compensation scheme in that State, under the European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes.

Hannah Bardell:[\[94477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department allocates to the Victim Support Homicide Service/Lucie Blackman Trust to support families bereaved abroad.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is committed to ensuring effective practical and emotional support for those bereaved by homicide and has taken steps to improve the funding available for these victims.

The current Homicide Service commenced in April 2019 and provides bereaved families with access to the fullest range of practical, emotional, specialist and peer support to families bereaved both in England and Wales as well as by homicide abroad.

We have provided Victim Support up to £3.4m per annum in funding for the delivery of the Homicide Service. In 2020/21 we are providing up to £500k in additional funding to the Homicide Service.

The funding available includes a contribution of up to £160k per annum from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to provide support to eligible families bereaved abroad. In addition, the FCDO has contributed funding of £40,000 this financial year to the Lucie Blackman Trust to support missing British nationals and their families.

Peter Kyle:

[94490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Victims Strategy, what steps he has taken to introduce uniform standards and a new framework of indicators for (a) centrally funded victims services, (b) PCCs, and (c) Sexual Assault Referral Centres.

Alex Chalk:

The Government has taken steps to improve the funding for victims' services as part of the Victims Strategy, and with greater investment comes with greater accountability.

Since 2014 grant agreements for all Ministry of Justice nationally funded victims' services have included reporting standards to demonstrate accountability, accuracy and robustness of data. To satisfy these standards, victims' services must complete biannual returns capturing data on spend, outputs and outcomes.

In addition, from April 2020 we have introduced new reporting standards for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) to ensure we are capturing quality data on victims' services at the local level.

In England, the Department of Health and Social Care funded Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) have been measured against national indicators since 2016 with SARC services reporting against a national data set on a quarterly basis.

Peter Kyle:

[94492]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Government's Victim Strategy, what steps he has taken to require that Police and Crime Commissioners ensure that restorative justice services are available in their areas.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice provides funding to Police and Crime Commissioners. The Grant Agreement in place requires Police and Crime Commissioners to provide or commission a wide range of local support services for victims, including Restorative Justice services, supporting the commitment in the Victim Strategy.

Restorative Justice services are well established within local commissioned victim support services commissioned through Police and Crime Commissioners. Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), all victims have the right to receive information about how to access Restorative Justice services in their local area in order to participate if they wish to do so.

■ Offences Against Children: Sentencing

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[91814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how the changes proposed in the White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, published September 2020, will effect those convicted of sexual offenses against children.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the worst offenders are kept behind bars to protect the public, and that the safety of our children is paramount when sentencing sex offenders.

We have already legislated to end automatic halfway release for offenders who have committed a specified sexual offence, including child sexual offences, for which the maximum penalty is life and who receive a sentence of 7 years or more. Such offenders now have to serve two-thirds of their sentence in prison before being released to serve the final part of their sentence on licence and under supervision in the community.

We are going further in the sentencing White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, to ensure that serious offenders spend more time in prison, to properly reflect the gravity of their crimes. We are proposing to legislate to extend the requirement to serve two-thirds of the sentence to other sexual offenders who receive sentences of between 4 and 7 years. Also under our proposals, offenders who commit serious sexual assaults against children and receive a Sentence for Offenders of Particular Concern (SOPC), will be required to serve two-thirds of their sentence, instead of the current half, before they can come before the Parole Board for consideration for release.

■ Tribunals: Disclosure of Information

Andy Slaughter:

[92726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's guidance notes and forms for requesting transcription of Tribunal proceedings, requiring that appellants will usually have to pay for those transcripts unless the court believes there are special circumstances, what financial criteria people are required to meet in their EX105 form to demonstrate such poor financial circumstances that the cost of obtaining a transcript would be an excessive burden, qualifying them for a free transcript paid at public expense.

Chris Philp:

Following an applicant's EX105 form, the decision to grant a transcript paid at public expense in Tribunal proceedings remains a judicial one. It would not be appropriate for Ministers to comment on how such decisions are made. Information on financial criteria requirements are published at: <https://www.gov.uk/get-help-with-court-fees>.

Andy Slaughter:[\[92727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's guidance notes and forms for requesting transcription of Tribunal proceedings requiring appellants to submit an EX105 form to request that a court transcript of proceedings be paid at the public expense, what would qualify a request as not being necessary in the interests of justice for such a transcript to be obtained.

Chris Philp:

Open justice is a fundamental principle in our Courts and Tribunals system, and we continue to uphold that principle. The decisions of the First-tier and the Upper Tribunal are published on www.gov.uk when they are deemed of legal or public interest.

Whether a transcript should be released in the interests of justice, remains a judicial decision. It is not appropriate for Ministers to comment on how such decisions are made. There are currently no plans to provide transcripts throughout Tribunals at no cost, unless directed by a judge.

■ Young Offenders: Sentencing**Peter Kyle:**[\[94489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his Department's White Paper, A Smarter Approach to Sentencing, published on 16 September 2020, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) community settings and (b) parental involvement in youth offender panels prior to bringing forward legislative proposals on youth sentencing.

Chris Philp:

We are aware that problem-solving approaches work well within the current youth justice system, and we recognise that effective multi-agency working can have a positive impact on a child's rehabilitation. In the Smarter Approach to Sentencing White Paper, published on 16 September 2020, we proposed pilots for adult problem-solving courts. We are keen to learn from these pilots, to explore problem-solving approaches in the youth justice system and build the evidence base for the use of panels in youth justice beyond their current use for Referral Orders.

Youth Offender Panels already operate for children who are given Referral Orders; parents are always requested to join both the initial panel meeting and the review meetings. The guidance on Referral Orders is clear that constructive engagement with the child's parents or carers is an important aspect of the youth offender panel process. Youth Offender Panels must also take place in spaces that are safe, appropriate and practical to do so and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are encouraged to hold Panels in an inclusive community-based settings. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-offenders-referral-orders>

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Chemicals: Northern Ireland****Louise Haigh:**[\[93625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what (a) guidance and (b) public information the Government has issued to businesses seeking to import more than one tonne of chemicals to Northern Ireland on the requirements they will need to implement from 1 January 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

On 7 August, the Government set out on Gov.uk further guidance on moving goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol. This confirms that there will be no change for the movement of goods covered by the Protocol between Northern Ireland and EU Member States, and that the overall process for trading between Northern Ireland and non-EU countries will continue broadly as it does today.

The guidance also explains that businesses seeking to import chemicals into Northern Ireland from non-EU third countries or to move them from GB to Northern Ireland, at or above 1 tonne per year, will need to ensure that the importer in Northern Ireland or the EU holds a registration under EU REACH, or appoint an Only Representative in Northern Ireland or the EU as registrant for the substance. The guidance links to further information on registration.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Government Assistance****Seema Malhotra:**[\[94436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on targeted support for the aviation sector and its supply chain.

Robert Courts:

The aviation sector is crucial to the UK's economy and businesses across the industry are able to draw on the unprecedented package of economic measures we have put in place during this time. This includes a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital, two business interruption loan guarantee schemes for different sizes of business, Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees and VAT deferrals.

In exceptional circumstances, where a viable company has exhausted all options and its failure would disproportionately harm the economy, the Chancellor has made clear that the Government may consider bespoke support on a 'last resort' basis.

The Department for Transport is in close contact with the travel sector, ensuring that the Government is kept fully aware of the latest developments with all firms and to understand where additional policy measures may address specific industry issues.

■ Bus Services: West Yorkshire

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[92699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the use of environmentally sustainable buses in West Yorkshire.

Rachel Maclean:

Through the 2018-2021 Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme (ULEBS), West Yorkshire Combined Authority and First West Yorkshire have been allocated £617,000 for 5 electric buses and charging infrastructure and £1,770,472.50 for 9 electric buses and charging infrastructure respectively, totalling £2,387,472.50. This is in addition to the 2016-2019 Low Emission Bus Scheme (LEBS) funding which has supported the purchase of 8 Low-Emission, Hybrid Buses with £234,000 in total provided to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

The Government is also investing at least 4,000 Zero-Emission Buses (ZEBs) through the £5 billion of new funding to overhaul bus and cycle links for regions outside London.

■ Cars: Registration

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[92746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of unprocessed hard-copy documents on purchased cars by the DVLA.

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[92747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time is for the DVLA to process hard-copy documents on purchased cars.

Rachel Maclean:

Between March and the end of August, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has issued nearly seven million vehicle registration certificates. On 21 September, there were just over 32,000 hard copy vehicle registration certificates awaiting processing. Vehicle registration certificates are currently being processed within around ten days of receipt at the DVLA. These include notification of change of vehicle keeper and also a change of name and address of the current keeper.

■ Electric Vehicles

Bill Wiggin:

[\[94342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage more road users to switch to electric vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is investing £2.5bn to support the market for zero emission vehicles. At the March Budget we announced £532m extra funding to keep plug in vehicle grants until 2023, to help offset the higher upfront costs, and an additional £500m to support the roll out of charging infrastructure to give motorists the confidence to make

the transition. As part of our consultation on ending the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans, Government is considering what further measures are required to support the uptake of zero emission vehicles.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Bill Wiggin: [\[94343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many on-street electric charging points have been installed throughout (a) North Herefordshire and (b) the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

Up to September 2020, 655 charging devices have been installed in the UK with funding from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles' On-Street Residential Charging Scheme, with funding allocated to local authorities for the installation of a further 2,456. To date, Herefordshire County Council has not applied for any funding under this scheme. There are likely to be further on-street charging devices installed without the use of this funding, but figures for these are not available.

■ Electric Vehicles: Registration

Bill Wiggin: [\[94344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many vehicles have been registered with the green electric-vehicle licence plate.

Rachel Maclean:

Green number plates are not yet available but they are coming soon. DfT officials are currently working with DVLA counterparts to amend the relevant legislation, and bring them in across the UK later in the autumn. Green number plates for zero emission vehicles will have an important awareness raising effect, helping to normalise EVs and increase their uptake. In addition, we are investing around £2.5bn, with grants available for plug in vehicles, and schemes to support charge point infrastructure at homes, workplaces, on residential streets and across the wider roads network.

■ Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[94517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the decision to replace the rail franchise model with Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) (a) has resulted in a change in the designated employer of train operating companies previously holding franchises and (b) will result in a change in designated employer after the expiration of ERMA in 18 months.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The implementation of the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements has not resulted in a change in the designated employer – the underlying franchise agreements remain in place.

It is the current intention of the Department to agree directly awarded contracts with operators at the expiration of the ERMA term and underlying franchise agreement. Should these contracts be successfully agreed with incumbent operators, there would be no change in the designated employer.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[94520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the move to Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements over the 18 month period that those agreements will be in place; and how much of that cost relates to (a) operational expenditure, (b) fees to run the network and (c) profit to private companies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The cost to the public purse of Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) is completely dependent on the course of the pandemic and also how many people are using the railway and generating revenue, which is highly uncertain at this point.

In terms of the fees, ERMA fees are based on a fixed 0.5% management fee based on the historical costs of a train operating company, with additional fees only where performance requirements are met or exceeded. Details of payments made by the Department to franchised passenger rail operators under the Emergency Measures Agreements can be found on the government's website and shall be updated regularly.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-march-to-june-2020>

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[94441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the rules on refunding rail season tickets as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following the introduction of COVID-19 travel restrictions in March, the Department introduced a number of temporary process changes to make it easier for passengers to claim refunds, including allowing season ticket holders to backdate their refund claim by up to 56 days, or the date their ticket was last used, whichever was later. In addition, new arrangements were put in place to enable season ticket holders to claim refunds remotely, and a season ticket refund calculator was added to National Rail and all train operator websites. The Department agreed with train operators that they would revert to the standard refund terms and conditions from 7 September

2020, but passengers can continue to claim refunds on unused portions of season tickets.

Train operators allocated additional resources to process the unprecedented number of refund requests as quickly as possible. Since 17 March over 220,000 season ticket holders have claimed season ticket refunds totalling over £340 million in response to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

■ Rolling Stock: Procurement

Grahame Morris: [\[94391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to reduce the costs of maintenance contracts with rolling stock companies as part of negotiating the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Under the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements, operators have been placed on far more demanding management agreements, with tougher performance targets and lower management fees. The new contracts allow us to make an early start on key reforms, including requiring operators to co-ordinate better with each other and driving down the railways' capital costs.

Grahame Morris: [\[94392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative assessment he has made of the merits of (a) directly procuring rolling stock and (b) leasing trains from rolling stock companies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State has not currently made assessments of procuring or leasing rolling stock directly from manufacturers or rolling stock owning companies. The UK rolling stock market has been a vibrant one and passengers are benefiting from private investment in new trains across the country.

■ Train Operating Companies: Investment Income

Grahame Morris: [\[94390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what restrictions he plans to place on the payment of dividends by train operating companies as a condition of the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Franchisees will remain in 'lock-up' for the duration of the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements (ERMAs), meaning that payment of dividends may not be made without the Secretary of State's consent. Consent to the payment of a Permitted Dividend will not be unreasonably withheld or delayed, subject to franchisees fulfilling their financial obligations under the ERMAs to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State and complying with their Companies Act obligations. For any

franchisee year the Permitted Dividend will be limited to the value of the fees paid to the franchisee net of Corporation Tax.

TREASURY

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[91766\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement entitled Finance Bill 2020-21 draft legislation and tax documents of 21 July 2020, what assessment he has made on the effect on the operation of the Small Brewers Relief scheme of converting it to a cash basis.

Kemi Badenoch:

Converting the Small Brewers Relief (SBR) scheme to a cash basis will enable the Treasury to review the value of the relief periodically, ensuring it maintains a fair and appropriate value. The Treasury will consult in the Autumn on this and other technical measures relating to SBR.

James Wild:

[\[92906\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the oral contribution of 15 September 2020 of the Exchequer Secretary, Official Report, column 180, if he will publish the evidential basis demonstrating that the vast majority of brewers will benefit from proposed changes to small breweries tax relief.

Kemi Badenoch:

Further information about the review of Small Brewers Relief so far, including evidence collected, will be published alongside the technical consultation later this Autumn.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Paul Girvan:

[\[91795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of re-opening business grants for companies which remain unable to operate as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the impact that necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on certain businesses.

The Government has provided unprecedented support for individuals and businesses during the pandemic. In addition to the measures announced over the past few months, including COVID-19 lending schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and business grants, to name just some measures, the Government announced additional support measures on 24 September as part of the Winter Economy Plan. These new measures include:

- The new Jobs Support Scheme, which for six months from 1 November will see the Government contribute towards the wages of employees across the UK who are working fewer than normal hours due to decreased demand related to COVID-19;
- The SEISS Grant Extension, which provides additional taxable grant funding to self-employed individuals who are currently eligible for the SEISS and are actively continuing to trade, but are facing reduced demand due to COVID-19;
- Extending the temporary VAT cut for hospitality and tourism businesses to March 2021;
- Extending the deadline for new applications to four of the COVID-19 loan schemes to 30 November; and
- Help for businesses in repaying loans from Government-backed schemes through the Pay as you Grow scheme and allowing lenders to extend the terms of CBILS loans to up to 10 years.

Earlier this month, we also announced the Local Lockdown Grant Fund (now called the Local Restrictions Support Grants), to enable Local Authorities in England to provide business properties which are required to shut due to nationally-imposed local lockdowns with grants of up to £1,500 for each three week closure period.

Business Grants are a fully devolved policy area, and so it is for the Northern Irish Executive to determine what business grants to provide in Northern Ireland.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Neil Coyle: [\[94437\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of the effect on the level of employment of the closure of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jim McMahon: [\[94507\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the ending of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at the end of October.

Jesse Norman:

The CJRS has helped 1.2 million employers across the UK furlough 9.6 million jobs, protecting people's livelihoods. Many of these employments will have already been resumed. 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 CJRS must be temporary and the Government must ensure people can get back to work safely and get the UK economy up and running again.

Building on the action taken in the face of the immediate threat posed by the virus, the second phase of the Government's response began with the targeted Plan for Jobs. The Plan places emphasis on job creation through the Kickstart scheme, a £2 billion fund to create hundreds of thousands of new, high-quality 6-month subsidised

jobs for young people; as well as job protection through the Job Retention Bonus, which specifically encourages firms to keep on workers they previously furloughed. It also supports jobseekers with direct help to find work and to gain the skills they need to gain employment.

The Government is adapting its response to the changing context, evolving as restrictions have changed. On 24 September the Government introduced a Winter Economy Plan including the new Job Support Scheme, which targets support on those businesses that need it most; focusing on those that are being affected by coronavirus and can support their employees doing some work, but that need more time for demand to recover.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Immigrants**

Apsana Begum:

[91809]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to provide financial support to those with No Recourse to Public Funds conditions who are currently supported by the furlough scheme, when the scheme ends.

Steve Barclay:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is an unprecedented scheme that was designed to be in place only as a temporary measure while businesses regrouped and responded to the crisis. Building on the action taken in the face of the immediate threat posed by the virus, the government is now proceeding with the second phase of its response with a targeted Plan for Jobs which will support the UK's economic recovery while continuing to prioritise people's health.

The Home Office leads on policy towards those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and is working closely with the Treasury and other government departments, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health and Social Care to support people, including migrants with NRPF, through this crisis. Departments are sharing what they are learning from other bodies and charities with each other to ensure that the government continues to take a compassionate and pragmatic approach to an unprecedented situation.

Apsana Begum:

[91810]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of individuals subject to No Recourse to Public Funds conditions who are currently supported by the furlough scheme.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold information on the immigration status of migrants supported by the furlough scheme, and are therefore unable to provide the requested data.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Leisure

Emma Hardy:

[\[92874\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing a sector-specific extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the sport and leisure sector.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on businesses and sectors like sport and leisure across the UK. We are working intensively alongside the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport to understand the long-term challenges facing the sector

We are introducing a new Jobs Support Scheme from 1 November. Employees must work a minimum of 33% of their normal hours, and in return, will receive at least 77% of their salary. For every hour not worked, the government and the employer will each pay one third of their remaining salary up to a cap of £697.92. Large businesses will be required to demonstrate that their turnover has suffered as a result of COVID-19.

It would be challenging to target the CJRS to specific sectors in a fair and deliverable way. It would also be difficult to target the CJRS at specific sectors without creating distortions, particularly as some firms work across multiple sectors.

The Government has provided unprecedented support for individuals and businesses during the pandemic, and on 24 September the Government announced additional support measures as part of the Winter Economy Plan. In addition to the new Jobs Support Scheme, the Winter Economy Plan includes measures such as:

- The SEISS Grant Extension, which provides additional taxable grant funding to self-employed individuals who are currently eligible for the SEISS and are actively continuing to trade, but are facing reduced demand due to COVID-19;
- An extension to the temporary VAT cut for hospitality and tourism businesses to March 2021;
- An extension to the deadline for new applications to four of the COVID-19 loan schemes to 30 November; and
- Help for businesses in repaying loans from Government-backed schemes through the Pay as you Grow scheme and allowing lenders to extend the terms of CBILS loans to up to 10 years.

Earlier this month, the Government also announced the Local Lockdown Grant Fund (now called the Local Restrictions Support Grants), to enable Local Authorities in England to provide business properties which are required to shut due to nationally-imposed local lockdowns with grants of up to £1,500 for each three week closure period.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support with regard to supporting public services, businesses, individuals, and sectors such as sport and leisure as we respond to this pandemic.

■ Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund

Emma Hardy:

[\[92875\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to make further financial support available through the Discretionary Grant Fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

The business grant funds, including the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, were primarily intended to support small businesses which faced high fixed property-related costs during the strict lockdown period, when consumer footfall was dramatically reduced. As most businesses in most areas are now able to reopen, it is right that we wind up the grant schemes, all of which closed to new applicants on 28 August. The Government continues to review the economic situation and consider what support businesses need. However, there are currently no plans to make further support available through the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.

We do recognise that businesses which are forced to totally close for a substantial period in local lockdowns are likely to require additional support, which is why on 9 September the Government announced a new Local Lockdown Grant Fund, to enable Local Authorities to provide business properties which are required to shut due to nationally-imposed local lockdowns with grants of up to £1,500 for each three week closure period.

Businesses can still access a range of other support from the Government, including the furlough scheme which remains open, and Bounce Back Loans. In addition, all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses have had their business rates cancelled in full for the entire year.

Paula Barker:

[\[92929\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the discretionary grant fund afforded to local authorities in order to support SMEs.

Kemi Badenoch:

The business grant funds, including the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, were primarily intended to support small businesses which faced high fixed property-related costs during the strict lockdown period, when consumer footfall was dramatically reduced. As most businesses in most areas are now able to reopen, it is right that we wind up the grant schemes, all of which closed to new applicants on 28 August. The Government continues to review the economic situation and consider what support businesses need. However, there are currently no plans to make further support available through the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.

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■ Elizabeth Truss

Emily Thornberry: [\[94375\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2020 to Question 89625, whether all events attended between 1 September 2017 and 24 July 2019 by the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury with the (a) Institute or Initiative for Free Trade, (b) Institute of Economic Affairs, (c) Adam Smith Institute and (d) Cato Institute were published by his Department in its quarterly publications of Ministerial meetings and hospitality for that period.

Steve Barclay:

HMT transparency returns include the details of meetings with external organisations undertaken in a ministerial capacity, gifts (given and received), hospitality and overseas travel.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Paul Girvan: [\[91794\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a furlough scheme for for companies that remain unable to operate due to covid-19 restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

After eight months of the CJRS, the scheme will close in October. The CJRS must be temporary and the Government must ensure people can get back to work when it is safe to do so and get the UK economy up and running again.

It would be challenging to target a furlough scheme to specific sectors in a fair and deliverable way, and without creating distortion, particularly as some firms work across multiple sectors. Moreover, it may not be the case that this would be the most effective or sensible way to provide longer term support for those sectors most affected by coronavirus.

There are other schemes that can provide support to firms, such as the new Job Support Scheme and other measures announced in the Winter Economy Plan. The Job Support Scheme is designed to protect viable jobs in businesses who are facing lower demand over the winter months due to COVID-19, to help keep their employees attached to the workforce. The company will continue to pay its employee for time worked, but the cost of hours not worked will be split between the employer, the Government (through wage support) and the employee (through a wage reduction), and the employee will keep their job.

■ Exports: VAT

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[91819\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the value of tax-free shopping sales in the UK; and what proportion of that spending is forecast to be retained in the UK once the VAT retail export scheme is withdrawn.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has announced that the VAT Retail Export Scheme will not be extended to EU visitors, and will be withdrawn for all non-EU visitors, following the end of the transition period. However, retailers will continue to be able to offer VAT-free shopping to non-EU visitors who purchase items in store and have them sent direct to their overseas addresses and this will be available to EU visitors following the end of the transition period.

The final costing will be subject to scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and will be set out at the next forecast.

The Government recognises the challenge these businesses face. The Chancellor announced the Winter Economy Plan on 24 September. This includes an extension to the temporary 5 per cent reduced rate of VAT on goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors from 12 January to 31 March 2021. This alone provides continued support for the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protection for 2.4 million jobs in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The plan also provides further support to businesses and jobs over the coming months.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[91820\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the potential number of job losses resulting from the ending of the VAT retail export scheme in the (a) retail and (b) tourism sectors.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[91821\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the cessation of the VAT retail export scheme on the UK's position as an international destination.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[91822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost of the VAT retail export scheme is to the public purse; and what estimate he has made of the savings that will accrue to the public purse as a result of the cessation of that scheme.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: [\[91823\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the value of spending by international visitors on goods and services other than tax-free shopping in the UK; and what proportion of that spending is forecast to be retained in the UK after the VAT retail export scheme is withdrawn.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has announced that the VAT Retail Export Scheme will not be extended to EU visitors, and will be withdrawn for all non-EU visitors, following the end of the transition period. However, retailers will continue to be able to offer VAT-free shopping to non-EU visitors who purchase items in store and have them sent direct to their overseas addresses and this will be available to EU visitors following the end of the transition period.

The final costing will be subject to scrutiny by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and will be set out at the next forecast.

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■ Night-time Economy: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[92868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2020 to Question 88386 on Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Night-time Economy, what options for more effective ways to help those businesses who are still unable to reopen during the covid-19 outbreak is his Department considering.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government is setting out the next phase of its plan to support the economy, following announcement of measures to control the spread of COVID-19. With the resurgence of the virus, and the measures taken to protect people's health and wellbeing, weighing on the fragile recovery, the government is announcing a targeted package of measures to support jobs and business through the winter months:

- supporting businesses to keep staff on through the introduction of a new Job Support Scheme and an extension to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Grant.
- helping the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through a continuation of the reduction in VAT
- support businesses that face a drop in demand for their services by taking action to relieve the pressure on their finances and help them plan cashflow in the coming months, offering them more generous terms for repayment of deferred taxes and government-backed loans.
- continuing to help businesses to access the finance through extending the application window of the government-backed loan schemes and supporting businesses in enabling them to repay these loans in a sustainable manner.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[94591\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the economy of self-employed beauty industry workers being unable to carry out treatments as a result of covid-19 restrictions remaining in place for the next six months.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that this is a challenging time for the beauty sector, where businesses were required to stay closed for longer than some others.

The SEISS Grant Extension will help the self-employed who are currently actively trading but are facing reduced demand. The Government will provide an initial SEISS grant covering 20% of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering 3 months' worth of profits, and capped at £1,875 in total. This grant will cover a three-month period from the start of November until the end of January. A second grant will cover a three-month period from the start of February until the end of April.

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.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[91828\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial assistance is available to PAYE freelancers whose employers will not register them for support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has committed to an unprecedented package to support individuals through this difficult time. Those not eligible for the CJRS or SEISS may have access to other measures which are designed to ensure that people get help at this time.

The Government has injected an additional £9.3 billion into the welfare system according to OBR estimates. These changes include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants.

■ Tax Avoidance: Coronavirus

Dan Carden:

[\[94532\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to delay the date for reporting the Loan Charge and concluding settlement agreements as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) announced in December 2019 that they would extend the deadline from 31 January 2020 to 30 September 2020, for individuals due to pay the Loan Charge, to submit their 2018/19 Self Assessment returns.

This deadline has long been established and the extension has given taxpayers an additional eight months to file their returns and, if they choose to, reach a settlement agreement with HMRC.

The Government has no plans to extend the deadline beyond 30 September 2020. HMRC will take a proportionate and reasonable approach to anyone who is unable to reach a settlement agreement or file their tax return by the 30 September 2020 deadline as a direct result of COVID-19.

Working Tax Credit: Stockton North**Alex Cunningham:****[94416]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many families with children have received the £20 per week uplift in Working Tax Credit basic element payments in Stockton North in each month since that uplift was introduced.

Jesse Norman:

This information is not currently available.

Provisional information on the number of families with children receiving Working Tax Credit at the parliamentary constituency level is published twice a year. In April 2020, the number of families with children receiving Working Tax Credit in Stockton North was 1,700: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-and-working-tax-credits-statistics-provisional-awards-geographical-analyses-december-2013>.

The next update to this publication will be available in January 2021 with statistics relating to December 2020.

Finalised annual information on families with children receiving Working Tax Credits is published once a year and is updated each July:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-and-working-tax-credits-statistics-finalised-annual-awards-2018-to-2019>.

WORK AND PENSIONS**Kickstart Scheme****Nick Fletcher:****[94590]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the requirement that placements on the Kickstarter scheme be submitted in batches of 30 to batches of five.

Mims Davies:

We will keep the 30 vacancy minimum under review throughout the scheme, which is open until December 2021 for the funding of new jobs.

■ Pension Credit**Olivia Blake:**[\[93723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Answer of 24 March 2020 to Question 30051 on Pension Credit stating that her Department will carry out a full evaluation of the 12-week Pension Credit awareness campaign that started on 12 February 2020, if she will outline (a) the results of that evaluation including how successful it was in meeting its objectives and (b) her Department's plans for future awareness raising of Pension Credit following that evaluation.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: The purpose of the campaign was to support Pension Credit take-up and test impact.

There was a 20% increase in telephone calls to the Pension Credit claim line (during the course of the campaign the weekly average was 2,493 phone calls compared to a weekly average in 2019 of 2,079 phone calls).

There was also significant engagement with social media and a spike of activity on viewing the Pension Credit website pages with more than 5,000 sessions on the launch day, 10 February (compared to 1,000 on 3 February).

However, it should be stressed that other factors may affect these numbers, including the BBC TV licensing decision and the effect of the Pandemic.

Due to the Pandemic, all pensions campaigns are currently on hold.

Grahame Morris:[\[94388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to increase uptake of pension credit; and if she will put in place a strategy to achieve full uptake of that benefit.

Guy Opperman:

While over 1.5 million pensioners currently receive Pension Credit, the Government wants to make sure that all pensioners eligible can claim the Pension Credit to which they are rightly entitled. That is why in February this year we launched a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit and help dispel some of the misconceptions that people might have about Pension Credit eligibility. We wanted to make it clear that having savings, a pension or owning a home are not automatic barriers to receiving Pension Credit. We also wanted to highlight that even a small award of Pension Credit can provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with rent, council tax reduction schemes, heating costs and for those aged 75 or over a free television licence.

We are also continuing to work with our stakeholders to help spread the key messages from the campaign because we know that often the best ways to reach

eligible pensioners is through trusted stakeholders working in the community. Our online Pension Credit toolkit (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pension-credit-toolkit>) has been updated with the recent awareness campaign materials to supplement the resources it already contains for those working with pensioners, such as guides to Pension Credit and information designed to help older people understand how they could get Pension Credit.

In May this year we launched an online claim service for Pension Credit to supplement the existing telephone and postal claim services (<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>). The new online service enables pensioners to apply for Pension Credit at a time that suits them. Around 50% of new claims to Pension Credit are currently being made using the service and more than 34,000 online claims have been made since it was launched. <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>.

■ Universal Credit

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[92786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to publish the steps it will take in response to the Court of Appeal ruling in Secretary of State for Work and Pensions v Johnson & Ors [2020] EWCA Civ 778.

Will Quince:

The Court of Appeal judgment affects a small minority of claimants in very specific circumstances, those who receive two calendar monthly payments of earnings in one assessment period and lose out on the work allowance. We recognise the impact that having double earnings in an assessment period can have on individual claimants and their ability to manage their finances.

While the court judgment does not require us to fix this issue by a particular date, we are currently working on ways to resolve this for claimants as soon as possible. We will keep the House updated as progress is made.

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[93510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Information Commissioner's Office's recommendation of 10 April 2019, RFA0715409, if she will publish, alongside her Department's published policy on universal credit, a ready-to-use template form for explicit consent for universal credit for a representative to act on behalf of an individual client.

Will Quince:

The Universal Credit (UC) system is structured around an online personal account which contains all the information relevant to the claim. This includes claimants' bank account details, savings, capital, medical history, family relationships and address information, which means that we have a responsibility to ensure that a high level of security and protection is in place, and that we take all reasonable steps to protect

our claimants and their data which includes ensuring that consent is explicitly given to share it.

As the amount of personal data available on UC is far greater than in the legacy benefit systems, any data breach has far reaching consequences for claimants, and so we need to balance consent against this risk. Therefore, a policy of explicit consent exists to help reduce the risk of fraud by ensuring that claimants' data is kept safe from unscrupulous organisations and individuals. The emphasis here is not to hinder people receiving support to help them make and manage their claim, but to make sure we protect claimants' personal data and other information.

Where explicit consent is needed it can be quickly given in different ways; over the phone or via the online journal, at any time during a UC claim. This is a far simpler and more straightforward process than in the legacy benefit systems. Once consent is given, we will work with claimants' representatives.

Following the Social Security Advisory Committee's report into consent in UC on 8 September 2020, the Department continues to consider how best to safeguard personal data moving forward, whilst allowing those claimants needing support from representatives to do so in a safe and secure manner.

■ Universal Credit: Autism

Seema Malhotra:

[\[94432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what training is provided to work coaches to support universal credit claimants with (a) Asperger's syndrome and (b) autism; and what processes are in place to identify people in need of specific support.

Mims Davies:

The Department is committed to providing the best possible support for all Universal Credit claimants to meet their individual circumstances. Jobcentre and Service Centre staff undergo a comprehensive learning journey designed to equip them with the tools, skills and behaviours required to provide a high quality service to all claimants, including those with Asperger's syndrome and autism. They receive on-going learning in their roles and have access to guidance which is refreshed at regular intervals.

Part of our training programme advises Universal Credit Work Coaches to consult with their Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) if the claimant has complex personal circumstances which need to be better understood, including Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) which is complemented with a specific online training product. This has been designed so Universal Credit Work Coaches can refer to it whenever they need to.

Additionally, Universal Credit Work Coaches are equipped with guidance to enable them to provide a high quality service to all claimants including those in need of specific support. Universal Credit guidance includes examples of life events, personal circumstances, health issues and disabilities which could affect the claimant's ability to access and use Universal Credit services.

■ Universal Credit: Huddersfield**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[95000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children have received the £20 per week uplift in universal credit standard allowance payments in Huddersfield in each month since that uplift was introduced.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[95171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children have received the £20 per week uplift in universal credit standard allowance payments in Bath in each month since that uplift was introduced.

Liz Twist: [\[95186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children have received the £20 per week uplift in universal credit standard allowance payments in Blaydon in each month since that uplift was introduced.

Ruth Jones: [\[95220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children received the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit standard allowance payments, announced on 20 March 2020, in Newport West in each month since it was introduced.

Will Quince:

The available information on the number of households with children with Universal Credit in payment, by parliamentary constituency, is published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Universal Credit: Stockton North**Alex Cunningham:** [\[94415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children have received the £20 per week uplift in universal credit standard allowance payments in Stockton North in each month since that uplift was introduced.

Will Quince:

The available information on the number of households with children on Universal Credit, by parliamentary constituency, is published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Government response to Electoral Commission and Association of Electoral Administrators reports**

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

[\[HCWS472\]](#)

The Government has published its responses to the Electoral Commission's reports on the administration of the December 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election and May 2019 European Parliamentary (and Local) Elections.

We have combined our response to the report on the General Election and European Parliamentary (and Local) Elections with the recommendations made in the positions statements of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) where they are relevant to those polls.

We are grateful for the recommendations produced by all these organisations and thank them for their work. These reports aid the Government in monitoring the effectiveness of electoral legislation; help us to make improvements and to identify future policy challenges and possible resolutions.

The Government will continue to work with these organisations, as well as electoral administrators and other partners, to improve our electoral system and ensure the effective running of elections. The Electoral Commission research found that people were very satisfied with the process of registering to vote and voting at the 2019 UK General Election. These were similar to positive levels of satisfaction that were found at other recent UK-wide elections or referendums.

The Government is committed to ensuring a flourishing and secure democracy and through these measures it is acting to promote the integrity of our electoral system. The Government takes the integrity and security of our democratic processes very seriously. We will continue to safeguard against future risks, strengthen our resilience and ensure that the regulatory framework is as effective as possible.

Copies of these Government responses will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Attachments:

1. Government response to EC and AEA reports [20200805 Gov response to EC & AEA Reports FINAL.pdf]

TREASURY**■ Contingencies Fund Advance**

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[\[HCWS471\]](#)

HM Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £100,000,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for HM Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £100,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

In line with the OBR forecasts, further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.