

## Daily Report

**Tuesday, 29 September 2020**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 29 September 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:28 P.M., 29 September 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

## ■ Climate Change

**Christian Wakeford:**[\[906791\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to tackle climate change.

**Amanda Solloway:**

We are taking action now to meet our net zero target by delivering world-leading clean growth. This year, the government has set out over £5 billion for our low-carbon economy. We will be bringing forward sectoral decarbonisation plans, including an Energy White Paper, to stay on track as we lead global climate action through our COP26 and G7 Presidencies.

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

**Matt Western:**[\[95179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the the average cost per kWh of energy used by his Department generated from (a) natural gas, (b) oil, (c) LPG, (d) electric direct heat and (e) air source heat pump.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The average costs per kWh for the Department have been taken from 2019/20 invoices for our headquarters building at 1 Victoria Street, London and are shown in the table below.

The Department does not use LPG and does not currently have an air source heat pump at 1 Victoria Street.

	NATURAL GAS	OIL	ELECTRIC DIRECT HEAT
£/kWh fuel	£0.04/kWh	£0.06/kWh	£0.13/kWh

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

**Neil O'Brien:**[\[92885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many members of staff his Department employs.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Data regarding the number of staff employed by each Government Department is published monthly as part of routine Government transparency. The most recent report was published in August, covering the Department's headcount and payroll data for July 2020, and can be found on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beis-workforce-management-information-july-2020>.

## ■ Energy: Buildings and Housing

**Dan Carden:**

**[92877]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress is being made on the retrofitting of homes and buildings to become more energy efficient.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

In the Clean Growth Strategy (2017), the Government set out its ambitions that all properties should be EPC Band C by 2035, where cost-effective, affordable, and practical. We have demonstrated our ambition as properties at EPC Band C has increased from 9% in 2008 to 34% in 2018. In addition, from 1990 to 2019 emissions from homes has reduced by 17%.

The Green Homes Grant will give homeowners and landlords an opportunity to upgrade the energy performance of their homes. We also plan on introducing the Future Homes Standard by 2025, which will help ensure that the homes in the UK will be fit for the future. Homes across the UK will be future proofed with leading energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures. The £50m Social Housing Decarbonisation Demonstrator will make progress toward increasing the energy efficiency of social housing. The £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will offer grants to public sector buildings, including schools and hospitals, to fund both energy efficiency and low carbon heat upgrades.

The Government is also planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from all homes and buildings and set buildings on track for net zero.

## ■ Energy: Foreign Investment in UK

**Paula Barker:**

**[92931]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government is taking steps to (a) help ensure energy independence and (b) limit the role of overseas state actors in the supply of (i) nuclear and (ii) other forms of energy.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

UK energy supplies are currently derived from a wide range of sources; progress towards the UK's target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050 will further diversify our energy system.

The Department has supported measures and programmes to support the production and use of renewable energy infrastructure. For example, the Offshore Wind Sector Deal will support the delivery of up to 30GW of offshore wind by 2030 in Great Britain; the Government has made a £3 billion investment to support low-carbon innovation in the UK up to 2021; and there is an ongoing commitment to developing the UK's domestic hydrogen sector.

Whilst inward investment into the UK energy sector is welcomed, all foreign involvement in critical national infrastructure undergoes the highest level of scrutiny. The UK civil nuclear sector has a strong regulatory system and companies involved in the industry are required to meet robust standards overseen by independent regulators.

## ■ Energy: Housing

**Matt Western:**

[\[95177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the average cost for homes off the gas grid to move from EPC band (a) E, (b) F and (c) G to band C; and if he will make a statement.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The most complete modelling of these costs we have is for households who were on low-incomes in 2018. This is based on the English Housing Survey. Due to small samples, the estimate for band F and G have been combined.

The modelled costs of improving the average home which is off the gas grid to band C are:

FROM BAND E	£12,300
From band F & G	£18,900

## ■ Fuel Poverty

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[95104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of fuel poverty in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Energy efficiency is the most sustainable way to reduce fuel bills and tackle fuel poverty. Half of the England-wide £2 billion Green Homes Grant has been earmarked to provide low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households with energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures. Low income households can receive a voucher of up to £10,000 towards eligible measures. We are working with local authorities and local energy hubs to tackle fuel poverty across England through the £500 million Local Authority Delivery portion of the Green Homes Grant.

In addition, the Energy Company Obligation drives £640 million of investment in energy efficiency measures for low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households each year. Up to 25% of this funding is delivered through the Local Authority Flexible Eligibility portion of the scheme each year. More than 15,000 households in Coventry and nearly 150,000 households in the West Midlands have received energy efficiency measures through the Energy Company Obligation since 2013.



## ■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Pensioners

**Alberto Costa:**

[\[92801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that pensioners are able to access the Green Homes Grant Scheme.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

People in receipt of certain benefits, including Pension Guarantee Credit, will also qualify for the low-incomes scheme and be eligible for a more generous voucher of up to 100% of eligible costs up to a maximum of £10,000 rather than two thirds up to a maximum of £5,000.

## ■ Heating: Business Premises

**Matt Western:**

[\[95176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of UK non-domestic properties that use (a) oil and (b) LPG for their space heating and hot water requirements.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Department estimates that approximately 5%, by floor area, of the 1.8m non-domestic properties in England and Wales use oil or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) for space heating and hot water (4% oil, 1% LPG). This is based on the Business Energy Efficiency Survey (published 2016) which covers England and Wales. We do not have sufficient data to make this assessment for non-domestic properties in Scotland and Northern Ireland where heat policy is mostly devolved. The Department is continuing to build its evidence base for non-domestic buildings.

## ■ Heating: Housing

**Matt Western:**

[\[95175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of UK households that use (a) oil and (b) LPG for their heating and hot water requirements.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

There are 1.9m households in the UK using oil and LPG as their main heating fuel and hot water requirements. We estimate that 1.7m use Oil and 220k use LPG.

## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Matt Western:**

[\[95178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the potential per property cost for installation of (a) loft insulation, (b) cavity wall insulation, (c) solid wall insulation and (d) double glazing for non-insulated properties.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

An assessment of typical costs for these measures in different property architypes can be found in our 2017 publication, '*Domestic cost assumptions – what does it cost to retrofit homes?*':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-cost-assumptions-what-does-it-cost-to-retrofit-homes>.

**■ Hydrogen: Renewable Energy****Alexander Stafford:****[92948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of investing funds from the public purse in electrolyser deployment.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government is committed to developing hydrogen as a strategic decarbonised energy carrier.

We are investing in hydrogen innovation across the value chain. This includes the £33 million Low Carbon Hydrogen Supply competition aimed to accelerate the development of low carbon bulk hydrogen supply solutions and the Storage at Scale Competition, which looked for innovative, replicable large scale energy storage solutions that could provide a market competitive alternative to conventional commercial large-scale energy storage technologies. These included projects supporting electrolysis.

We are considering revenue support delivered by business models to support the deployment of, and investment in, low carbon hydrogen production and developing a £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund, announced in August 2019 to stimulate capital investment. Again, electrolysis is included in the scope of this work.

The Government intends to publish a hydrogen strategy early in 2021, which will include discussion around the costs associated with expansion of the UK hydrogen economy, including scale up of production, and how these might be met .

**■ Marriage: Coronavirus****Sajid Javid:****[92752]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of the wedding industry sector on responding to the challenge of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy publishes details of ministers' meetings with external organisations on a quarterly basis, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

Data for April-June will be published in due course.

## ■ Mining: Carbon Emissions

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[92949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure UK mining industries undertake low carbon extraction techniques.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[92951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how he plans to support businesses that are using low environmental impact mining techniques.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

There are a number of R&D programmes that currently support innovative projects aimed at reducing the environmental impact of industrial processes, such as the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund: Transforming Foundation Industries, and the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, both of which are currently open for applications.

Mineral planning authorities are responsible for controlling the use of land for mining activities through the policies and proposals in their local plans and through the granting of planning permission. In granting planning permission mineral planning authorities should ensure that operations do not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural and historic environment or human health. Other regulators (such as the Environment Agency) are responsible the control of processes or emissions (where these are subject to separate pollution control regimes).

## ■ Mining: Radioactive Waste

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[92950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of whether the Radioactive Waste Management Strategy has ensured that radioactive by-products from the extractive industry are always processed in a safe manner.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Waste from the extractive industry is covered by the 2009 Radioactive Discharges Strategy (2009 Discharges Strategy) and the 2014 *Strategy for the management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) waste in the UK*. These strategies aim to limit the exposure of the public and the environment to radiation and require the safe processing of waste as part of those intended outcomes.

In England, the safe management of radioactive wastes is regulated by the Environment Agency in accordance with The Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016.

A 2018 review of the 2009 Discharges Strategy found that the UK was making good progress towards the Strategy's intended outcomes and was contributing to the dose reduction aims of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic. Overall progress on the Strategy's implementation is monitored

through close liaison with our partners in the Devolved Administrations and UK environmental regulators.

■ **Natural Gas: Fees and Charges**

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[906795\]](#)

What discussions he has had with Ofgem on the introduction of a short-haul tariff scheme for gas transportation.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

We recognise this is an important issue. I am in regular dialogue with Ofgem and understand they are examining five industry proposals on the short-haul tariff, with varying impacts on different consumers groups.

■ **Nuclear Power**

**Paula Barker:**

[\[92932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to expand the nuclear energy sector.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The construction of Hinkley Point C in Somerset is well underway, employing thousands of workers and having already invested almost £1.7 billion in the regional economy.

In September 2020, the UK nuclear industry issued an update on progress towards the commitments and targets contained within the £200 million plus Nuclear Sector Deal. the industry also issued a report which set out how to cut the cost of new nuclear plants.

Building on the advanced nuclear spending commitments of the Nuclear Sector Deal, we have developed a package of funding now worth approximately £100 million, designed to turbocharge the UK's advanced nuclear industry. This includes the initial £36 million received last year by the UK Small Modular Reactor consortium, led by Rolls-Royce, to further develop their design, as well as this year's investment of £40 million in projects focused on developing advanced modular reactors and upskilling our world-class regulators.

■ **Post Offices: Subsidies**

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[906804\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the post office network of the end of the post office subsidy in 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

Future funding is obviously a matter for the ongoing Spending Review processes, but I can assure the hon Member that the Government remains committed to the long-term sustainability of the Post Office network, which has achieved so much during the Covid-19 crisis.

## ■ Small Businesses: Billing

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[906792\]](#)

What steps he is taking to help reduce the number of late payments to small businesses.

**Paul Scully:**

I wrote in May to the FTSE 100 Group and accountancy firms, highlighting the importance of paying promptly.

We are engaging with Prompt Payment Code signatories on reforming the Code and will consult on strengthening the Small Business Commissioner's powers.

## ■ Tidal Power

**Paula Barker:**

[\[92933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of tidal energy projects in Britain's estuaries.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

We have recently launched a Call for Evidence on supporting marine projects, including tidal stream and tidal range, to gather evidence on the scope for innovative marine energy technologies across Great Britain.

## ■ United Kingdom Internal Market Bill

**John Nicolson:**

[\[906811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Scottish Government on the economic effect on businesses of the UK Internal Market Bill.

**Paul Scully:**

Ministers have clearly set out the benefits to all UK businesses of ensuring goods and services can flow freely across the UK: this is in Scotland's interests given it exports more to the rest of the UK than the EU.

## ■ Urenco: Security

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[93534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether investigations into security breaches of URENCO employees are required to involve notification of Ultra-Centrifuge Nederland NV and Uranit GmbH.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

URENCO operations in the UK are regulated by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), with clear criteria for the reporting of security breaches. Security breaches are reported to the ONR and to the UK, Dutch, and German members of the Security Work Group. The Security Working Group is made up of regulators from the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and the US, as well as representatives from the

Enrichment Technology Company and URENCO. Severe breaches may also be reported to the board of URENCO, on which Directors appointed by Ultra-Centrifuge Nederland NV and Uranit GmbH sit.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Civil Service: Sustainable Development

**Paula Barker:**

[\[95244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how frequently Sustainability Forum meetings between civil service unions and the civil service take place.

**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.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Aircraft Carriers

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[93535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 84645, whether there is a difference between the (a) assets and (b) capabilities of the (i) Carrier Strike Group and (ii) Carrier Enabled Power Projection.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Yes, there is a significant difference between the terms described.

Carrier Enabled Power Projection (CEPP) consists of three core programme elements; Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, Lightning II aircraft and the CROWSNEST radar system. These combine to exploit the key attributes of maritime manoeuvre and air power to deliver action in all environments. The capability that CEPP provides is primarily Carrier Strike but is also able to support littoral and discrete operations, provide humanitarian assistance and conduct defence diplomacy. The Carrier Strike Group consists of the three core CEPP programmes combined (as appropriate according to tasking) with destroyers, frigates, submarines, additional rotary wing aviation and support vessels.

### ■ Armed Forces: Civil Proceedings

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[93536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many claims have been made against UK (a) servicemen and (b) servicewomen in the past twenty-five years.

**Johnny Mercer:**

It is not possible to answer the right hon. Member's question put which asks how many claims, which for the purposes of this response are deemed to be common law claims for damages, have been made against UK servicemen and servicewomen in the last 25 years without exceeding the disproportionate cost limit. It is usual practice for claimants, or solicitors acting on their behalf, in pursuance of common law claims for damages that allege negligence on the part of UK service personnel to bring the claim against the Ministry of Defence or the Secretary of State for Defence rather than an individual UK serviceman or service woman. The Ministry of Defence would not necessarily be made aware of any common law claim for damages brought against an individual UK serviceman or UK servicewoman. Whilst some information is held relating to the question posed, that information is not sufficient to enable the provision of a response to this question. The Department does not record separately information that would serve to confirm the causative nature of the incident that gives rise to individual claims or gender specific information that would enable a determination as to whether it was the alleged negligent action of a UK serviceman or UK servicewoman that caused the incident and therefore it is not possible to determine which of those claims received during the past 25 years arose out of the alleged negligent actions of a UK serviceman or UK servicewoman without reviewing all of the common law claims for damages received in that period.

**■ Armed Forces: Discharges****Derek Twigg:**[\[95005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he will take to ensure service leavers who have had their resettlement workshops and courses cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak are able to receive their full resettlement support before leaving service.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The resettlement services provided by the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Career Transition Partnership's (CTP) ten Resettlement Centres and Resettlement Training Centre have all now reopened and training is taking place using a 'blended' approach that uses both virtual and face to face learning, albeit social distancing requirements have significantly reduced training capacity.

In recognition of this, CTP and MOD have taken a number of actions to ensure Service leavers and veterans are not disadvantaged; Service leavers who are in their final six months of Service, or who are being medically discharged, are being prioritised and access to CTP services has been extended by three months (in addition to the existing 24 months) to 27 months post-discharge to reflect the current disruption. In addition, all three single Services have introduced measures which allow personnel currently serving to request an extension of Service of between six and twelve months or to rescind a previous request to voluntarily leave the Armed Forces during the COVID-19 outbreak.



**Derek Twigg:**

[\[95006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will delay the discharge of service leavers who are being discharged on medical grounds, after suffering injuries sustained whilst on operations, until they have received their full entitlement to resettlement support.

**Johnny Mercer:**

A bespoke service is provided for the most vulnerable leavers through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) resettlement pathway. This function is called CTP Assist and delivers an individualised, needs-based service to those Service personnel who face the greatest barriers to employment as a consequence of their medical conditions. This comprehensive employment support is made available to all Service personnel subject to medical discharge in order to maximise their successful transition to civilian life. The single Services take account of individual requirements and revise individual plans as appropriate, ensuring the serviceperson can utilise all their entitlements prior to their exit date. Requests to extend exit dates are considered on a case-by-case basis, to ensure individuals can complete recovery and resettlement activities.

■ **Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[92729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 and related questions, how many allegations were newly entered into his Department's tracker between 1 May and 18 September 2020 in addition to the 528 entered as of 30 April 2020; and how many of those incidents have subsequently been categorised as duplicates or not credible.

**James Heappey:**

Twelve. These allegations are still being assessed.

■ **Belarus: Military Aid**

**Neale Hanvey:**

[\[92904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what training was provided by the UK to the Belarusian armed forces between 2018 and 2020.

**James Heappey:**

The UK's engagement with the Belarusian Armed Forces has been modest and driven by a need to build mutual understanding and trust on NATO's longest border with the CSTO. It includes Winter Survival Training, International Arms Control skills, Language Tuition and Peacekeeping.

Between 2018 and 2020, English language training has been provided (in support of Belarusian Personnel destined for UN Peacekeeping Operations) and one Belarusian Officer has completed the Advanced Command and Staff Course at the Defence Academy. Other training has focussed on Arms Verification techniques plus improving Governance in Defence as well as Command and Staff structures. Junior Leadership development alongside peers from other Former Soviet States has been



delivered by UK personnel in the Czech Republic and Belarus. In 2018-19 the UK provided preparatory training for Belarusian Teams to participate in CAMBRIAN PATROL, an international military skills competition. Since 2018, the UK has trained around 60 Belarusians.

## ■ **Cyprus: Territorial Waters**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[92719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of reported Turkish naval activity in proximity to the territorial waters of Cyprus on the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean; and if he will make a statement.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[92720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether British armed forces based at the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia monitored the recent Turkish naval exercise near Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

The Government is aware of the naval activities of all NATO allies in the region. Turkey is an important NATO ally and Cyprus is a key regional partner. The UK maintains strong and positive relations with them both and has encouraged both countries to work together with our partners in the Eastern Mediterranean to achieve stability and mutual prosperity.

## ■ **Military Aid**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[92728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2020 to Question 69743 on Military Aid, for which countries the armed forces provided training in (a) 2015-16, (b) 2016-17, and (c) 2017-2018; and which armed service provided the training for each of those training programmes.

**James Heappey:**

The information requested will take time to collate and I will write to the right hon. Member when it is available.

**Neale Hanvey:**

[\[92905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what specific police and military training is being provided by the UK to (a) Turkey, (b) Bahrain and (c) the Philippines.

**James Heappey:**

We currently provide limited military training with Bahrain and the Philippines. As a NATO ally, our defence relationship with Turkey is one based on collaboration and partnering rather than direct training of their forces. All three countries routinely send officer cadets to UK military academies such as the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Royal Britannia Naval College in Dartmouth and the Royal Air Force

College in Cranwell. We have also been training Bahrain's security forces for a number of years to better counter the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices.

The Defence Education & Training we provide to foreign nations, stresses the need to respect International Law and the importance of adhering to international standards, for example with regard to human rights, human security, transparency & corruption, and civilian oversight and control of the Armed Forces.

In line with the policy of successive governments, we do not comment on operational policing matters.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[93538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 84971 on Military Aid, how many flights did that training mission consist of.

**James Heappey:**

The P-8A has conducted two training mission flights, on 12 and 14 August, in support of Border Force operations in the English Channel.

#### ■ Reserve Forces: Coronavirus

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[93539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many reservists have been mobilised as part of Operation Rescript.

**James Heappey:**

Approximately 2,300 reservists were brought into permanent service as part of Operation RESCRIPT.

Reservists from all Services have been employed in numerous tasks throughout the UK, from working as planners and liaison officers, to delivering PPE and ventilators.

Reservists have played a key role during the COVID-19 response and have been part of the force at every level.

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Arts: Coronavirus

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[93506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on (a) allocating capital grants to assist with the cost of (i) commercial rent, (ii) lease payments, (iii) insurance costs, (iv) business rates and (v) tax breaks, (b) longer mortgage holidays, (c) extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (d) extending the Self-employed Income Support Scheme for the creative industries supply chain; and if he will make a statement.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

Ministers meet regularly with their Ministerial colleagues to discuss a variety of issues.

On 5 July, the government announced a major £1.57 billion support package for cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. Alongside recovery grants, and a repayable finance option for the largest organisations, the package includes £120m of capital investment to restart construction on cultural infrastructure and for heritage construction projects in England which was paused due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), business rates relief, a reduction in VAT to 5% for tourism and hospitality firms for six months, and the Bounce Back Loan schemes in particular are providing support to organisations across the arts and creative industries sector.

Our world-beating creative industries are nothing without the people who work in them, and we are working hard to help provide financial support to freelancers in those sectors.

Arts Council England has made £95m available for individuals - which includes £75m in project grants to maximise employment opportunities, £18m in "Developing your Creative Practice" program, for individuals looking to develop new creative skills and £2m in benevolent funds to support the likes of stage managers and technicians.

#### ■ **Broadband: South Yorkshire**

**Stephanie Peacock:**

**[92857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the roll-out of superfast broadband to communities in (a) South Yorkshire and (b) Barnsley.

**Matt Warman:**

The department invested over £10 million in broadband rollout across South Yorkshire. As a result of this, as well as commercial investment, 98% of premises in South Yorkshire now have access to superfast broadband. Nearly 14% of premises can also access gigabit-capable connectivity - up from 0% in February 2016. A further £780,000 has been made available to bring more South Yorkshire premises in scope for a broadband upgrade.

In Barnsley, 98% of premises in Barnsley have access to superfast broadband which is up from 44% in November 2011. Nearly 20% of premises have access to gigabit-capable connectivity, up from 0.4% in August 2018.

For those premises that are still struggling with slow speeds, there are a number of options available to them. DCMS runs a voucher scheme that can be used by rural communities across the UK to reduce the cost of installing gigabit-capable connectivity. This provides a voucher worth up to £3,500 for eligible small businesses and vouchers worth up to £1,500 for residents. 'Top-up' schemes run by Local Authorities, who provide their own funding on top of DCMS's, are also operating across the UK.

The government also introduced the broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) on 20 March 2020. The USO gives eligible premises in the UK the right to request a decent and affordable connection. The government has defined decent broadband as a service that can provide a download speed of 10Mbps and an upload speed of 1Mbps.

## ■ Darts: Coronavirus

**Robert Halfon:**

[95064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to issue guidance on the conduct of (a) professional and (b) recreational darts during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Sports and physical activity facilities play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active. The Government has made it clear that it will adopt a phased approach based on scientific and medical advice, and that the primary goal is to protect public health.

The Government has published guidance on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) allowing the phased return of sport and recreation activities in line with the latest medical guidance. The Government does not plan to publish sport-specific guidance. It is for the national governing bodies of sports to publish relevant guidance in accordance with the latest government guidance.

## ■ Data Transmission

**Sarah Olney:**

[95167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK-EU data transfer can be undertaken legally from 1 January 2021.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The free flow of personal data between the EU and the UK is important to the UK economy and underpins our future trade and security cooperation.

To continue the free flow of data from the EU to the UK, we are seeking adequacy decisions from the EU under both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Law Enforcement Directive (LED), before the end of the transition period. This process is moving forward and talks between the UK and EU have been underway since 11 March. The EU's adequacy assessment is separate from other UK-EU negotiations.

To continue the free flow of data from the UK to the EU, we have legislated so that personal data for general processing can continue to flow freely, on a transitional basis, from the UK to the 30 EEA States and the EU Institutions after the end of the transition period. We have also ensured that personal data for law enforcement purposes can flow freely, on a transitional basis, to the 27 EU Member States to support cross-border cooperation in preventing crime.

We will keep these arrangements under review and will, in any event, conduct adequacy reviews within four years of them coming into effect (i.e. by 1 January 2025), as required by our law.

## ■ Events Industry

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

[\[93531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional (a) business and (b) financial support for the (i) exhibition and (ii) events industry he has discussed with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We are in regular contact with Treasury colleagues regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the business events industry.

Events businesses can continue to make use of the broader support package available to them. This includes the Bounce Back Loans scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We recognise that the events industry and its supply chain has been severely impacted by Covid-19. We continue to meet with the stakeholders, including through the Visitor Economy Working Group and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel, to discuss the specific issues facing the industry.

## ■ Events Industry and Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[95145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 2 September 2020, Official Report, column 160, what steps events and hospitality companies that cater for large events can take to get back to work while continuing to follow Government guidance.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Due to the sharp upward trajectory of Covid-19 cases, we took the decision to pause the planned 1st October reopening of business events in England. We recognise that this means that many companies who cater for affected large events cannot fully return to their roles.

We are aware that the events industry and its supply chain has been severely impacted by Covid-19. We continue to engage with the stakeholders, including through the Visitor Economy Working Group and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel, to monitor the situation.

As with all aspects of the Government's response to Covid-19, our decisions have been and will continue to be based on scientific evidence and public health assessments.

Events businesses can continue to make use of the broader support package available to them. This includes the Bounce Back Loans scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Meetings of up to 30 can still take place in permitted venues, as per the Covid-19 Secure guidance for the visitor economy. Since 11 July, a range of outdoor events have been able to take place.

■ **Events Industry: Coronavirus**

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[906777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on support for the exhibitions sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We are in regular contact with colleagues across Government regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the business events industry.

Events businesses can continue to make use of the broader support package available to them. This includes the Bounce Back Loans scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We recognise that the events industry and its supply chain has been severely impacted by Covid-19. We continue to meet with the stakeholders, including through the Visitor Economy Working Group and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel, to discuss the specific issues facing the industry.

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[91789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to enable the return of in-person events without social distancing.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

We want to see live venues open their doors to full audiences as soon as it is safe to do so, and we are working extensively with these sectors on how to achieve this.

Indoor performances to socially distanced audiences have been permitted since 15 August, and I am happy to see a number of organisations have opened successfully in this way. Any further steps to continue to open up the sector will understandably be dependent on the pandemic and the number of cases at that time.

■ **Football: Gambling**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[92690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of gambling advertising in football on the wellbeing of young people.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[92693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the accessibility of gambling to people who are under the legal age for that activity.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

As set out in answer to questions 73904 and 73907, gambling advertising and sponsorship, including around football, must be socially responsible and must not be targeted at children. The Government assessed the evidence on advertising in its Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures, the full response to which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures>.

Since then, in March this year, the charity GambleAware has published the final report of a major piece of research into the effect of gambling marketing and advertising on children, young people and vulnerable people. That study found that exposure to advertising was associated with an openness to gamble in the future amongst children and young people aged 11-24 who did not currently gamble. It also found that there were other factors that correlated more closely with current gambling behaviour amongst those groups, including peer and parental gambling. It did not suggest a causal link between exposure to gambling advertising and problem gambling in later life.

Operators are required both by law and by the conditions of their licence from the Gambling Commission to prevent underage gambling. In May 2019 the Gambling Commission introduced new rules that require online gambling businesses to verify the age of customers before they can deposit money, gamble, or access play-for-free versions of gambling games. The Gambling Commission provides support to licensing authorities, local police and trading standards who undertake test purchasing to monitor compliance with minimum age rules in the land based sector, and is working with local authorities and the hospitality sector to improve the enforcement of legal age requirements on the use of gaming machines in pubs.

**■ Gambling****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[92694]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of gambling services on the high street in the last 10 years.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[92695]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to reduce the prevalence rate for problem gambling on online slots, casino and bingo games.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Between 2011, the earliest year for which we have complete figures, and September 2019, there was a 21% decrease in the number of bingo, arcade, casino and betting shop premises. A year-by-year breakdown is provided in the accompanying table.

According to data from the 2016 combined Health Surveys, 3% of adults in Great Britain played online slots, casino and bingo games, and 9.2% of those were considered problem gamblers. In the Health Survey for England 2018, 4% played



those products, with a problem gambling rate of 8.5%. The Gambling Commission recently completed a consultation on new measures to make online slots safer. Those proposals included a minimum spin speed to reduce the maximum speed of play and banning split screen play which allowed multiple games to be played simultaneously. The Commission will publish its response to the consultation in the coming months.

The government has committed to review the Gambling Act 2005 to make sure it is fit for the digital age and further details will be announced in due course.

Table: Land-based gambling premises numbers

YEAR TO	TOTAL	ARCADES	BETTING	BINGO	CASINO
31/03/2011	12,307	2,396	9,067	695	149
31/03/2012	12,462	2,542	9,128	646	146
31/03/2013	11,957	2,033	9,100	680	144
31/03/2014	11,999	2,031	9,111	710	147
31/03/2015	11,758	1,941	8,995	674	148
31/03/2016	11,615	1,894	8,915	654	152
31/03/2017	11,404	1,819	8,800	635	150
31/03/2018	11,069	1,701	8,559	657	152
31/03/2019	10,781	1,656	8,320	651	154
30/09/2019	9,745	1,633	7,315	642	155

## ■ Gambling: Coronavirus

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[92691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce gambling-related harm during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[92692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the number of people revoking their self-exclusions to gambling during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Gambling operators providing facilities to customers in Great Britain must be licensed by the Gambling Commission and must abide by strict player protection requirements. In response to the Covid outbreak, the Commission strengthened its guidance for online operators to include increased customer interactions, a ban on



direct marketing of bonus offers or promotions to customers showing vulnerabilities, and a ban on operators allowing customers to reverse decisions to withdraw winnings. Data published by the Gambling Commission indicates that the majority of people spent the same amount or less on gambling during lockdown (83%) or since (90%) than they had before the Covid-19 period, but we continue to monitor the evidence in this area.

People who self-exclude through either individual or multi-operator self-exclusion schemes should not be able to end their exclusion before the minimum period they requested when they signed up has elapsed. Operators who knowingly allow customers who have self-excluded to gamble are in breach of their licence conditions and risk sanction by the Gambling Commission. GAMSTOP, the national online self exclusion scheme, gathers data on the number of requests it receives from people who want to cancel their self-exclusion early, even though these requests are not granted. Prior to lockdown on 23rd March 2020, an average of 1,000 requests to cancel registrations early per month were received by GAMSTOP, although these may not all have been from unique individuals. During the first two weeks of lockdown, 400 requests per week were received. This number stabilised thereafter, and for the months of May and June 2020 the average number of requests returned to approximately 1,000 per month. More than 160,000 people have now registered with GAMSTOP.

From 23rd March all land-based gambling facilities were closed, with betting shops reopening from 15th June, arcades and bingo remaining closed until 4th July and casinos remaining closed until 15th August.

## ■ Internet: Safety

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[95214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the timescale is for bringing forward an online harms Bill.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

The government is firmly committed to making the UK the safest place to be online, and we are working at pace on our proposals. We will publish a full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation later this year. This will be followed by legislation, which will be ready early next year.

## ■ Performing Arts: Coronavirus

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[94594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the latest covid-19 guidance, published on 22 September 2020 affects the ability for indoor grassroots performing arts organisations to rehearse and perform in groups of six.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

It is against the law to gather in groups of more than six, where people are from different households or support bubbles. Some activities - such as those organised

for under-18s - are exempt. In a COVID-19 Secure venue or public outdoor place, 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.

### ■ **Performing Arts: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

**Alex Sobel:**

**[90230]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to protect the performing arts sector to ensure that people working in the industry have (a) financial and (b) job security once the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ends.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

In March, the Government implemented an unprecedented package to support businesses, charitable organisations, workers and the self-employed through the Coronavirus crisis. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and business rates relief in particular are providing support to organisations across the arts sector. The Government has now announced additional government support to provide certainty to businesses and workers impacted by Covid 19 across the UK. Central to this plan are the new Job Support Scheme and the SEISS Grant Extension.

On 5 July, DCMS announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. As a result of these grants and loans, organisations will be more able to resume cultural activity, albeit in a socially distanced way. Each organisation that receives money will know what best they can do to support their workforce and keep job losses to a minimum. We recognise the crucial role that individuals play in making our arts and creative industries world-leading, and DCMS are doing everything we can to aid in the protection of jobs, especially as the sector begins to reopen.

### ■ **Performing Arts: Social Distancing**

**Daniel Zeichner:**

**[94453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to allow cultural organisations to continue producing approved socially-distanced music and theatre performances.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

Professional Activity in line with Stage 4 of the performing arts roadmap can continue as it has done previously.

Venues such as theatres, concert halls and other entertainment venues that are already able to host larger numbers, and are Covid secure in line with the relevant guidance, will continue to be able to do so - as long as groups of more than one household are limited to six.

Venues will need to ensure that groups are kept separate from one another to ensure they do not mix and do not exceed the new legal limits. They will also need to adhere to new legal requirements around track and trace.

## ■ **Pornography: Internet**

**Fiona Bruce:**

**[92753]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will ask the Information Commissioner's Office to investigate instances of pornographic websites using children's browsing history data to promote pornographic content to those users.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

Providers of online services which are likely to be accessed by children are required by UK data protection legislation to ensure that children's data is processed fairly, lawfully and transparently. They should not be sharing data with third parties unless there are compelling reasons to do so, taking account of the best interests of the child.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has issued a code of practice on Age Appropriate Design, which offers guidance for organisations on complying with the legislation, including the privacy standards that should be adopted where they are offering online services to children. The code can be viewed on the ICO's website at:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/key-data-protection-themes/age-appropriate-design-a-code-of-practice-for-online-services/>

Online services that do not comply with the legislation, should be reported to the ICO which may, in turn, consider enforcement action.

## ■ **Tourism: West Midlands**

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

**[93532]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support the tourism sector in the West Midlands.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Government has also implemented a series of Covid-19 related financial measures that will assist tourism businesses, including those in the West Midlands. This includes the significant cut to VAT and business rates relief for hospitality, retail and leisure businesses, both of which will last until the end of March.

Between April and July, VisitEngland's £1.3 million Destination Management Organisation Resilience Fund supported local tourism organisations in the West Midlands. The West Midlands Growth Company received £29,866 from the DMO Resilience Fund. Visit Shropshire received £25,066.

More broadly, the £45m Discover England Fund has supported the development of internationally marketed tourism products in the region, including the 'England's Waterways' project. We are also working with regional partners to maximise the tourism benefits of hosting the UK City of Culture in Coventry and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[92723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support travel management companies affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We recognise that these are extremely challenging conditions for businesses in the tourism sector, including travel management companies. We continue to closely monitor the situation.

Travel management companies have been able to access the Government's comprehensive economic support package, including the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme, VAT deferrals, as well as various generous loan schemes. We are continuing to engage across Government and with stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support the recovery of travel and tourism across the UK.

■ **Voluntary Work: Young People**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[92954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the funding allocated from the public purse to the National Citizens Service.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

Around 600,000 young people have taken part in the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme since its inception, with almost 100,000 young people taking part in 2019. Consecutive, independent evaluations have demonstrated the positive impacts that NCS delivers both to its participants and their communities. The most recent evaluation shows that for every £1 of taxpayer money spent on the 2018 summer programme, £3.49 is provided back to society in terms of the economic benefit.

## EDUCATION

■ **Assessments: Coronavirus**

**Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:** [\[95009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that an equitable system is in place for schools and students in the event that a predicted grade exam results system is introduced for exams in (a) October and November 2020 and (b) later in the 2020-21 academic year.

**Nick Gibb:**

There are no plans to introduce a predicted grade results system in England for exams in the 2020-21 academic year. Exams and assessments are the best and fairest way of judging students' performance, and we are clear in our intention that both the autumn and summer exam series should go ahead.

Most students taking exams in the autumn series received a centre assessment grade, based on an assessment of the likely grades that students would have obtained had exams gone ahead, or a calculated grade if that was higher. There is, therefore, no basis on which to award a different grade other than the student sitting the exam. Some students, for example some home-educated students, were not in a position to provide sufficient evidence for them to be able to receive a grade in the summer, and it remains the case that there would be insufficient evidence to award grades to those students unless they sit exams.

We continue to discuss arrangements for exams in summer 2021 with Ofqual, the exam boards, higher and further education representatives and other sector bodies to ensure that arrangements are fair and the 2021 cohort of students receive the qualifications they deserve.

The arrangements for awarding qualifications to students in Northern Ireland are a matter for the Northern Ireland government and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Regulation.

**■ Children and Young People: Social Services**

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[95157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to review the adequacy of the care system for children and young adults.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government announced that it would review the care system in its 2019 manifesto. The urgent local and national response to the COVID-19 outbreak has delayed launching the Care Review, but we are making preparations to launch as soon as possible and will set out further details at that point. This review will be broad and bold, taking a fundamental look across children's social care, with the aim of better supporting, protecting and improving the outcomes of vulnerable children and young people.

**■ Children: Computers**

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[95159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops his Department has provided to children since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[95160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many more laptops his Department plans to provide to children living in digital poverty.

**Nick Gibb:**

During the summer term, the Department delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers to local authorities and academy trusts. The number of devices delivered to each local authority and academy trust can be viewed here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/912888/Devices\\_and\\_4G\\_wireless\\_routers\\_progress\\_data\\_as\\_of\\_27\\_August\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Devices_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf).

The Department is now supplementing this support by making 150,000 additional devices available in the event 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 years 3 to 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.

**■ Children: Day Care****Tulip Siddiq:****[95158]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of (a) the covid-19 restrictions announced on 22 September 2020 and (b) further local lockdowns on demand for childcare places.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government understands the importance of childcare, which is why we are planning to spend over £3.6 billion on our free early education entitlements in 2020-21. We continue to work closely with both local authorities and the early years sector organisations to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the sector.

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

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

Additionally, nurseries, childminders and pre-schools can claim for various other forms of business support, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self Employment Income Support Scheme for the proportion of their staff costs that would not normally be covered by government funding.

To provide additional support to firms to keep employees as demand returns, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced the Job Retention Bonus, a one-off payment of £1,000 to employers for each employee who was ever furloughed,

has been continuously employed until 31 January 2021 and is still employed by the same employer as of 31 January 2021.

Additionally, on 24 September, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, outlined additional government support within the Winter Economy Plan, to provide certainty to businesses and workers impacted by COVID-19 across the UK.

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

## ■ Children: Quarantine

**Paula Barker:**

**[92934]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support children who are missing education as a result of having to self-isolate.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is committed to the continuation of high quality education for all pupils during this difficult time and expects all schools to have remote education contingency plans in place by the end of September. On 2 July, the Department published guidance that sets out what is expected from schools for their remote education provision. This guidance is available at:

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

The Department has already delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers to children who would not otherwise have online access, as part of over £100 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care. The Department is supplementing this support by making an initial 150,000 laptops and tablets available to support disadvantaged children through this scheme. Devices will be available to schools so they may support the most disadvantaged pupils in year 3 to year 11 who would not otherwise have access to a device, and whose education is disrupted.

Schools will also be able to support disadvantaged children across all year groups who might be shielding at home on official or medical advice due to them or a close family member of their household being clinically extremely vulnerable.

Where education is disrupted in hospital schools, they will be able to order devices for children in all year groups. Further education colleges registered to teach 14-16 year olds may also apply for devices for disadvantaged children in Key Stage 4. Schools and colleges will be able to lend and reallocate the devices between pupils as they see fit.



**■ Children: Social Services****Alex Cunningham:****[95070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many referrals there have been to children's social care in each month since March 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department has undertaken a new Vulnerable Children and Young People Survey which has collected data from local authorities in England since May 2020. It includes data on contact with children supported by children's social care, workforce, cost and system pressures. The report includes the number of referrals to children's social care and referral source. Findings from the survey are published monthly and are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-and-young-people-survey>.

The attached table shows the data we have collected from the survey on the number of referrals to children's social care services between May and August. The survey collects data fortnightly and asks for the number of referrals received over a one-week period, meaning there are gaps in the data. The total number of referrals to children's social care received over a full month is not held.

Figures on the number of referrals and referral source are also published annually in the characteristics of children in need statistical release. The latest published data relates to the period up to 31 March 2019. The statistics are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need>.

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

**Attachments:**

1. 95070\_table  
[95070\_table\_showing\_the\_number\_of\_referrals\_to\_children's\_social\_care.xls]

**■ Class Sizes: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:****[92817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to reduce the size of classes in (a) primary schools and (b) secondary schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

The guidance, which was developed working closely with Public Health England, sets out a range of protective measures which, when implemented in line with a revised



risk assessment, create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. Measures include minimising contacts between groups and maintaining distance where possible, encouraging regular handwashing, and enhanced cleaning.

The overarching principle schools will be applying is to reduce the number of contacts between children and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining the distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on children's ability to distance, the layout of the school, and the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate whilst offering a broad curriculum (especially at secondary). It is for schools to decide, but it is likely that for younger children the emphasis is on separating groups and for older children it is on distancing.

Class sizes can now return to normal and spaces used by more than one class or group can be cleaned between use. Schools can look to maximise the use of their site and any associated available space, such as rooms in an associated place of worship for schools with a religious character, if feasible.

There cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach where the system of controls describes every scenario. Head teachers are best placed to understand the needs of their schools and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced curriculum with the measures needed to manage risk.

## ■ Education: Coronavirus

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[92922]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional funds he is making available for (a) schools, (b) childcare facilities and (c) universities for deep cleaning after cases of covid-19.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is providing additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred between March and July due to the COVID-19 outbreak that cannot be met from their existing resources.

Schools have been eligible to claim for: increased premises related costs associated with keeping schools open over the Easter and summer half term holidays; support for free school meals for eligible children who are not in school, where schools are not using the national voucher scheme; and additional cleaning costs required due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements. We have published detailed guidance on the fund at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>.

As explained in the guidance, schools can claim for reimbursement of their costs, up to a maximum amount that will depend on their size, and will be no more than £75,000 per school. We expect the funding limits which have been set by the size of

the school are sufficient to cover additional costs in most cases. The Department understands that there may be exceptional circumstances which mean that costs are higher than this, so schools have been able to submit claims that are more than the funding limit.

The first claims window for the fund closed on 21 July. All claims for funding within the specified cost categories and maximum limit have already been paid. The Department is assessing all other claims, which will be paid later in the autumn if approved.

There will also be a further opportunity in autumn for schools to claim for exceptional costs they faced between March and July. This second claims window will be for available for schools who were unable to claim in the summer, and will be for the same eligible cost categories.

Nurseries and childminders cannot claim for specific costs incurred due to increased premises costs needed to keep schools open during school holidays, or over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements as a result of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases. The Department continues to look at the costs associated with COVID-19 and to secure the best and most appropriate support for nurseries and childminders.

The Department also expects universities and other higher education providers to prioritise the health and safety of their staff and students and put in place measures that apply to their individual circumstances. To help universities make informed decisions about their provision, we have updated our guidance on reopening university buildings and campuses to reflect the latest public health advice, including on face coverings, local lockdowns and test and trace. Everyone should be following basic guidance on COVID-19, including social distancing and maintaining good hand and respiratory hygiene.

## ■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[92944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support the return of domestic overnight educational residential trips for schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department continues to work with representatives of the tour industry, devolved administrations, trade unions and other government departments on the issue of educational trips.

The guidance for full school opening enables schools to resume educational day visits, but continues to advise against overnight educational residential visits. This advice will remain under review and will be updated in line with guidance from Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The guidance can be viewed at:

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

## ■ Health Education: Females

**Alex Norris:**

**[95203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on the teaching of menstrual wellbeing in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department wants to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe, and to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. That is why we have made Relationships Education compulsory for all primary school age pupils, Relationships and Sex Education compulsory for all secondary school age pupils, and Health Education compulsory for pupils in all state funded schools.

Schools are expected to start teaching the new subjects by at least the start of the summer term in 2021. Considering the circumstances faced by our schools, the Department is reassuring schools that they have flexibility over when they discharge their duty within the first year of compulsory teaching.

The statutory guidance sets out that as part of Health Education, primary and secondary school pupils should be taught about menstrual wellbeing, including key facts about the menstrual cycle. The statutory guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

Schools also have the flexibility to design the content of their curriculum in an age appropriate and developmentally sensitive way, to support their cohort of pupils. To help schools design their curriculum, the Department has signposted them to expert advice from Public Health England on reproductive health.

The Department's guidance for teaching about relationships, sex and health covers all of the teaching requirements in the statutory guidance and includes online modules on teaching about menstrual wellbeing. The Department's full guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[92796]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) guidance, (b) support and (c) resources his Department is providing to schools with students returning to school who have (i) tracheostomies and (ii) other aerosol-generating procedures.

**Vicky Ford:**

As I set out in my letter of 2 September to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, their families and carers and those who work to support them, we know that it is critical that all pupils and students can once again

benefit from a full-time on-site education 5 days a week. There are a small number of children with complex needs that require aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) to be undertaken where risks need to be carefully managed in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Schools, health, and local authority partners need to work together on how the current guidance applies in their setting and to the specific children they are working with to enable them to return to school safely. We have heard examples of good practice locally and are working with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England to establish whether any changes to the guidance or further information about practice principles are needed.

It is important that schools communicate clearly with parents on progress towards supporting children who need AGPs to return to school safely, and provide remote education and support if they are unable to do so.

As part of their risk assessment, schools will need to consider measures so that specialists, therapists, clinicians, and other support staff for their pupils can continue to provide support that is needed. Schools should refer to the guidance for special schools, specialist colleges, local authorities and any other settings in managing the needs of children and young people with complex needs, such as AGPs. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

The government's guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment, provides further support on preventing and controlling infection and contains a section on caring for children who need AGPs at Annex A. This guidance reflects advice from PHE and is updated as necessary to reflect current advice. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

## ■ Schools: Sanitary Protection

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[92744]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide an update on (a) the uptake of free period products in schools and (b) that uptake for each region of England; and if he will make a statement.

**Vicky Ford:**

On 20 January 2020, the department launched a new scheme which makes free period products available for state-funded primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England.

Our delivery partner, phs Group, reported that since the scheme launched, almost 40% of eligible organisations have placed orders for period products and we are

continuing to monitor the scheme closely. We have not released information on uptake at a regional level, but we continue to monitor this closely.

The scheme remained in operation during partial school and college closures, and these organisations are still able to order a range of period products and distribute them to learners.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[92797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of additional ring-fenced funding for children with SEND in the Comprehensive Spending Review to allow them to catch up on (a) learning, (b) therapy and (c) social care support lost as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department is currently working hard with HM Treasury as a part of the Spending Review to understand what resources the education and children's social care sectors in England need over the coming years. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will set out the department's settlement when the Spending Review concludes.

In advance of the Spending Review, we have introduced a COVID-19 catch-up premium worth £650 million to support mainstream and special schools to make up for lost teaching time. There is additional weighting for specialist settings, in recognition of the significantly higher per pupil costs they face. Headteachers will decide how this premium is spent, according to the needs of their pupils. Our expectation is that this funding will be spent on additional activities required to support children to catch up. We have also introduced a £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils. This will increase access to high-quality tuition for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, helping to accelerate their academic progress and tackling the attainment gap between them and their peers. This includes a £96 million tuition fund for students aged between 16 and 19 years.

## ■ Unemployment: Coronavirus

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[93592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is taking steps with the Department for Work and Pensions to (a) support and (b) retrain young people who have lost their jobs during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Department for Education (DfE) recognise the substantial risk that some young people who would usually enter the labour market this year will find themselves unemployed instead.

On 8 July, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a plan to support jobs. Measures announced as part of the plan are being delivered by both

the Department for Work and Pensions and DfE, who are working closely together to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

These measures form a plan to support jobs focusing on skills and young people. This includes a new £2 billion Kickstart Scheme to create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people aged 16 to 24 claiming Universal Credit. Funding available for 6 month job placements will cover 100% of the National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week.

£1.6 billion is also being invested to scale up employment support schemes and training. This includes nearly £900 million to double the number of work coaches to 27,000 and over £500 million in a package of support to ensure young people have the skills and training to go on to high quality, secure and fulfilling employment.

This support includes a new payment of £2,000 that employers are now able to claim for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for those 25 and over. Employers can start claiming for payments from 1 September. £111 million will also be provided to triple the scale of traineeships, with 3 times more funding available to providers in 2020/21 to support 30,000 new places. We have also introduced payments of £1,000 per trainee for employers who offer new or additional work placements for up to 10 trainees.

In addition, we are providing £101 million to give 18 and 19-year-old school and college leavers the opportunity to study high value level 2 and 3 courses when there are no employment opportunities available to them. We will also be making £32 million available over 2 years to help 269,000 more people receive advice from the National Careers Service and £17 million available to triple the number of sector based work academy programme placements in 2020/21. This is enough funding to support an extra 40,000 job seekers with additional training opportunities and the chance of a job.

Starting this Parliament, we are also providing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations), for the National Skills Fund to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future. The fund aims to boost productivity and ensure more people and places can share in the rewards that improved productivity can bring.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture

**Sajid Javid:**

**[92751]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers in (a) Worcestershire and (b) the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra is taking steps to support farmers throughout the UK, including Worcestershire, by introducing schemes using powers in the Agriculture Bill. This Bill will allow us to

introduce ambitious new schemes in England, based on the principle of "public money for public goods", so that we can reward farmers and land managers who protect our environment, improve animal welfare and produce high quality food in a more sustainable way.

The Bill helps farmers to stay competitive with measures to increase productivity and invest in new technology. We will also improve transparency in the supply chain to help food producers strengthen their position at the farm gate and seek a fairer return from the marketplace. The Bill also provides the legislative framework necessary to ensure a smooth transition to the new system. Farmers and land managers will be supported over a seven-year agricultural transition period, giving them time to plan and adapt to the new approach.

The Government appreciates that the food and farming sectors are currently facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and is grateful for the hard work farmers have done to maintain food supplies. In response to the pandemic, we introduced a range of measures to support the agriculture sector, including farmers and agricultural businesses in Worcestershire. These included: easements to competition law to help producers get food where it was needed; a dairy support scheme; support for various AHDB promotional campaigns and the opening of intervention and storage aid schemes for various products. Employees in the food sector were also designated as key workers and there has been a temporary relaxing of the normal rules on drivers' hours, enabling the sector to keep supply chains running, including deliveries from farm gate to processors. Farmers have also, where eligible, been able to apply for public support through the various Covid-19 related Government schemes including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, business rates relief, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme. On 24 September, the Government announced an extension to its access to finance schemes to 30 November 2020 for new applicants and introduced 'Pay as you Grow' options for Bounce Back Loan borrowers, who will be offered more time and greater flexibility for their repayments.

In June we announced a package of trade support for food and drink exporters. This joint Defra and Department for International Trade package of short-term practical measures will support businesses to get their products back in front of international buyers and grow their exports. More information can be found on the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/government/news/bounce-back-plan-for-agriculture-food-and-drink-industry-launched](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bounce-back-plan-for-agriculture-food-and-drink-industry-launched).

## ■ Agriculture: Finance

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[93704]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending support grants for the (a) dairy industry and (b) agricultural sector as the covid-19 outbreak continues.



**Victoria Prentis:**

To support dairy farmers who have been significantly impacted by covid-19, Defra ran a Dairy Response Fund which closed for applications on 11 September. This has provided financial support to those eligible dairy farmers who suffered a reduction in the average price paid for their milk of 25% or more in April 2020, compared with February 2020. More detail can be found at the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dairy-response-fund-2020>

The passing of the spring production peak, combined with measures taken by the government on competition easements and promotion campaigns, alongside the partial re-opening of hospitality has seen the dairy market recover and commodity prices have largely recovered to their pre-covid-19 levels.

We will continue to work very closely with all agricultural industry stakeholders and the Devolved Administrations to assess and monitor UK agricultural markets including price, supply, and trade information. This will enable us to identify, and respond as appropriate to the impacts of the covid-19 outbreak across all of our agricultural sectors.

**■ Beverage Containers: Recycling****Fleur Anderson:****[95237]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the impact assessment that will be published alongside the second consultation on a deposit return scheme will include an analysis of the potential for consumers to switch from aluminium cans in multi-packs to large plastic bottles in response to the cumulative effect of the fee.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 21 September 2020, PQ UIN 88938.

[ [questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-11/88938](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-11/88938) ]

**■ Coronavirus: Laboratories****John Spellar:****[94999]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what laboratory capacity his Department and its Agencies have provided to NHS Test and Trace.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra's agencies have significant laboratory capacity and expertise that have been repurposed and provided to NHS Test and Trace.

Defra's Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) temporarily supplied staff and equipment to the Lighthouse laboratories and has a contract with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to test up to 2000 samples per day. APHA also has a contractually based involvement in a research project called *Safe & Certain* (DHSC-funded project), coordinated by University of Southampton, which involves direct



testing on saliva samples. APHA participated in Phase 1 of the project (July/August 2020) and is now embarking on Phase 2 involving testing of up to 60,000 samples over the next month.

The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Science (Cefas) provided four key pieces of Polymerase Chain Reaction testing equipment to the UK's mass diagnostics facility in Northern Ireland, and personal protective equipment to NHS facilities in the Dorset region. Cefas has registered details of its remaining capacity through DHSC's online portal.

The Environment Agency has been working with core Defra and the Joint Biosecurity Centre to trial the use of waste water testing for Covid-19 RNA, to help identify increases in Covid-19 prevalence at population level and help target testing capacity.

Fera Science Ltd provided critical testing equipment to the Lighthouse laboratory in Glasgow.

## ■ Dairy Products

**Mr Richard Holden:**

**[93707]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to further support value add to food manufacturing for dairy products.

**Victoria Prentis:**

British dairy and other agricultural products are renowned around the world for their high standards of animal welfare, traceability and sustainability. Dairy is the UK's largest agricultural sector and, alongside our other agricultural sectors, the Government is determined to see the sector become more productive and competitive.

Through measures in our Agriculture Bill we will offer financial assistance to enable dairy and other farmers to invest in the equipment, technology, and infrastructure that they need to improve their productivity, provide more home-grown healthy high-quality produce, and manage the environment sustainably. Productivity improvements can help drive added value in the dairy supply chain.

We will also make use of the opportunities provided by our new independent trade policy to grow new and existing export markets around the world. The strong reputation of our products provides an excellent platform on which to further increase overseas demand and secure maximum value for British dairy products.

In June we announced a 'bounce back package' of trade support for food and drink exporters. This joint Defra and Department for International Trade package of short-term practical measures will support businesses to get their products back in front of international buyers and grow their exports. More information can be found on the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/government/news/bounce-back-plan-for-agriculture-food-and-drink-industry-launched](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bounce-back-plan-for-agriculture-food-and-drink-industry-launched).

**■ Fish: Labelling****Sir Greg Knight:****[95013]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to amend regulations to require labelling of food where salt has been added to fresh fish by either brining or any other deliberate salting process from 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Such labelling is already required under Annex VI (1) of the Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers.

The annex requires that in all cases where omission of such information could mislead the purchaser, the name of a food shall include, or be accompanied by, particulars as to the physical condition of the food or the specific treatment which it has undergone.

This requirement will continue to apply when the Transition Period ends, at which point the Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 will be retained in UK law.

**■ Floods: Worcestershire****Harriett Baldwin:****[94410]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what type of applications to the Farming Recovery Fund he has received from farmers whose crops were affected by flood damage in Worcestershire in 2019-20.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Farming Recovery Fund offers funding for the repair of infrastructure and land recovery, which may include crop damage, and agreements can include a range of recovery work. Sixty applications to the fund have been received from farmers in Worcestershire, of which twenty-six cited land recovery as the principle work area.

**■ Food: Labelling****Sarah Olney:****[95169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to issue guidance on food and drink labelling to businesses trading in (a) the EU and (b) Northern Ireland after the end of the transition period.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Ministers meet regularly with food manufacturers, and representatives of other parts of the supply chain, to discuss preparations for the end of the transition period including for food labelling.

The GOV.UK website provides guidance on these matters and is kept under review and updated as appropriate. EU food labelling requirements are a matter for the EU

and the EU has set out its position on how food and drink should be labelled where EU rules apply.

We will provide a period of adjustment for labelling changes required at the end of the transition period, wherever this is possible. During this period the changes that UK businesses need to make when selling between different markets will be minimised. We are working to determine the appropriate time industry needs to make changes and will provide guidance as soon as we can do so, to ensure that businesses have clarity and certainty.

## ■ Plastic Bags: Fees and Charges

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[92689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to (a) further incentivise and (b) ensure that large retailers distribute the Plastic Bag Levy to sustainable causes.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The charge on single-use carrier bags was introduced to decrease the number of bags in circulation and to encourage consumers to use more sustainable, reusable bags. The introduction has reduced the sale of single-use carrier bags in the main supermarkets by 95%. We have announced our plans to increase the minimum charge to 10p and to extend the charge to all retailers from April 2021.

The government expects retailers to donate the proceeds of the charge to good causes, but it is ultimately for them to choose what to do with the revenue raised. Since the charge was introduced, our data shows that almost £180 million has been donated to charities and other good causes from the proceeds from the charge.

Further details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carrier-bag-charge-summary-of-data-in-england>.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

## ■ China: Uighurs

**Alex Sobel:**

[90225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Chinese Government to end the use of re-education camps in Xinjiang in the context of protecting detainees from covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

We regularly raise our serious concerns about the extra-judicial detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang with the Chinese authorities, and have repeatedly called on China to urgently end the practice of extra-judicial detention.

Most recently, on 9 September during an adjournment debate in Parliament, I [Minister Adams] called on China to live up to its international human rights obligations and end the disproportionate and damaging policies in Xinjiang. On 28

July, the Foreign Secretary raised human rights violations in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi.

The risk of the spread of COVID-19 in places of detention is a matter of concern around the world. The UK will continue to work closely with China on the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[93566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to vulnerable Uyghur Muslim refugees from China in Turkey.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK recognises and supports the extraordinary generosity of Turkey in hosting over 4 million refugees - more than any other host country in the world. 3.6 million of these refugees are from neighbouring Syria where the brutal conflict is now in its tenth year.

The UK supports the efforts of the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, which provides assistance and protection to refugee population groups, irrespective of nationality, across Turkey and UNHCR's Global Operations.

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[93568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of proposals to establish a monitoring mechanism for human rights abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang under the UN (a) Human Rights Council and (b) General Assembly.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK has played a leading role at the Human Rights Council, and in the UN Third Committee to call for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to be allowed meaningful access to Xinjiang. The UK is the only country to have led formal joint statements on Xinjiang in relevant UN fora, including on the issue of UN access. On 30 June, the UK read out a formal statement on behalf of 28 countries at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council, and on 29 October 2019, the UK read out a statement on Xinjiang on behalf of 23 countries at the UN Third Committee in New York. We will continue to work with international partners at the UN to maximise pressure on the Chinese Government over its egregious human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang.

**Chris Law:**

[\[94454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to impose sanctions on the people responsible for human rights abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 28 September 2020]:* On 6 July, the UK Government established the Global Human Rights ('Magnitsky') sanctions regime by laying regulations in

Parliament. This sanctions regime enables the UK to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under the sanctions regime in the future, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations. We keep all evidence and potential listings under close review.

**Chris Law:**

[\[94455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he plans to make at the forthcoming 45th session of the Human Rights Council on the situation of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 28 September 2020]:* The UK has played a leading role at the Human Rights Council in registering the breadth and depth of international concern about the situation of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, and will continue to do so. Most recently, on 30 June, the UK read out a formal statement on behalf of 28 countries at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council highlighting arbitrary detention, widespread surveillance and restrictions, particularly those targeting Uyghurs and other minorities, and urging China to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights meaningful access to Xinjiang.

## ■ Crime: Victims

**Hannah Bardell:**

[\[94475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the FCO Murder Manslaughter Team will become party to the Victims' Code.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 28 September 2020]:* FCDO officials are in discussion with the Ministry of Justice about the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code) following recommendations made by the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales in 2019. The Ministry of Justice recently ran a public consultation exercise on changes to the Victims' Code and their officials continue to analyse the responses received.

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Equality

**Neil O'Brien:**

[\[92889\]](#)

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

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* This information is not held centrally. The FCDO is committed to putting diversity, equality and inclusion at its heart.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**

**Rachel Hopkins:**

**[89897]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many fixed-term contract workers there are in his Department by (a) gender, (b) age group and (c) ethnicity.

**Nigel Adams:**

As of the 30 June 2020, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) had the following percentages of fixed-term contract workers in the department:

- by gender: Women 57.6%, Men 42.4%
- by age:

AGE	PERCENTAGE OF FIXED TERM CONTRACT WORKERS
18-29	70.5%
30-39	17.0%
40-49	7.0%
50-59	4.3%
* 60+	-

- c) by ethnicity:

ETHNIC MINORITY	29.3%
White	59.6%
Do not wish to declare	11.1%

Home Civil Service and Diplomatic Service staff employed on a Fixed Term Contract.

\*Numbers of 5 or less have been suppressed in order to comply with the GDPR.

**Rachel Hopkins:**

**[89900]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the employment position is of non-UK national staff who were transferred from the Department for International Development to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

**Nigel Adams:**

All former DFID staff who are non-UK nationals transferred to the FCDO in their existing roles on 2 September 2020. Further work is underway to agree a long term

policy for the FCDO on reserved and unreserved roles, and impacted staff will be communicated with as soon as possible.

#### ■ **Independent Commission for Aid Impact**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[92821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his oral answer on 2 September 2020, Official Report, column 198, what plans he has to conduct a review of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Foreign Secretary has commissioned a review of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) to begin this autumn. The review will make sure ICAI's remit, focus and methods are effectively scrutinising the impact of UK aid spend, in line with the aims of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The findings of the review are expected to be published at the end of 2020.

#### ■ **Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[93658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether one planned outcome of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy is to recommit the Government to the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

**James Cleverly:**

*[Holding answer 25 September 2020]:* The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is an important component of the UK's work to promote human rights and support sustainable peace processes. The evidence is clear that women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention through to conflict resolution is key to securing sustainable peace. Our approach to WPS is outlined in the cross-government National Action Plan on WPS 2018-2022. The Integrated Review and the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are evidence of the Prime Minister's commitment to a unified British foreign policy that will maximise our influence around the world, ensuring the UK is a force for good in the world. When the Prime Minister launched the Integrated Review, he was clear that it will set out the way in which the UK will be a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation. Our aim continues to be for an ambitious and bold Integrated Review that is guided by the UK's foreign policy, national security and development objectives.

#### ■ **International Assistance: Security**

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[92771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 81911 on International Assistance: Security, for what reason records of Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessments were not maintained in accordance with his



Department's guidance which states once approval is given or withheld, the full assessment should be filed with the relevant Post and with the OSJA Lead.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* Where a Minister withholds approval for Overseas Security and Justice Assistance that record is filed appropriately by the responsible Department. However, the FCDO does not centrally maintain a record of the number of occasions Overseas Security and Justice Assistance was withheld.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[92772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Human Rights and Democracy Report published on 16 July 2020, on how many occasions (a) a Minister in his Department was consulted on Overseas Security and Justice Assistance cases during 2019-20 and (b) did a Minister in his Department decide that UK assistance should be provided.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* The Human Rights and Democracy Report published on 26 July 2020 provides an estimate for the number of Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) cases for 2019- 2020. The FCDO does not hold a record centrally of the number of times an FCDO Minister was consulted on OSJA cases or the number of times a Minister decided assistance should be provided.

## ■ Mexico: Protestantism

**Brendan O'Hara:**

[\[95099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Mexican counterpart on the case of six Protestant Christian families in El Encanto village, Las Margaritas Municipality, Chiapas who had their electricity cut off on 27 July because they refused to sign an agreement which obliged them to participate in religious activities associated with the Catholic religion.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are aware of reports of the removal of some Mexican Protestants' access to water, electricity, and other basic services in Mexico. The British Embassy in Mexico City has raised this specific case with the Mexican authorities, who have agreed to look into it. 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.

## ■ Nguyen Bac Truyen

**Brendan O'Hara:**

[\[95100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Vietnamese counterpart for the release of Nguyen Bac Truyen from detention in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

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

We raised concerns about freedom of expression and assembly, the treatment of prisoners, and the protection of civil society, during Vietnam's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in January 2019. We also expressed our concern about restrictions on freedoms of expression and assembly in Vietnam in a UN Human Rights Council Item 2 Statement in September 2020. In January, the British Embassy in Hanoi met the Inter-faith Council of Vietnam to understand the restrictions religious groups in Vietnam have faced. Also in January, the former Minister for Asia and the Pacific raised the UK's concerns about human rights with the Vietnamese Vice Foreign Minister during her visit to Vietnam.

We also raise individual cases of concern, including members of the Hoa Hao Buddhist movement who have faced repression. We have raised and will continue to raise our concerns in relation to Vietnam's UPR implementation plan.

**■ Operation Blue Star****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[92864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the freedom of information request, reference FCO 1059-17, which stated that former diplomats who had been involved in Anglo-Indian Affairs in 1984 were able to help locate files for the Heywood Review, if he will support an independent inquiry into British involvement in Operation Bluestar.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* The Heywood review of 2014 worked specifically to establish facts about the UK advice and assistance to the Indian Government. It concluded that UK assistance was advisory, ended several months before the operation, and had limited impact on the tragic events that followed. The UK Government has concluded that there is insufficient evidence to challenge the conclusions of the 2014 inquiry or to review the broader decisions of the government of the day.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[92865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason his Department did not provide the Heywood Review with a copy of its file FCO 37/3663 on the Indian National Security Guard from 1984.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* This file deals with the establishment of the Indian National Guard and does not cover the tragic events surrounding military action at the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 1984. Therefore this file did not fall within the scope of the Heywood Review and would not have affected its outcome.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[92866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will place in the Library copies of the files on the Indian National Security Guard from 1984 and 1985, reference FCO 37/3663 and FCO 37/4109.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* These files have been reviewed for release to The National Archives under the Public Records Act. FCO 37/3663 and FCO 37/4109 are retained by the FCDO on grounds of sensitivity. It would not be appropriate to place these retained items in the House of Commons Library. Nevertheless, these files will be re-reviewed for release at least every ten years, in line with Government policy.

## ■ Overseas Aid

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[91126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he made an assessment of the implications for his policy of reducing the UK aid budget by almost 20 per cent of the recent OECD forecast of UK GDP in 2020 falling by 10.1 per cent.

**James Cleverly:**

As the Chancellor has set out, like many other nations across the world the UK is experiencing a severe economic downturn as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This review took place in order to ensure that the UK Government meets, but does not exceed, its commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of our national income on aid, which is enshrined in law, whilst ensuring that the continued focus of 0.7 per cent is on supporting the most vulnerable around the world and delivering the greatest possible impact.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[92819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Official Development Assistance budget will be increased to 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income in the event that that income rises.

**James Cleverly:**

Spending 0.7 per cent of our national income on development assistance is a manifesto commitment and is enshrined in law. The principle of the 0.7 per cent commitment is that the Official Development Assistance budget rises and falls depending on the value of Gross National Income (GNI), and so the budget would increase if GNI increased.

## ■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[92639]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Pakistani Government on the series of attacks made against Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan during August 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 25 September 2020]:* We are aware of the concerning reports of violence against members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan including in August. The UK Government remains deeply concerned by reports of discrimination and violence against religious communities in Pakistan, including against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. We continue to urge the Government of Pakistan at senior levels to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, regardless of their belief. Most recently, Lord Ahmad raised our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief, with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 27 August.

## ■ Pakistan: Blasphemy

**Carla Lockhart:**

**[89883]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Pakistan on its blasphemy laws as a result of recent death sentences being passed against Christians in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns regarding blasphemy laws with the authorities in Pakistan. We remain deeply concerned about reports of discrimination against the Christian community and other religious minorities in Pakistan. Our position on the death penalty is well known - we are firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances.

We will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, in accordance with international standards. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon last raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority religious communities, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 27 August. Lord Ahmad also discussed our concerns about the use of the death penalty with Dr Mazari on 15 July. The British High Commissioner to Pakistan raised our concerns about the use of the death penalty with the Ministry of Interior on 29 July.

## ■ Slavery

**Mrs Pauline Latham:**

**[91016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's timescale is for responding to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's forthcoming reports on (a) The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery

through the aid programme, (b) Management of the UK's 0.7 per cent ODA Spending Target and (c) Sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeepers.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs aims to respond to Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) reviews within six weeks of the reports' publication dates.

This is the usual timescale for Government responses to ICAI reviews and enables the Government to give proper consideration to reviews and the recommendations made within them.

■ **Yemen: Humanitarian Situation**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[92732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy of the methodology and definitions used by the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen in its report of 9 September 2020 on alleged violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen and (b) implications for his policies of that report; and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK supports the UN Group of Eminent Experts (GEE), which is an important mechanism for ensuring accountability and supporting the promotion and protection of human rights in Yemen. The UK is deeply concerned by the allegations in the GEE's latest report. The UK calls on all the parties to the conflict to engage constructively with the GEE, investigate these allegations, protect human rights and comply with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. Yemen is a human rights priority country for the UK. In the latest Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office human rights report, we highlighted our concerns over women's rights including girls' education, the recruitment of child soldiers, arbitrary detention, and attacks on freedom of religion or belief and on freedom of speech and association.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[71904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the covid-19 testing protocol differs between care homes and Housing with Care facilities.

**Helen Whately:**

We initially prioritised testing for care homes that specialise in caring for older people and those living with dementia based on Public Health England (PHE) and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergency (SAGE) advice, as they are at higher risk of adverse consequences if they get the disease.

We have subsequently made asymptomatic testing available to some extra care and supported living setting when they are identified as higher risks - for instance due to their similarity to a care home by local Directors of Public Health. This is based on advice from PHE and SAGE. We rolled out an initial round of testing to extra care and supported living settings that were referred by Directors of Public Health as meeting certain risk-based criteria.

People in all settings can access testing if they have symptoms.

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[81755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 August 2020 to Question 78605, whether the weekly covid-19 testing of care home staff and testing of residents every 28 days in all care homes without outbreaks through Pillar 2 referred to in that Answer commenced from 6 July 2020 onwards; and whether the supply of covid-19 tests is adequate to meet demand.

**Helen Whately:**

We started rolling out regular retesting for residents and staff of care homes for over 65s and dementia from 6 July. We provided testing kits to all care homes for older people and people with dementia who have registered for regular retesting kits by 7 September.

All remaining adult care homes were able to apply for regular retesting from 31 August.

We are meeting demand and issuing more than 100,000 tests a day to care homes across the country.

## ■ Care Homes: Vacancies

**Sir Graham Brady:**

[\[89613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his oral contribution of 16 July 2020, Official Report, column 1795, what progress his Department has made on developing a support package for care homes with high rates of vacancies.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 17 September 2020]:* Following the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's statement of 16 July 2020 ( Official Report, columns 1784-1786) outlining the Government's ongoing work to support care homes with a high rate of vacancies, the Department has continued to review vacancy levels and the support on offer to care homes. As part of the Department's continued commitment to supporting the social care sector during COVID-19 we will shortly be publishing our Adult Social Care Winter Plan. This plan sets out our strategy for providing national support to the sector over the winter period. Additionally, the Infection Control Fund is being extended until March 2021, providing a further £546 million for the care sector. This new investment underlines the Government's commitment to ensuring that adult social care has the resources it needs over winter.

**■ Care Homes: Visits****Caroline Lucas:****[85002]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the lack of visits for people in care homes due to covid-19 restrictions on the speed of deterioration of dementia symptoms of care home residents; if he will set out a strategy to enable people affected by dementia to recover from the effects from the covid-19 pandemic to include (a) rehabilitation to counteract effects on cognitive or physical functioning, (b) support for mental and physical health and (c) speech and language therapy; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

We recognise how important it is to allow care home residents to safely meet their loved ones, especially for those at the end of their lives. We appreciate the particular challenges visiting restrictions pose for people with dementia, amongst others, as well as for their loved ones.

We published visiting guidance on 22 July 2020, which outlined how providers, based on the views of their local Director of Public Health, could take a dynamic risk-based approach to visiting. In the Adult Social Care Winter Plan published on 18 September, we set out tightened infection prevention and control measures to enable visits to continue safely. Our July guidance will shortly be updated to reflect the changes announced in the Adult Social Care Winter Plan which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-winter-plan-letter-from-minister-for-care-to-local-authorities/adult-social-care-winter-plan-letter-from-minister-for-care-to-local-authorities#adult-social-care-winter-plan>

NHS England and NHS Improvement have made guidance and resources available to address the rehabilitation needs of people living with dementia. This includes:

- 'Your COVID Recovery'. This is an online platform which is freely available for people recovering from the long-term effects of COVID-19. The platform is available from the following link:

<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>

- 'Aftercare needs of inpatients recovering from COVID-19' guidance to support primary care and community health services to meet the immediate and longer-term care needs of patients discharged following an acute episode of COVID-19, including embedding specific considerations for people living with dementia, and signalling resources for support such as neuro-rehabilitation, and speech and language therapy. The guidance is available from the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/06/C0705-aftercare-needs-of-inpatients-recovering-from-covid-19-aug-2020.pdf>

We are also working closely with our system partners, stakeholders, local authorities and the care sector to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia and



to identify what additional actions may be required to ensure their safety and access to the right support and care.

**Sir Graham Brady:**

**[85944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will relax the rules on the number of family visitors for relatives in residential care on compassionate grounds in circumstances where residents are approaching end of life.

**Helen Whately:**

We are aware that limiting visits in care homes has been difficult for many families and residents who want to see their loved ones. Our first priority is to prevent infections in care homes, and this means that visiting policy should still be restricted with alternatives sought wherever possible.

As set out in our guidance on visiting guidance for care homes, visiting policies will now be tailored to the individual care home, and will be based on a local dynamic risk-based approach. The guidance sets out how there may need to be different rules applied to different residents or categories of resident, taking into account the benefits to a person's wellbeing by having a particular visitor or visitors. Specifically, the guidance confirms that any imposed visitor restrictions should have regard to exceptional circumstances such as end of life. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus>

This guidance will be updated as the risk posed by COVID-19 continues to change.

## ■ **Care Homes: West Midlands**

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

**[90058]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 testing for (a) care home staff and (b) care home residents in the West Midlands.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* Since the launch of whole care home testing, we have provided over 8 million test kits to over 17,000 care homes in the United Kingdom. We started rolling out regular retesting for residents and staff of care homes for over 65s and dementia from 6 July. This included weekly testing for staff, and every 28 days for residents. Each care home received enough test kits for a month. We are continuing to prioritise care home testing and we are issuing more than 100,000 tests a day to care homes across the country. We have met our 7 September target of providing testing kits to all care homes for older people and people with dementia who have registered for regular retesting kits. In addition, all other care homes have been able to place orders for test kits from 31 August. Since they were eligible to apply for regular repeat testing on 31 August, 4,576 specialist homes in England have applied for tests. Where an outbreak has been identified, we

test all staff and residents as a priority, with all those who test negative being tested again four to seven days later.

We have continued to look for options that can reduce delays, such as encouraging care homes to carry out testing throughout the whole week, especially on weekends where this is possible. This will enable us to increase the amount of testing we can do and make full use of the available lab capacity.

## ■ Carers: Government Assistance

**Sarah Olney:**

**[90203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support working carers with assets above the £23,450 upper threshold who wish to provide care for a family member while also maintaining a career and other family commitments.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* We published a cross-Government Carers Action Plan 2018-2020, which included a range of actions to increase identification, recognition and support for unpaid carers. It is an essential step towards realising the Government's commitment to valuing, recognising and supporting unpaid carers to provide care in a way that protects their own health and wellbeing, employment and life chances.

We are committed to examining further actions that will help support working carers with balancing their employment and caring responsibilities. We recently consulted on proposals to introduce a new employment right to one week of additional leave for unpaid carers and have committed to further encouraging flexible working, which we know has benefits for employers and their employees, including those with caring responsibilities.

## ■ Coronavirus Act 2020

**Ian Murray:**

**[93572]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which parts of the Coronavirus Act 2020 have been implemented in practice.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 25 September 2020]:* The status of each of the provisions in the Act is set out in the two month reports that the Government presents to Parliament. These are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-act-report-may-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-act-report-july-2020>

## ■ Endometriosis

**Alex Norris:**

**[95202]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to reduce the diagnosis time for endometriosis; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Endometriosis manifests itself in a variety of ways and shares symptoms with other conditions. As a consequence, diagnosis can be difficult and is sometimes delayed.

There are currently no plans to reduce the diagnosis time for an endometriosis.

Given the highly invasive nature of the diagnostic procedure and the varying degree to which women experience symptoms, it can be more appropriate to treat mild symptoms on clinical grounds and reserve a laparoscopy with its inherent risks for women with more significant symptoms.

## ■ Health Education: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[90176]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the effectiveness of public health education on (a) how to wear a mask and (b) observing social distancing during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* The Government is running a major proactive communications campaign on face coverings to alert the public where they are now required to wear a face covering, who is exempt from wearing one, and how to wear one correctly. We are also emphasising the need to maintain good hand hygiene and adhere to social distancing guidelines, through the 'Hands, Face, Space' campaign, as these measures are key in controlling the spread of the virus.

To support the social distancing guidance the Government have also launched a new communication campaign 'Hands, Face, Space' which have provided people with clear messaging on how they can protect themselves and their friends, family and work colleagues.

## ■ Hospices: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[88902]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the news story, Chancellor sets out extra £750 million coronavirus funding for frontline charities, published on 8 April 2020, how much of the £200 million for hospices has been (a) allocated and (b) received by hospices to date.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 September 2020]:* On 8 April 2020, the Chancellor announced funding of up to £200 million for hospices as part of the £750 million funding package for the voluntary and charitable sector. This funding supported them in increasing

capacity of NHS services and providing stability as we managed our response at a critical stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department is currently in the process of reconciling the payments that have both been made and received by hospices to date, and regularly assesses the financial effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospice sector. Through NHS England and NHS Improvement, we are engaged in regular discussions with key stakeholders in the hospice sector regarding the challenges they face.

## ■ Joint Biosecurity Centre: Coronavirus

**Justin Madders:**

[\[87569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent meetings he has had with the Joint Biosecurity Centre to discuss the threat level from covid-19.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 September 2020]:* The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and Public Health England monitor a broad range of data daily to assess the risks from COVID-19 on a local, national and international level. The four Chief Medical Officers review the setting of the national alert level based on advice from the JBC at least once a week. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care chairs a decision-making meeting at least once a week to review the national picture and to decide also on the classification of risk at a local level (Areas of concern, for Enhanced support, for Intervention). The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care also holds a meeting at least once a week together with the Secretaries of State for Transport, the Home and Foreign offices to review travel corridors in light of international risks to United Kingdom public health from COVID-19.

## ■ Maternal Mortality

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[92829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) caucasian and (b) non-caucasian women died (i) during pregnancy and (ii) in childbirth in each of the last three years.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[92830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidence supporting the identification by his Department of a higher prevalence of mortality for caucasian women in pregnancy and childbirth.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 24 September 2020]:* The Department does not hold these figures. The Department does not hold any evidence which suggests a higher prevalence of mortality for Caucasian women in pregnancy and childbirth.

## ■ Mental Health Services

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[92685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that treatment options for mental health conditions has parity with treatment options available for physical conditions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The provision of mental health services remains a priority for this Government.

We are committed to achieving our NHS Long Term Plan ambitions for service transformation and expansion, backed by investment of £2.3 billion a year to mental health services by 2023/24. The service expansion will cover different age groups and different diagnoses which involve a number of treatment options appropriate to the individual circumstances.

The Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/34 provides a framework to ensure delivery on this commitment at the local level.

## ■ Mental Health: Care Leavers

**Cat Smith:**

[\[94460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to support the mental health and wellbeing of children in and leaving care.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 28 September 2020]:* Supporting children and young people's mental health, including the most vulnerable, is a priority for the Government. We know that mental health needs are more prevalent among looked after children which is why we are working with the Department for Education to develop and trial new high-quality mental health assessments for looked after children. These pilots ensure that young people are assessed at the right time, with a focus on their individual needs as they enter care. The Department for Education has awarded £240,000 to a group of organisations, led by the Anna Freud Centre, to deliver up to nine local pilots over two years.

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.

The NHS Long Term Plan will see an expansion of specialist services, including crisis care, as part of a comprehensive offer that reaches across mental health services for children, young people and adults.

## ■ Multiple Births

**Giles Watling:** [\[92882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS hospital trusts (a) collect and (b) publish accurate data on multiple births.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Birth data, including information on multiple births is submitted to NHS Digital via the Hospital Episodes Statistics and Maternity Services Dataset data collections. As multiple births form only a small percentage of the total number of births, this information is not routinely released as part of monthly publications due to the small numbers involved at each provider, but is available on request.

## ■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Regulation

**Sarah Olney:** [\[92658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of existing legislation to regulate practitioners and premises providing (i) special treatments (ii) other non-surgical cosmetic treatments.

**Sarah Olney:** [\[92659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulation of (a) special treatments (b) other non-surgical cosmetic treatments; and whether he plans to propose further regulations relating to these procedures.

**Sarah Olney:** [\[92660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to bring forward legislative proposals to improve the consistency of requirements for practitioners and premises providing special treatments.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 25 September 2020]:* The Government is committed to improving the safety of cosmetic procedures through better training for practitioners, and clear information so that people can make informed decisions about their care.

The Department is exploring the regulation of premises, practitioners, products and consumer safeguards. This includes an assessment of the regulation of practitioners and whether additional measures are required to improve patient safety.

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

## ■ Paterson Inquiry

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[93695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to respond to the Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Issues raised by Paterson, HC 31, published in February 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 25 September 2020]:* The Paterson Independent Inquiry reported on 4 February. Departmental Ministers committed in Parliament to produce a formal Government response.

In April 2020, Ministers took the decision to pause this work as a result of the COVID-19 emergency which was announced via a Written Ministerial Statement ( [HCWS208](#) ) made to Parliament.

This work has now recommenced, and the Department is planning to publish a formal Government response in due course.

## ■ Sepsis: Diagnosis

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[90187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding the Government is allocating from the public purse to develop new sepsis diagnostics to determine whether a patient with sepsis has a bacterial or viral infection.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Developing new diagnostics that enable early detection of bacterial or viral infections and drive optimal antimicrobial usage is a priority for this Government. Since 2014, the Government has invested over £360 million in antimicrobial resistance research and development, including funding to support the development of diagnostics for infection.

Investments in early-stage funding for diagnostic research include the £10 million Longitude Prize for a diagnostic tool that can rule out antibiotic use or help identify an effective antibiotic to treat a patient. The National Institute for Health Research Medtech and In Vitro Diagnostic Co-operatives support the development of medical technology and the uptake of commercially supplied in vitro diagnostic devices, including for infection-related tests. The £14.25 million award is for five years until 2022.

## ■ Sodium Valproate: Prescriptions

**Christian Wakeford:**

[\[91200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he has allocated to (a) GPs and (b) technicians to support the prescribing and monitoring of Sodium Valproate to women of child-bearing potential.



**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

In 2019/20 a Quality and Outcomes Framework Quality Improvement (QI) domain on safer prescribing ran in general practice. It aimed to improve engagement with women of child-bearing age and pregnancy prevention for these patients. This QI module was worth around £44 million in 2019/20 nationally.

As part of a Pharmacy Quality Scheme community pharmacies were asked to complete a valproate safety audit. Pharmacists were asked to check the records of girls and women of childbearing potential for whom a prescription is dispensed for valproate, to ensure they have been advised on the risks of taking valproate in line with all the requirements as detailed in the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's Drug Safety Update 2018.

The valproate audit was one of three parts of the Medicines Safety Audits domain and each part had to be delivered to earn the points available. The 25 points available were then worth £1843.5 per pharmacy who completed this domain.

**■ Supported Housing: Coronavirus****Helen Hayes:**[\[78773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the access to covid-19 testing for (a) residents and (b) staff in supported living settings.

**Helen Whately:**

We have begun to roll out an initial round of testing in extra care and supported living settings which meet certain risk-based criteria. To access testing, settings must be a closed community with substantial facilities shared between multiple people and where most residents are receiving personal care (rather than help with cooking, cleaning and shopping).

We have been piloting testing initially in Bromley, Hertfordshire and Sheffield. National roll-out will begin in September. As with care homes, we will use the data from the initial testing rounds to inform our approach.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Asylum****Paula Barker:**[\[92935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long on average it takes her Department (a) to make an initial decision on asylum applications and (b) to carry out substantive interviews with asylum applicants.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office does not publish data on how long it takes to make an initial decision on asylum applications or to carry out a substantive interview.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration. This data can be found at This data can be found at Asy\_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/list-of-tables>

The Home Office are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, individuals who need protection are granted asylum as soon as possible and can start to integrate and rebuild their lives, including those granted at appeal.

Whilst we take steps to increase capacity, with focus on process improvements, to deliver better quality decisions, more efficiently, we have moved away from the six-month service standard to concentrate on older claims, cases with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Additionally, we are prioritising cases where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required. The intention is for this approach to bring balance back to the asylum system.

**Paula Barker:**

**[92939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of asylum applications are granted upon first application.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office routinely publishes information on the total number of initial decisions on asylum applications, by outcome. This data can be found at This data can be found at Asy\_02a of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/list-of-tables>

## ■ Asylum: Employment

**Mr Steve Baker:**

**[92763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to grant asylum seekers the right to work.

**Chris Philp:**

Asylum seekers are allowed to work in the UK if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own.

Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List, which is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

It is important to distinguish between those who need protection and those seeking to work here, who can apply for a work visa under the Immigration Rules. Our wider policy could be undermined if migrants bypassed work visa Rules by lodging unfounded asylum claims here.

Unrestricted access to employment could act as an incentive for more migrants to choose to come here illegally, rather than claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

## ■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

**Justin Madders:**

[82041]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2020 to Question 74645 on Coronavirus: Quarantine, when she plans to publish the selected data on compliance with quarantine measures.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Available data on compliance with quarantine measures was been published on the 10 September which demonstrates the cross-government and industry effort and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-on-health-measures-at-the-uk-border/data-on-health-measures-at-the-uk-border>

In addition, Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) data relating to the Covid-19 enforcement notices issued in England and Wales under the International Travel Regulations is provided monthly by National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) to the Home Office. The data provides an analysis of the rationale for issuing a FPN and a breakdown of issuance by Police Force.

## ■ Crimes of Violence: Young People

**Alexander Stafford:**

[93725]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle serious youth violence.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government is committed to delivering on the people's priorities by tackling violent crime and giving the police the resources and powers they need to fight crime. In January this year we announced the biggest funding increase in a decade for the police system and we are recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers over next three years including 6,000 additional officers by the end of financial year 2020/21.

In the 18 Police Force areas worst affected by serious violence, we have invested a total of £176.5 million over 2 years (2019-21) to deliver a whole-systems response. Of this funding £106.5 million is to enhance the Police's operational response and £70 million has funded the establishment of local, multi-agency Violence Reduction Units to address the drivers of serious violence. Tackling serious violence will be backed with £119 million in 2020-21, which includes £20 million to tackle county lines drug dealing.

The Government has also invested £200 million in a 10-year Youth Endowment (YEF) Fund to tackle serious youth violence and an extra £5million has been awarded to the YEF in 2020 to develop a National Centre of Excellence, which will share knowledge and expertise with those working with vulnerable children and young people at risk of involvement in serious youth violence.

It was announced on 19 December in the Queen's Speech that we will be bringing forward legislation that will place new duties on a range of specified agencies across different sectors to work collaboratively, share data and information, and put in place plans to prevent and reduce serious violence.

In addition, on 14 September we launched an 8-week public consultation on the design of the new court order - Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs). SVROs would give the police personalised powers to target those already convicted of certain knife and weapon offences, giving them the automatic right to search those who pose the greatest risk.

## ■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

**Ian Mearns:**

**[93579]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 June 2020 to Question 53408 on Drugs: Organised Crime, what work is currently being undertaken by her Department in collaboration with (a) the Department for Health and Social Care, (b) the Ministry of Justice, (c) the Department for Education and (d) local authorities to tackle county lines drug trafficking and safeguard vulnerable children from exploitation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

County lines drug trafficking is a growing threat and one that this Government is determined to tackle. A cross-government approach is essential to identify and support children and young people who are criminally exploited by these ruthless gangs.

We are working across government to enhance the response to children and young people who are subject to criminal exploitation from county lines. Through our county lines programme, the Home Office is investing £860,000 this financial year to provide specialist one-to-one support for children and young people who at risk or involved in county lines. We are also working in collaboration with other government departments to monitor and respond to the impact of COVID-19 on county lines activity and exploitation.

We are also committed to taking forward national learning and are working with the Department for Education, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Health and Social Care to examine the recommendations from the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report 'It was Hard to Escape', as well as those from other safeguarding reviews relating to child criminal exploitation, in order to identify areas for improvement, put in place support for vulnerable children, raise awareness of criminal exploitation from county lines and ensure that the criminal justice response to county lines is as effective and robust as possible.

## ■ Drugs: Smuggling

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[92900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) short-term and (b) long-term effects of Operation Venetic on the (i) availability, (ii) price and (iii) purity of drugs in the illegal market, by drug type and (iv) levels of violence associated with the illegal drug market.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government is committed to tackling global drugs supply and reducing the violence and harm associated with the illegal drugs market. Operation VENETIC targeted EncroChat, a global encrypted communications service that was used exclusively by serious and organised criminals to coordinate their illicit activities, including drugs trafficking.

There were 60,000 global users of EncroChat and 10,000 users in the UK, resulting in a significant volume of intelligence that UK law enforcement continue to act on. As a result, the impact on the (i) availability, (ii) price and (iii) purity of drugs in the illegal market, by drug type and (iv) levels of violence associated with the illegal drug market has not been assessed.

## ■ Immigrants: Finance

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[95257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to recommendation 7 of the Windrush: Lessons Learned review, whether she plans to make an assessment of the effect of No Recourse to Public Funds conditions in her review of hostile environment policies.

**Priti Patel:**

I have accepted the Windrush Lessons Learned review's important findings and I will be publishing the Government's response to the review shortly.

## ■ Immigrants: Health Services

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[92847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in each of the last six months how many health and care workers have (a) paid the immigration health surcharge, (b) applied for a refund for that charge and (c) been successfully refunded.

**Kevin Foster:**

This information is not readily available nor held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost due to the fact the IHS is payable across multiple application routes. For example, where the customer is on a visa with a general right to work and subsequently takes up employment, we do not have a record who the employer is.

Since the Prime Minister's announcement, we have been working at pace to identify and issue refunds to those customers who are eligible and hold Tier 2 (General) visas.

## ■ Immigration Controls

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[95258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made on the full review of hostile environment policies following recommendation 7 of 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 publishing the Government's response to the review shortly, including how we will take forward a review and evaluation of compliant environment policies.

## ■ Magnet Fishing

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[92641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislation proposals to regulate magnet fishing to make it mandatory to declare all finds of (a) barrelled weapons, (b) bladed instruments above three inches and (c) munitions.

**Kit Malthouse:**

It is already the case that anybody who finds a firearm or ammunition under any circumstances, including whilst magnet fishing, must notify the police. They are likely otherwise to be committing an offence by being in unlawful possession, given that most of these items are subject to strict licensing controls under firearms legislation.

Similar considerations apply for bladed articles which are found. These may be prohibited under the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959 or the Criminal Justice Act 1988. In addition, it is an offence to carry an article with blade or point in public without good reason, under section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 strengthens the law further in respect of knives and bladed articles and will make it an offence to possess prohibited weapons in private.

## ■ Migrant Workers: Visas

**Dan Carden:** [\[93668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the time taken to process one-year visa extensions for healthcare workers.

**Kevin Foster:**

Following the announcement of the automatic visa extension scheme on the 31 March, subsequently expanded on 29 April, UKVI have concluded over 6000 free extensions for eligible healthcare workers and their dependents.

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

■ **Police: Pay**

**Carolyn Harris:** [\[93635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the merits of funding the (a) long-term and (b) starting salaries of recently recruited police officers.

**Carolyn Harris:** [\[93637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of the Government funding the salaries of the recently announced 20,000 new police officers.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The police funding settlement for 2020/21 sets out the biggest increase in funding for the policing system since 2010.

The Government will provide a total police funding settlement of up to £15.2 billion in 2020/21, which is an increase of up to £1.1 billion compared to 2019/20. As part of this, police forces will receive £700 million to recruit up to 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021. This is the first year of a multi-year commitment. Funding for future years will be set out at the Spending Review.

■ **Police: Uber**

**Mr David Davis:** [\[92678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with police forces on information and intelligence obtained from Uber.

**Mr David Davis:** [\[92679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions Uber has provided information to police forces in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019 and (e) 2020.

**Mr David Davis:** [\[92680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions the necessary warrants have been in place for the sharing of information between Uber and police forces in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019 and (e) 2020.

**Mr David Davis:** [\[92681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what role her Department has played in any data sharing agreements made between police forces and Uber.



**Mr David Davis:**

[\[92682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the legal basis is for the sharing of intelligence from Uber to police forces without the prior granting of a warrant.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Home Office officials work with law enforcement regularly to consider what data is operationally valuable to them and how they may lawfully access it. It is vital that police forces have the information they need to detect and prevent crime and keep the public safe. The legal routes available to police forces will depend on the specific circumstances and the types of data sought.

Under Common Law, the police have the power to obtain and store information for policing purposes for the prevention and detection of crime. Schedule 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) allows police to access data held in confidence by a third party, provided the data is relevant evidence of an indictable offence and it is authorised by a circuit Judge.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) sets out the circumstances in which Public Authorities can acquire certain types of data and the safeguards that apply. The IPA is overseen by the independent Investigatory Powers Commissioner.

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office collects a wide range of statistics on the use of investigatory powers. Section 234 of the IPA requires the publication of key statistics, including the number of warrants and authorisations issued, given, considered and approved during the year.

The Home Office do not keep information on the number of requests made to individual companies or data sharing agreements. The Police forces themselves, who are operationally independent, would hold this data.

## ■ Psilocybin

**Ronnie Cowan:**

[\[95125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of rescheduling psilocybin.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government has made no recent assessment of the potential merits of rescheduling psilocybin, which remains a Schedule 1 substance under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 (the 2001 Regulations).

Ministers continue to take a close interest in any new evidence relating to controlled drugs and they would seek expert advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs before making any amendments to the 2001 Regulations.

**■ Pupils: Disclosure of Information****Caroline Lucas:** [\[92745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Department for Education approved data shares with external, third-party organisations published on 14 December 2017, (a) how many and (b) what type of (i) individual and (ii) family intervention her Department made based on the 1545 individual pupil records received by her Department from the Department for Education between July 2015 and July 2020,

**Chris Philp:**

The specific information you have requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

**■ Refugees: Lebanon****Stuart C McDonald:** [\[95107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to help ensure people in Lebanon due for resettlement through the paused refugee resettlement scheme retain the ability to resettlement in the UK.

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[95108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the International Organisation for Migration on the legal status and other circumstances of refugees in Lebanon whose resettlement to the UK has been delayed.

**Chris Philp:**

Families who were due to be resettled to the UK when resettlement was paused remain eligible to be resettled when resettlement resumes.

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.

We are in regular contact with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and are working with them (and UNHCR) to ensure that those accepted for resettlement to the UK are able to access any additional support they may need.

**■ Road Traffic Offences: Enforcement****Colleen Fletcher:** [\[95105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the laws relating to traffic offences are effectively enforced.

**Kit Malthouse:**

This government is fully committed to giving the police the powers and resources they need to fight crime.

We will provide a total police funding settlement of up to £15.2 billion in 2020/21, which is an increase of up to £1.1 billion compared to 2019/20.

The Roads Policing Review was launched in 2019 to help us better understand how enforcement can be utilised to improve road safety across the country. This is the most comprehensive review of roads policing in a generation and is being jointly led by the DfT and the Home Office.

In 2018 there were a recorded 2.11 million speed limit offences in England and Wales, an increase of 4.3% compared with the previous year. There was an 88% conviction ratio for people proceeded against for speed limit offences in England and Wales in 2019 (175,000 were found guilty)

Vehicle speed compliance statistics for Great Britain: 2019 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vehicle-speed-compliance-statistics-for-great-britain-2019>

## ■ Slavery: Victims

**Alex Norris:**

**[91798]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many grants of Discretionary Leave to Remain have been made to victims of human trafficking or modern slavery with a positive Conclusive Grounds decision from the National Referral Mechanism, on the grounds of their personal circumstances relating to safety on return to country of origin.

**Alex Norris:**

**[91799]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of time is for which someone with a positive Conclusive Grounds decision from the National Referral Mechanism for victims of modern slavery is usually granted Discretionary Leave to Remain.

**Alex Norris:**

**[91800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of the people referred to the National Referral Mechanism in 2019 reporting exploitation that took place (a) in the UK, (b) in the UK and overseas, and (c) overseas only, how many people in each of those categories were (i) EEA and Swiss nationals, (ii) UK nationals, and (iii) non-EEA or Swiss foreign nationals.

**Victoria Atkins:**

THE HOME OFFICE PUBLISHES STATISTICS REGARDING THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM (NRM) WHICH CAN BE FOUND AT: [HTTPS://WWW.GOV.UK/GOVERNMENT/COLLECTIONS/NATIONAL-REFERRAL-MECHANISM-STATISTICS](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics) [HTTPS://WWW.GOV.UK/GOVERNMENT/PUBLICATIONS/2019-UK-ANNUAL-REPORT-ON-MODERN-SLAVERY](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2019-uk-annual-report-on-modern-slavery) THESE PUBLICATIONS PROVIDE THE NUMBER AND NATIONALITY OF POTENTIAL VICTIMS REFERRED INTO THE NRM AND THE NUMBER OF NRM REFERRALS BY LOCATION OF EXPLOITATION. THE STATISTICS DO NOT CURRENTLY PROVIDE A BREAKDOWN OF NATIONALITIES BY LOCATION OF EXPLOITATION. NUMBERS AND REASONS FOR GRANTS OF DISCRETIONARY LEAVE TO REMAIN TO VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY DO NOT CURRENTLY FORM PART OF MODERN SLAVERY PUBLISHED STATISTICS. THE SAFETY ON RETURN TO A VICTIM'S COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IS ASSESSED AS PART OF THE PROTECTION-BASED DECISION WHERE THE VICTIM HAS ALSO CLAIMED ASYLUM. WHERE A VICTIM HAS NOT CLAIMED ASYLUM, THEIR SAFETY ON RETURN RELATED TO THEIR EXPLOITATION IS CONSIDERED WITHIN THE PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ELEMENT OF THEIR MODERN SLAVERY DISCRETIONARY LEAVE TO REMAIN DECISION, WHERE RELEVANT.

Statistics on the total number of people granted Discretionary Leave for all reasons can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2019>

#### ■ South Wales Police: Finance

**Carolyn Harris:** [93634]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of funding for South Wales police.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The police funding settlement for 2020/21 sets out the biggest increase in funding for the policing system since 2010, with South Wales Constabulary receiving a total of up to £315.8m, an increase of up to £44.8m on 2019/20.

### HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

#### ■ Calling of Members

**Mr Toby Perkins:** [94385]

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many times each Member of Parliament has been successful in the Question Ballot and been called on in the Chamber or virtually in (a) Ministerial Statements, (b) Departmental Question sessions and (c) Urgent Questions since 16 April 2020.

**Pete Wishart:**

The outcome of the 'shuffle' for oral questions for Ministers is published in Future Day Orals available on the day after the shuffle in question takes place. Information on the outcome in respect of individual Members during the period since 16 April 2020 is not

held by the House of Commons Service and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

The calling of Members to ask supplementary questions during question time and to ask questions following an Urgent question or Ministerial statement is the responsibility of the Speaker of the House of Commons, and not within the responsibilities of the House of Commons Commission.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[906776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason his timetable is to introduce the Future Homes Standard in 2025.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it. We must ensure that the energy efficiency standards we set through the Building Regulations for new homes put us on track to meet the 2050 target.

A full response to the Future Homes Standard consultation will be published in the autumn, and we intend to review the roadmap to ensure that implementation of the full Future Homes Standard takes place in the shortest possible timeline.

### ■ Archaeological Sites and Cultural Heritage: Planning

**Darren Jones:**

[\[92862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Government's Planning for the Future consultation and forthcoming proposals for reform to planning regulation, what assessment he has made of the need to preserve existing (a) requirements for archaeological investigation and (b) safeguards for heritage and the historic environment as part of the planning process.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is committed to the protection of the historic environment and we have put in place a strong legislative and policy framework to achieve this. In bringing forward any reforms to the planning system, we will ensure that heritage considerations, including the need for archaeological surveys, are taken into account.

### ■ Building Safety Fund

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[92791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how applications for the Building Safety Fund are being assessed; what the criteria is for prioritising those applications; and how many have been assessed to date.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Following registration, MHCLG contacts building owners or the responsible person to ask for supporting evidence for their technical eligibility for the fund. This will include evidence of the height of the building and materials that are in place. Once a technical assessment of the building is complete and eligibility confirmed, successful registrants are then invited to apply for funding. The application stage is administered by our partners in Homes England and the Greater London Authority. The rate at which applications are progressed will be dependent on the readiness of building owners to provide the required information.

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[92793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many buildings are registered to the Building Safety Fund.

**Christopher Pincher:**

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

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[92794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timeframe is for his Department to assess registrations to the Building Safety Fund; and whether that timescale allows for works to commence on those buildings before April 2021.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We are currently reviewing registrations and any additional information that has been requested. We understand that some buildings are awaiting the outcome of their registrations, and we will be in touch with eligible building owners as soon as we have verified the information received, at which point eligible registrants will be asked to apply for funding. We are working to do this as quickly as possible

The speed with which registrations and applications are processed is dependent on the readiness of building owners to provide the required information.

**■ Building Safety Fund: Salford****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[92792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the outcome of an application to the Building Safety Fund in relation to Imperial Point, Salford, M50 3RB, will be confirmed.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We are currently reviewing registrations and any additional information that has been requested. We understand that some buildings are awaiting the outcome of their registrations and we will be in touch with eligible building owners as soon as we have verified the information received, at which point eligible registrants will be asked to apply for funding. We are working to do this as quickly as possible.

## ■ Business Premises: Rents

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[95080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking against landlords proposing rent increases that do not adhere to the principles set out in the Government's Code of Practice for commercial property relationships during the covid-19 pandemic, published on 19 July 2020.

**Luke Hall:**

In the Code of Practice, Government set out clarity for businesses when discussing rental payments and encouraged best practice so that every part of the chain is supported. We recognise that, as the Code is voluntary, it is not being used in every situation and have also introduced a range of measures to support tenants struggling to pay rent.

Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides for a moratorium on forfeitures of commercial leases due to the non-payment of rent accrued during the pandemic. This means that landlords of commercial properties will not have the option to evict tenants for not paying the rent that was due after 23 March 2020. Government has announced that it will extend the moratorium on forfeiture until the end of the year. The extension provides landlords and tenants with a further opportunity to come together to have these discussions and reach agreements on outstanding rent.

Government has also restricted landlords' ability to seize goods in lieu of rent and protected tenants from insolvency measures including statutory demands and winding up petitions.

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

**[94997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will revise the covid-19 lockdown restrictions for weddings to increase the number of people permitted to attend services in churches.

**Luke Hall:**

From 28 September no more than 15 people can legally attend a marriage or civil partnership, even where a larger number could be safely accommodated with social distancing in a large COVID-19 secure venue. Those who are working at the ceremony are not included as part of this legal limit.

We recognise that this rule will be disappointing for those planning such events. By their nature, marriage and civil partnership ceremonies are events that bring families and friends together, making them particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19.

We do not wish to keep this restriction in place for any longer than we have to, and it will be kept under review in line with the changing situation.



## ■ Evictions: Coronavirus

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[92828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on delaying evictions of tenants facing hardship during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We have established an unprecedented package of support to protect renters throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a range of financial support to enable renters to continue paying their living costs, including rental payments.

We introduced legislation through the Coronavirus Act 2020 delaying when landlords can evict tenants. From 29 August 2020, landlords must give tenants six months' notice before they can evict in most circumstances, apart from the most egregious cases, such as those involving anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse. It is right that landlords should be able to start advancing these serious cases more quickly, because of the pressure they place on landlords, other tenants and local communities. The changes to notice periods ensure those most at risk are protected and provide time for tenants to agree a solution with their landlord if they are unable to pay their rent or to consider moving to avoid building up unsustainable debt.

Where possession cases do go to court, new court rules mean that landlords are now required to set out any information they are aware of in relation to how their tenant, or any dependant of their tenant has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Where this information is not provided, judges have the ability to adjourn proceedings until such information is provided. Guidance will also be issued to bailiffs highlighting that they should not enforce possession orders in places where local public health restrictions have been introduced by government through legislation or in England and Wales across 11 December 2020 to 11 January 2021.

We will keep our measures under review and decisions will continue to be guided by the latest public health advice.

## ■ Flats: Commonhold

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[92899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of implementing the recommendations in the Law Commission's Commonhold Report on (a) flat owners' ability to make key decisions about the management and costs of their building and (b) preventing the exploitation of leaseholders by landlords.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government wants to see commonhold reinvigorated as an alternative tenure to leasehold for flats, which is why we asked the Law Commission to look at how this could be done and what changes to legislation are required to support a wider take up of the tenure in the future.

The Law Commission report on commonhold was published in July, alongside reports on enfranchisement and Right to Manage. They are comprehensive and thorough reports and we will now take the time to consider these in detail and set out our preferred way forward in due course.

## ■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

**Paula Barker:**

[\[92925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to reimburse local authorities for costs incurred in housing the homeless during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Government provided £4.3 billion to help councils to manage the impacts of COVID-19 which includes their work to support homeless people, £3.7 billion of which is unringfenced, and £600 million to support social care. The Government provided a further £3.2 million in emergency funding for local authorities to support vulnerable rough sleepers.

On 18 July, the Government launched the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, inviting bids for additional funding in 2020/2021 to pay for immediate support to ensure that people housed during the pandemic do not return to the streets, and to deliver longer-term move-on accommodation.

On 17 September we announced allocations of £91.5 million from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to 274 councils in England to help vulnerable people housed during the pandemic. An additional £13.5 million will be used to enable local authorities to tackle new and emerging challenges over the winter. Applications for funding for the longer-term accommodation element of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme are currently being considered.

## ■ Housing

**Steve Reed:**

[\[95082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the names of the individuals who attended his meeting with Residential Land, M&G, Redrow and Berkeley Homes on 16 March 2020.

**Steve Reed:**

[\[95083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the minutes of his meeting with Residential Land, M&G, Redrow and Berkeley Homes on 16 March 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Ministers meet with a range of stakeholders and organisations on a regular basis. It is not usual practise to publish full details of such discussions, but there was a broad conversation on general housing issues. Information relating to this meeting was included in the quarterly Ministerial transparency return, which is published here:

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

■ **Housing: Carbon Emissions**

**Tim Farron:** [95054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Accelerator Cities project in increasing low carbon home retrofit activity.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We welcome all initiatives in this area but my Department does not collect this information.

■ **Land Use: Databases**

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [92856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a national land use database for (a) rural use, (b) urban use, (c) geology, (d) hydrology, (e) climate, (f) soils, (g) weather, (h) air, (i) ecology, (j) culture assessments for integrated use in the planning system.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The *Planning for the Future* consultation proposes a move towards a modernised, open data approach which will create a national picture for different types of planning data. We will require local plans to use standardised data and digitally consumable rules that enable accessible, interactive maps showing what can be built where. We will also build upon the work my department has already done on Brownfield site registers, with local planning authorities already exploring innovative solutions to fix underlying data issues, so a strategic national map of planning can be created.

■ **Local Government Finance**

**Rachael Maskell:** [92827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his timescale is for publishing the Local Government Finance Settlement 2021-22.

**Luke Hall:**

In line with the recommendations of the Hudson Review, we aim to publish the provisional settlement on or around the 5 December each year, and the final settlement no later than 31 January.

■ **Local Plans: York**

**Rachael Maskell:** [92826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the Planning Inspectorate on the timescale for (a) review and (b) response to the draft City of York local plan.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning process, I cannot comment on the details of an individual Local Plan, especially one that is currently being examined by an independent Inspector. In line with this the Secretary of State has had no recent discussions with the Planning Inspectorate regarding the City of York Local Plan. The independent Inspector is responsible for the examination of the plan and for considering matters raised during the examination process.

The Government wants all local authorities to have up to date local plans in place as soon as possible. To that end it has set a deadline for all local planning authorities to have up-to-date local plans by the end of 2023 and is prepared to intervene where local authorities fail to meet the deadline. This will help deliver the certainty that local communities and businesses deserve. To date, 91 per cent of local planning authorities have an adopted local plan, and 45 per cent have a local plan adopted in the last five years.

In July 2020 the Government amended regulations and planning policy guidance to remove the requirements for physical documentation when preparing local plans, and to allow virtual hearings.

**■ Planning Permission****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[92688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that local communities can continue to have the opportunity to democratically object to planning proposals in their area.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The planning reforms set out in the *Planning for the Future* White Paper will make it simpler, quicker and more accessible for local people to engage with the planning system. The best way to bring forward new, significant development is by improving community engagement and input at an earlier stage in the planning process. At the plan making stage, people will have the opportunity to comment on local plans and have their say on the location and standard of new development. This will give certainty to local communities that development will be in the areas best identified for growth. There will still be the opportunity for people to comment on planning applications where these are required.

**■ Private Rented Housing: Regulation****Paula Barker:**[\[92926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of devolving more powers to local authorities to (a) regulate and (b) ensure higher living standards for people in the private rented sector.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Housing Act 2004 already gives powers to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector. We added to these through the Housing and Planning Act 2016 when we introduced Rent Repayment Orders, Banning Orders and the database of rogue landlords. We also gave local authorities the power to serve financial penalties of up to £30,000, and they can keep the proceeds of this to pay for more targeted enforcement of standards in the worst properties.

So that local authorities can continue to apply these powers effectively, we are reviewing the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, the tool used to assess hazards in rented homes. This will provide a future-proofed system that tackles the worst conditions, helping the most vulnerable people and delivering big savings to the NHS.

**Residential Land****Steve Reed:**[\[95084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what correspondence he has had with Bruce Ritchie, owner of Residential Land since 1 July 2019.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Ministers and officials have regular engagement with a range of organisations and stakeholders. Correspondence was received from Residential Land in relation to a roundtable discussion organised earlier this year.

**Tenants: Loans****Grahame Morris:**[\[95062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward a tenant loan scheme similar to the Tenancy Saver Loans and Tenant Hardship Loan Fund introduced by the Welsh and Scottish Government respectively.

**Christopher Pincher:**

This Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notably, to help prevent people getting into financial hardship, we have increased the local housing allowance rate to the 30th percentile of local market rents in each area. This will remain in place throughout the Winter period until at least the end of March 2021. The increase will mean nearly £1 billion of additional support for private renters claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit in 2020/21 and benefits over 1 million households, including those in work. Claimants will gain on average an additional £600 this year in increased housing support.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for business to pay staff salaries, and the Chancellors recent announcement of the Government's Winter Economy Plan now sets out further measures to support jobs and businesses.

Finally, for those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year, which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

These measures enable renters to continue paying their rent and we will closely monitor the ongoing impact of the pandemic on renters.

## ■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[95168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when funding from his Department's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund will become available for businesses.

**Luke Hall:**

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

Leaving the European Union provides us with a fresh opportunity to create a fund which invests in our own priorities and targets funding where it is needed most, whilst maintaining support for our businesses and communities.

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

## ■ **Vacant Land**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[95061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to amend the definition of a brownfield site to include areas with large numbers of void properties.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Void properties already fall within the definition of brownfield within the planning system in England. Brownfield is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as 'previously developed land', and can have any number of buildings on it, whether empty or occupied. It is for each authority to decide whether a particular site in its area is brownfield, and what new-build development, if any, should be permitted there.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[92736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 10 October 2016 air-strike on houses in Majz was among the (a) 166 incidents assessed by her Department as not credible or (b) the 310 incidents assessed as credible to which her Department's international humanitarian law analysis was applied.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[92737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the answer of 11 September to Question 86598, whether the 6 January 2017 air-strike on a school in Al-Haymah Al-Dakhiliyah was among the (a) 166 incidents assessed by her Department as not credible or (b) the 310 incidents assessed as credible to which her Department's international humanitarian law analysis was applied.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[92738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September to Question 86598, whether the 27 January 2017 air-strike on a vehicle in Al-Wazi'iyah was among the (a) 166 incidents assessed by her Department as not credible or (b) the 310 incidents assessed as credible to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

I refer the Rt Hon. Lady to the answer I gave on 11th September (UIN: 84666).

■ **Department for International Trade: Staff**

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[92886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many members of staff her Department employs.

**Greg Hands:**

The Department for International Trade employs both domestic and overseas staff, who are contracted separately through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

There were 2,766 staff employed directly by the Department for International Trade (DIT), within DIT and UK Export Finance, as of 31 August 2020. Staff working on DIT objectives but contracted through the FCDO total 1,411, with a total employed figure for the DIT workforce of 4,177\*.

***\*This figure does not include those on loan to DIT from other Government departments who remain on their home departments payroll, contractors, military staff, people on secondment from other organisations, those who are on loan or secondment out of DIT, on unpaid special leave or career break.***



## ■ Exhibitions: Coronavirus

**Nickie Aiken:**

[\[93683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the international exhibitor funding scheme to domestic events as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) is designed to assist UK companies in learning about overseas tradeshow and how they can be used to help a business's export development plans.

The Department for International Trade is currently reviewing TAP and looking at a number of possible changes to the support it will offer in the future.

## ■ Exports: Bromsgrove

**Sajid Javid:**

[\[92750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps businesses in Bromsgrove District can take to utilise support from her Department to help increase (a) international exports (b) international exports to Japan.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for International Trade (DIT) delivers a range of export services across the West Midlands. These include: providing support in accessing international opportunities; participation in trade missions; providing export credit and insurance through UK Export Finance (UKEF); access to DIT's international network; and face-to-face support provided by experienced International Trade Advisers. There is a dedicated local DIT team of five International Trade Advisers based in Worcester who cover Hereford and Worcestershire including the Bromsgrove constituency. DIT Midlands are working closely with the Hereford & Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership team, providing additional International Trade Adviser support to help grow business exporting opportunities.

Goods exports from the West Midlands were £473M in 2019. The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was agreed in principle on Friday 11 September. The deal secures additional benefits beyond the EU-Japan free trade agreement deal and will give UK companies exporting to Japan a competitive advantage in a number of areas.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Kenya

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[93504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress her Department has made in agreeing a continuity trade agreement with the Government of Kenya.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The United Kingdom is exploring a trade agreement with Kenya to avoid disruption to trade between our two nations, as part of a wider commitment to keeping trade flowing with the whole East African Community.

**■ UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group****Emily Thornberry:**[\[94371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the (a) names and (b) positions of the people who represented the UK at the US-UK Trade and Investment Working Group meetings in (i) Washington DC on 24 July 2017, and (ii) London on 15 November 2017.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[94372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what meetings were held of the UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group between December 2017 and April 2020; where those meetings were held; and if she will publish the (a) names and (b) positions of the people who represented the UK at those meetings.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

There were six meetings of the United Kingdom-United States Trade and Investment Working Group. These took place between July 2017 and July 2019 and outcome statements for each working group are publicly available on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-us-trade-and-investment-working-group>.

My Rt Hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset, then Secretary of State for International Trade, attended the initial meeting between 24th-25th July 2017 in Washington DC.

The timings, locations, and senior officials who attended these meetings are attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Attendee List [UK-US T&I Working Group - Attendees.docx]

**JUSTICE****■ Overseas Companies: EU Countries****Sarah Olney:**[\[95170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how will disputes between UK companies and companies in the EU be resolved once the Court of Justice of the European Union ceases to have direct jurisdiction.

**Alex Chalk:**

At the end of the transition period the United Kingdom will leave the EU's civil judicial cooperation framework, which presently contains a framework of rules on matters such as jurisdiction, applicable law and recognition and enforcement of judgments

that apply to disputes between parties in the UK and parties in an EU member state which raise cross-border issues. These EU rules will no longer apply and jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union in relation to these rules will end. To protect parties involved in such disputes where proceedings are issued before the end of the transition period, the Withdrawal Agreement provides that the EU rules will continue to apply in such cases.

At the end of the transition period the UK will re-join the 2005 Hague Convention on Choice of Court Agreements as an independent contracting state. This Convention ensures that exclusive choice of court agreements in commercial contracts are given effect i.e. that the jurisdiction of the chosen court will be respected and its judgment will be recognised and enforced by the courts of other Contracting Parties (which include the EU). Where cases fall outside the scope of the 2005 Hague Convention, matters - such as jurisdiction for, and recognition and enforce of civil and commercial judgments in, cross border disputes - arising after the end of the transition period will be determined under the domestic private international law rules of the UK and the relevant EU member state.

The UK has also applied to re-join to the 2007 Lugano Convention, as an independent contracting party. This is an international convention that provides rules on jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters involving parties from EU member states and Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. Our application is currently being considered by the existing signatories to the Convention and, if it were to be successful, would provide a comprehensive framework for dealing with commercial disputes.

The Government will soon be publishing guidance explaining the changes to the laws applying to civil and commercial disputes on Gov.uk.

## ■ Prisoners On Remand: Video Conferencing

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[95117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of virtual remand hearings on police custody suites.

**Chris Philp:**

COVID-19 has been the biggest peacetime challenge that our justice system has faced. Video Remand Hearings (VRH) have been an important tool to free up court capacity for trials which must take place in person. During a pandemic, anything which reduces the number of people travelling to court is the right thing to do for the safety of all those who come into contact with the criminal justice system. The roll out of VRH was rapid, and we are grateful to all of those that have engaged with it to ensure the continued operation of the criminal justice system.

I am aware of concerns over resourcing pressures. During this unprecedented time all parts of the criminal justice system have been required to operate in new ways to keep the public safe and ensure that justice is delivered. My Department is engaging with the police and Home Office to agree a way forward.

## ■ Prisoners: Reoffenders

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

**[95017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps his Department has taken to reduce the rate of prisoners re-offending after their release.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Employment is a significant factor in reducing reoffending. Secure and sustained employment for people released from prison starts with getting the right education in prison and we are creating a Prisoner Education Service focussed on work-based training and skills.

The Sentencing White Paper also sets out proposals for changes to rehabilitation periods – shortening the time in which prison leavers have to declare criminal records to prospective employers. For the first time, some custodial sentences of over 4 years will become spent as part of criminal records checks for non-sensitive roles in addition to significant reductions to the rehabilitation periods for sentences under 4 years.

These proposals, along with recently approved legislation to change the rules governing disclosure for sensitive roles by removing the multiple convictions rule and the disclosure of youth cautions, reprimands and warnings, will help those who have offended in the past access employment.

## ■ Shoplifting: Sentencing

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[92846]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to consult on the effectiveness of the (a) law and (b) sentencing guidelines in relation to shoplifting following recent attacks on shop workers which have been linked to shoplifting offences.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government recognises that the violence and abuse shop workers face can have a significant impact, not only physically but mentally and emotionally. Everyone has the right to feel safe at work and assaults on shop workers are unacceptable.

The Government has no current plans to introduce legislation as there is already a wide range of offences and sentencing guidelines which cover the type of crime faced by shop workers. The current sentencing guidelines for assault offences specify that it is an aggravating factor for an offence to be committed against a person who works in the public sector or who is providing a service to the public, such as a shop worker.

In April 2019, the Home Office launched a call for evidence on violence and abuse toward shop workers to help gather evidence to strengthen their understanding of the scale and extent of such abuse against retail workers. The Government's response to that call for evidence was published in July 2020. Specifically on shoplifting, respondents to the call for evidence highlighted concern about the effectiveness of section 176 of the Anti-social, Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the 2014 Act), suggesting that it may have given the impression to some offenders that where the

value of goods stolen was less than £200, this would not be dealt with by the police. Some respondents suggested this was a contributory factor to the more brazen stance being taken by such offenders.

The Government is clear that shoplifting offences involving the theft of goods up to the value of £200 can, and should, be pursued as a criminal offence by the police. Section 176 of the 2014 Act should have no bearing on the ability of the CPS to prosecute a person for theft from a shop, or on the courts' powers to punish offenders. An offender convicted of theft in the magistrates' court can still face a penalty of up to six months imprisonment for a single offence.

The Government has taken steps to ensure this is clearly understood and has written to the Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables across England and Wales setting out that the theft of goods valued up to £200 from a shop should still be prosecuted as a criminal offence and does not constrain the ability of the police to arrest or prosecute someone in the way they feel is most appropriate. The Government is due to undertake a post-legislative review of the 2014 Act and as part of this will look at the effectiveness of section 176.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Armed Forces Covenant: Northern Ireland

**Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:**

[\[95012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent progress has been made on full implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

We have been making good progress on implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland, in line with my party's manifesto pledges and UK Government commitments in the New Decade, New Approach Agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has appointed Danny Kinahan as the first ever Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner, to act as a voice and advocate for veterans as they make the transition to civilian life. Moreover, we have secured additional funding for the Veterans' Support Office to assist them in delivery of the Covenant at ground level in Northern Ireland.

Elsewhere, a review of the Aftercare Service will consider whether their remit can be extended to cover all HM Forces veterans living in Northern Ireland with service-related injuries and conditions.

Finally, our Armed Forces Covenant legislation will mandate local authorities to pay due regard to the experience of veterans so that they suffer no disadvantage in society. This will apply UK-wide, and the Ministry of Defence is working closely with the territorial offices and devolved administrations to ensure it is implemented effectively across the four nations.

**■ Free Zones: Northern Ireland****Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:** [\[95011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on granting Northern Ireland ports freeport status.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Government plans to introduce up to 10 Freeports across the UK. Freeports will unleash the potential of our ports, regenerating communities across the UK. We are working with the Devolved Administrations, including the Northern Ireland Executive, to enable the creation of Freeports across all four nations of the UK. We will shortly be publishing the Government's response to the Freeports consultation, launched in February 2020, which will set out our plans for the delivery of Freeports across the UK, including in Northern Ireland.

A number of ports in Northern Ireland submitted responses to the consultation.

**■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:** [\[95010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to publish further proposals on dealing with legacy issues in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Government has been clear that we will introduce legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in a way that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of reinvestigations that has failed victims and veterans alike.

We remain committed to making progress and engaging on these issues with the Northern Ireland parties, the Irish Government, and stakeholders from across the community including victims groups as quickly as possible.

**TRANSPORT****■ British Transport Police: Finance****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[93664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what changes he plans to make to the British Transport Police budget as a result of his recent announcement of the end to rail franchising.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The British Transport Police's budget is set by the British Transport Police Authority. Those operators required to use the BTP will continue to pay for policing with those subject to the new Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMA) or those under Directly Operated Railways (DOR) control continuing to be charged as now.

## ■ Driving Licences: Coronavirus

**Fiona Bruce:**

**[95059]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to ensure the DVLA prioritises driving licence applications for key workers during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Rachel Maclean:**

During the national lockdown, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) recognised the impact that the pandemic would have on the UK's vital supply chains and emergency workers. To address this, the DVLA provided a service to prioritise applications from key workers. This included a dedicated postal address for driving licence applications and specific support through the DVLA's contact centre.

The DVLA is now processing applications from all customers as normal but is able to prioritise applications from key workers as necessary.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Bill Wiggin:**

**[94345]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help reduce the cost of charging electric vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government's EV cost calculator demonstrates that battery electric vehicles can be charged from as little as 1p per mile, compared to 8-17p per mile for even the most fuel-efficient petrol and diesel cars. At home, smart charging of an electric vehicle during off-peak periods when electricity demand is low means consumers can benefit from cheaper electricity prices. Next year we intend to mandate that all new private chargepoints must have smart functionality to help realise the benefits smart charging can offer consumers. In May, the Secretary of State for Transport announced that he will consult on improving the charging experience for EV drivers when using the public charging network. This includes consulting on options to introduce a common pricing metric e.g. p/kWh allowing drivers to compare the cost of charging between different networks more easily. Just like with today's conventional fuels this will help drive competition between chargepoint operators and bring down prices.

**Bill Wiggin:**

**[94346]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on completing the fast-charging network for electric vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The roll out of rapid charging is an opportunity to remove range anxiety for electric vehicle drivers across the roads network. Highways England have now completed their commitment to ensure there is a rapid chargepoint every 20 miles along 95% of the Strategic Road Network by March 2020. By 2023, we aim to have at least six high powered, open access chargepoints at motorway service areas in England, with some larger sites having as many as 10-12, and by 2035 we expect the number to



increase to around 6,000 high powered chargers across the network. This will be supported by a Rapid Charging Fund, part of the £500m support for charging infrastructure announced at March Budget. We plan to set out how the Rapid Charging Fund will work in due course.

■ **Electrification: West Midlands**

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[93561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to electrify the train line between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail is leading development of a Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS), due later this year, that will inform decisions about the scale and pace of railway decarbonisation to 2050 in our Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP).

Plans for decarbonisation on the line between Birmingham and Shrewsbury via Wolverhampton, will be informed by TDNS and the TDP. Once the final TDNS is published we will develop business cases for each electrification scheme to ensure they are deliverable and affordable.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[93562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Network Rail on the electrification of the railway line between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department is working with Network Rail and the rail industry to support Network Rail's delivery of a Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS). TDNS will inform decisions about the scale and pace of railway decarbonisation to 2050 in our Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

In July this year Network Rail published TDNS interim findings. The report identified electrification as the preferred option to decarbonise rail traffic between Birmingham and Shrewsbury via Wolverhampton. Once the final TDNS is published we will develop business cases for each electrification scheme to ensure they are deliverable and affordable.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[93563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with train operators on introducing bi-mode hybrid trains on the railway line between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department has had no such discussions with train operators.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Mr David Lammy:**[\[93514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will meet the hon. Member for Tottenham to discuss (a) the funding of the Tottenham Hale link bridge and (b) correspondence from that hon. Member dated (i) 27 February and (ii) 25 June 2020.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

My door is always open for the Hon Gentleman and my office will hopefully have contacted his to arrange such a meeting before this answer is published.

**■ Railway Stations: Public Lavatories****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[92869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of Changing Places toilet facilities in train stations.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Changing Places toilets are designed to meet the needs of people with profound multiple learning and physical disabilities and the Government supports their provision at railway stations.

I can confirm that there are 18 Changing Places toilets in Network Rail and Train Operating Company managed stations. They are:

Birmingham New Street

Bridgend

Brighton

Crewe

Glasgow Central

Leeds

Llandudno

London Bridge Station

London Kings Cross

London Paddington

London Victoria

London Waterloo

Nottingham

Port Talbot Parkway

Reading

Sutton

Swansea

York

In the March Budget 2020 it was announced that a £30 million Changing Places Fund would be launched to increase the provision of Changing Places toilets in existing public buildings.

## ■ Railways: Coronavirus

**Ian Mearns:**

[R] [92760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for each Train Operating Company with which his Department has agreed an Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA), what figure will be used to calculate the Management Fee covering the term of the EMA and Reporting Period 13.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

EMA Fees are based on a fixed 1.5% management fee based on the historical costs of a TOC. 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>

**Ian Mearns:**

[R] [92761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for each Train Operating Company with which his Department has agreed an Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA), what the Performance Payment amounts are for (a) each of the three EMA criteria and (b) each score.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Performance Payments in relation to an EMA Performance Period are calculated based on the number of Reporting Periods within that EMA Performance Period. The amount of Performance Payment in relation to each Reporting Period comprised in an EMA Performance Period will be the sum of the three amounts corresponding to the Franchisee's EMA Review score for the three EMA Criteria (operational performance, customer experience and acting as a Good and Efficient Operator). 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: Disability

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesis:**

[92870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to increase awareness of Passenger Assist among passengers who would benefit from that service.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[92871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the passenger experience of Passenger Assist.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Office of Rail and Road is responsible for monitoring train and station operators' performance with Passenger Assist. According to the latest figure published by the Office for Rail and Road, in July 2020, 86% of the passengers surveyed were satisfied with their experience of Passenger Assist.

All train and station operators are required to promote Passenger Assist as part of their Accessible Travel Policy obligations. The Department included this requirement in the direct awards of both Great Western Railway and London Southeastern Railway.

## ■ Railways: Public Sector

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[92915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring into public ownership (a) the UK railway network and (b) rolling stock companies.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Government's new deal for rail will keep the best elements of the private sector, including competition and investment, that have helped to drive growth - but deliver strategic direction, leadership and accountability. We will set out further details in a White Paper when the course of the Covid-19 pandemic becomes clearer.

The Secretary of State also has no plans to bring the rolling stock companies into public ownership. The UK rolling stock market has been a vibrant one and passengers are benefiting from private investment in new trains across the country.

## ■ Shipping: Identification

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[93580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has in place to stop skippers turning off their automatic identification system to prevent location identification.

**Robert Courts:**

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) already has measures in place to ensure that shipmasters, skippers and navigational watchkeepers of fishing vessels and commercial vessels mandated to carry automatic identification system (AIS) keep their systems operational and in proper use at all times.

These measures include the use of fixed wing surveillance aircraft and fixed radar installations at certain locations along the coast.

The MCA recently updated gov.uk weblinks to remind skippers of relevant fishing vessels that they must fit AIS which meet the international performance standards

and that it is an offence to switch off AIS unless there are compelling grounds to justify that safety and security of the vessel would be affected.

The MCA will either warn or prosecute and fine those who they discover are failing to properly use the AIS at sea.

## ■ Trains: Hydrogen

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[95193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is his Department's policy is on the use of hydrogen trains as a replacement for diesel trains; and what steps his Department is taking to support the development and introduction of hydrogen trains.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Government supports the use of new technologies on the railway to deliver our legally binding target of net-zero UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The Department for Transport is currently working with the rail industry to determine which parts of the network are best suited to the use of hydrogen or battery trains, and which are best suited to further electrification, to support decarbonisation of the railway. We are also supporting the development of hydrogen and battery technology through innovation funding and research.

## TREASURY

## ■ Business: Coronavirus

**Paula Barker:**

[\[92928\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the accuracy of its data on the number of (a) small business, (b) self-employed and (c) sole traders that have been ineligible for Government support during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps the Government is taking to deliver financial support to those categories.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC have a range of processes and checks built into the running of the tax system, which ensures the accuracy of their taxpayer information. To support the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) a number of additional processes and checks have been introduced to ensure the correct eligibility decisions have been reached, based on the information available, and HMRC have also undertaken a number of manual reviews to cross-check the information held on the taxpayer's self-assessment account.

The Government has introduced a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses to help combat the impact of COVID-19. For the self-employed and sole traders, the Government introduced the SEISS, which has received more than 2.6 million claims worth over £7.6bn. The Government will continue its support for millions of self-employed individuals through the SEISS extension. An initial taxable

grant will be provided to cover three months' worth of profits for the period from November to the end of January 2021. This is worth 20% of average monthly profits, up to £1,875.

For those ineligible for the SEISS, the Government has increased the Universal Credit standard allowance and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor for the duration of the crisis meaning that if self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly reduced, their Universal Credit award will now increase to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this they also have access to other elements of the package which includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

### ■ **Cash Dispensing: Rural Areas**

**Carla Lockhart:**

**[92943]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) viability and (b) accessibility of cash ATMs in rural areas following the reduction in their usage as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government continues to engage closely with the financial services regulators to monitor developments relating to COVID-19, including through the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, which is chaired by the Treasury and aims to ensure comprehensive oversight of the overall cash infrastructure across the UK.

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

Furthermore, banks, building societies, credit unions and Post Offices are working with the Treasury and the financial regulators to maintain access to their services, including access to cash, while balancing the needs of their customers with the safety and welfare of staff. The vast majority of branches are open, though many are open for reduced hours. The Financial Conduct Authority has issued guidance to regulated firms, including on a provision to allow a trusted third party to make payments on behalf of vulnerable customers who may be self-isolating.

The Government recognises that widespread access to cash remains extremely important to millions of people across the UK. That is why, at the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect access to cash. This will ensure continued access to cash for those who rely on it and that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

**Rachael Maskell:** [92831]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) people and (b) women are in receipt of support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme nationally.

**Rachael Maskell:** [92832]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people in receipt of support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are women in York.

**Jesse Norman:**

It is not possible to answer directly the question as data on the number of people furloughed whose jobs have been supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is not available. However, data is available for the number of employments furloughed with the support of the CJRS (a person may have multiple employments). Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) published statistics about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on 18 September 2020 which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-september-2020>.

These statistics are the latest available and provide preliminary figures for numbers of jobs furloughed and supported by the CJRS as at 31 July 2020. The release includes figures for the number of jobs furloughed by gender of the employee; the production of which depends on the matching of employment level CJRS data to other HMRC data. For records where this has been possible, the release reports that there were 4.40 million jobs furloughed where the gender of the employee was known. In the case of 2.26 million of these furloughed jobs, the furloughed employee was female.

These figures are preliminary values and based on claims received to 31 August. They are subject to revision as more claims are made in respect of staff furloughed on 31 July.

Figures for the number of jobs furloughed by local authority area and the gender of the employee will be included in the October release of HMRC's CJRS statistics.

## ■ Economic Growth

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [95173]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 91125 on Economic Growth, whether his Department used the scenario that GDP will fall by 14.3 per cent to determine the reduction to the Official Development Assistance budget announced in July 2020.

**John Glen:**

A £2.9bn 'reasonable worst case' risk of exceeding the 0.7% ODA target was modelled based on a range of independent forecasts on the contraction of the UK economy in 2020, and accounts for some unexpected spending pressures. Arrangements are in place to tailor our spend further during the remaining months as we start to gain a clearer economic picture.



## ■ Freight: Wales

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[95014\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what tests he has carried out on the application of the Goods Vehicle Movement Service for goods moving through Welsh ports; and what the outcome of those tests was.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC will work with carriers and operators to develop delivery plans, provide technical support and guidance on their key milestones of development, IT build and test, and will monitor progress against their plans.

The Goods Vehicle Movement Service technical specifications have been available since mid-July and provide carriers and operators with the specifications and understanding of the technical requirement.

A new Virtualised Test Service has been available since 3 August 2020 which allows carriers and operators to test their software against the HMRC specification to ensure alignment and compliance.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

**Alan Brown:**

[\[95136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2020 to Question 84292 on Hospitality Industry: VAT, whether a company that has paid VAT at 20 per cent in advance for services that fall within the discount rate period that started on 15 July 2020 can claim the 15 per cent differential back from HMRC in subsequent VAT returns.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 24 September 2020 that the temporary reduced rate for tourism and hospitality will be extended to 31 March 2021. This measure has been extended to support the cash flow and viability of businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

All businesses that supply services which benefit from the temporary reduced rate are able to apply the reduced rate to advance bookings that take place between 15 July 2020 and 31 March 2021 and can make any necessary adjustments in subsequent VAT returns.

## ■ Pensions: Fraud

**Neil Gray:**

[\[95092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent guidance he has issued to HMRC on the tax treatment of the victims of pension scams.

**Neil Gray:**

[\[95093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of breaches of tax law which were made as a result of pension scams in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

**Neil Gray:**

[\[95094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with HM Revenue and Customs on its approach to tax rule breaches arising from pension scams.

**John Glen:**

We take the issue of pension scams very seriously. The government is committed to protecting people from pension scams and pursuing those who perpetuate pension scams wherever possible.

In 2012 the government established Project Bloom, a cross-government taskforce currently led by the Pensions Regulator (TPR), to tackle scams and identify emerging threats.

HMRC will continue to come down hard on scammers who we identify, working closely with the Pensions Regulator and Financial Conduct Authority in a cross-agency approach.

HMRC does not hold an estimate of the number of breaches of tax law which were made as a result of pension scams.

## ■ Public Expenditure

**Wayne David:**

[\[95016\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the comprehensive spending review.

**Steve Barclay:**

As the Chancellor confirmed in July, the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review will be published in the autumn. Further detail will be set out in due course.

## ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[92833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) people and (b) women have received support from the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

By 31 July 2020, 2,604,000 individuals had claimed the first SEISS grant and 759,000 (29 per cent) of these were women.

By 31 August 2020, 2,019,000 individuals had claimed the second SEISS grant and 580,000 (29 per cent) of these were women.

These figures were taken from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics published on 21 August and 18 September respectively.

## ■ SVS Securities

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[95263]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on the difficulties faced by clients and former clients of SVS Securities.

**John Glen:**

**HM Treasury regularly engages with the Financial Conduct Authority on the circumstances surrounding SVS Securities PLC.**

**SVS Securities is a wealth management firm that was placed in Special Administration on 5 August 2019. An assessment of the client money and custody assets held by the firm has been completed and the Special Administrators have confirmed that these are intact. There are costs associated with distributing client money and custody assets back to clients which by law will be deducted from client money or custody assets.**

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) will cover custody assets and client money shortfalls, including the costs associated with their distribution back to clients, for eligible clients up to £85,000.

The Special Administrators are working closely with the FSCS and expect the vast majority of clients will be compensated in full by the FSCS for these costs. As a result, the vast majority of clients shall receive their client money and custody assets in full.

Please note that the Special Administrators have now contacted SVS customers to invite them to submit any claims.

For further information on SVS Securities, please see the Financial Conduct Authority's website: <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/news-stories/svs-securities-plc-enters-administration>.

## ■ Tax Allowances

**Dan Carden:**

**[95206]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to review the (a) effectiveness, (b) equity and (c) value for money of non-structural tax reliefs.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government's response to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report "Management of tax reliefs" was published on 28 September. This outlines the approach and commitments the Government has made regarding the monitoring and evaluation of tax reliefs. The Government has said it will consider development of a methodology for assessing the value for money of tax reliefs. This work will support the Government's ambition for a fair and sustainable tax system.

## ■ Unpaid Taxes: Coronavirus

**Owen Thompson:**

**[92835]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Loan Charge, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure that people unable to (a) file their tax return, (b) pay tax due and (c) agree a time to pay arrangement by 30 September 2020 as a result of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak do not face any penalty.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are acutely aware of the current economic challenges facing taxpayers as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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 and pay the tax due or agree a time to pay arrangement.

This deadline has long been established and the extension has given taxpayers an additional eight months to file their returns and decide whether to make an election to spread their loan charge liability over three years. HMRC expect the majority of Loan Charge taxpayers to be able to file a full and accurate 2018/19 Self Assessment return by the 30 September 2020 deadline.

HMRC will take a proportionate and reasonable approach to anyone who is unable to file their tax returns and pay the tax due or agree a time to pay arrangement by the 30 September 2020 deadline as a direct result of COVID-19.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Access to Work Programme

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

**[93647]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost to the public purse has been of the Access to Work scheme in each year since 2010.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The 2019/20 Access to Work statistics show that 43,000 people with disabilities and health conditions are receiving tailored and flexible support to do their job.

During this period Access to Work has continued to expand its reach to underrepresented groups including those with Mental Health conditions, seeing the highest ever number of people approved for support: up 95% on the previous year.

Full details of Access to Work expenditure is published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/915547/access-to-work-statistics-april-2007-to-march-2020-tables.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/915547/access-to-work-statistics-april-2007-to-march-2020-tables.ods)

## ■ Bereavement Support Payment and Widowed Parents Allowance

**Jeremy Wright:**

[95052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to apply the proposed remedial order to extend the legislation governing widowed parent's allowance and bereavement support payments retrospectively to non-married partners and their children.

**Mims Davies:**

We intend to take forward a Remedial Order to extend eligibility for BSP to cohabitees with children. The detail of the changes will be set out in the Remedial Order. We intend to lay the Order before the House in due course.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Neil Gray:**

[95097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many eligible parents have not received payment through the Child Maintenance Service in any month since March 2020.

**Mims Davies:**

The number of Paying Parents who have paid Child Maintenance are published quarterly. The latest published figures for Child Maintenance Service (CMS) are up to the end of March 2020 and can be found on Stat-Xplore here:

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

Guidance on how to extract information from Stat-Xplore can be found at:

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

Information on the number of CMS 'Collect & Pay' arrangements for which no payments were made in the quarter can be found by selecting the "Service Type and Paying Status" variable in the "Child Maintenance Service" dataset. Please note that arrangements listed as "Collect & Pay, Not Paying" include some arrangements for which no maintenance was due.

Alternatively, Table 8: Paying Parents Compliance, in the National tables of the CMS official statistics, gives the number of Paying Parents who were due to pay some Child Maintenance each quarter and the number of those who paid some maintenance. The latest statistics to the end of March 2020 are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-maintenance-service-statistics-data-to-march-2020-experimental>

Statistics containing data to the end of June 2020 will not be available until the next publication, due on 30 September 2020.

**■ Employment: Wolverhampton South West****Stuart Anderson:** [\[92893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to help ensure equity of employment opportunity in Wolverhampton South West constituency.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP offers significant support to unemployed people across Great Britain to access employment opportunities through our network of Jobcentres. Our work coaches provide support on finding a job, help with retraining or skills advice, CV, job applications and access to the new vacancies we record every day, as well as signposting to our new Jobhelp website.

The Department is working closely with other government departments, external organisations and local partners to support people into work. The Kickstart scheme was recently announced to help young people aged 16-24 find 6-month work places in Wolverhampton. We have also partnered with employers in the area to deliver Mentoring Circles and Sector-based Work Academy Programmes.

**■ Industrial Health and Safety: Pregnancy****Owen Thompson:** [\[95137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many employers the Health and Safety Executive has (a) investigated and (b) taken enforcement action against since 16 March 2020 in respect of an alleged breach of the employer's obligations to a pregnant woman under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

**Mims Davies:**

HSE does not record specific regulations against all investigations, including the investigation of concerns raised by workers and others, except when formal enforcement action in the form of prosecutions and notices is taken. Regulation 3(1) of the Management of Health of Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on employers to assess the risks to their employees including women of child bearing age and new or expectant mothers. From 16th March 2020 to 24th September 2020 no formal enforcement action has yet been recorded against employers for failing to meet the requirements of Regulation 3(1) in relation to women of child bearing age or new or expectant mothers. Similarly, where other forms of action including letters and Notification of Contravention letters are taken details are not specifically recorded on HSE's database.

**■ Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit: Medical Examinations****Afzal Khan:** [\[92880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to resume face-to-face medical assessments for Industrial Injuries' Disablement Benefit.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[92881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to resume assessing Industrial Injuries' Disablement Benefit claims for (a) asbestosis and (b) diffuse pleural thickening.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Our priority throughout this health emergency continues to be to protect the public and our assessment providers' staff, while ensuring people get the benefits they are entitled to quickly and safely. Face-to-face assessments remain suspended while we review what activity we can gradually start reintroducing in line with the latest public health advice. We will confirm next steps as soon as possible.

In the meantime, for claimants with the most serious or terminal conditions, claims continue to be processed and decisions made as normal. We are actively considering how to deal with those cases not currently being processed.

#### ■ **Jobcentres: Coronavirus**

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[95078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to review her Department's policy on face-to-face appointments at job centres for (a) 18-24 year olds and (b) other people during the application of covid-19 restrictions requiring staff to work from home where possible.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[95079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy only to permit urgent face-to-face jobcentre appointments to take place during the application of covid-19 restrictions requiring staff to work from home where possible.

**Mims Davies:**

In line with Public Health guidance and with safety measures in place across the Jobcentre network, face-to-face appointments can be booked with claimants who will benefit from this support, including young people. Updated guidance has been issued to Jobcentres and is reviewed regularly.

Our teams are designated as key workers, determined to serve our communities face-to-face, over the phone and online. As we double the number of Work Coaches, we will continue to expand our multi-channel engagement with claimants, including booking appointments across our network to support people face-to-face where they need it.

#### ■ **Jobcentres: Staff**

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[94433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what length of training programme new work coaches are expected to undertake before they are able to support claimants independently.



**Mims Davies:**

Currently, new Work Coaches undertake a training programme which in total is 52 working days. This currently consists of 32 days facilitated learning with 20 days' consolidation interspersed throughout, enabling them to become an effective Work Coach with both the knowledge and skills to support claimants. As will all DWP employees, even after an initial learning intervention line managers and employees continue to discuss and agree ongoing skills development

To strengthen the ongoing development of colleagues we are also currently testing a transformed approach based on research from public and private sector. This will contain 20 days facilitated learning plus 5 days structured, practical consolidation. This is followed up with a suite of products enabling colleagues to learn in a flexible, digital way, better supporting the continuously learning culture.

We are evaluating the impact of this approach and will refine and iterate as we go. Testing will continue over the next 6 weeks, refining where needed, until we are confident we can move to this model for all new Work Coaches.

**■ Kickstart Scheme****Seema Malhotra:**[\[95081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many employers have applied for funding as part of the Kickstart scheme since that scheme was established.

**Mims Davies:**

I am pleased to confirm that my department is now processing many applications from across the UK, this is currently a clerical process, so reliable management information is not yet available.

**■ Kickstart Scheme: Disability****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[95223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that young disabled people are able to access the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

We are encouraging employers to create a range of opportunities through the Kickstart Scheme for all young people aged 16 to 24 who are at risk of long-term unemployment including those who have disabilities. Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches will identify those young people most in need of the extra support offered by the Kickstart Scheme. We encourage organisations that work with disabled young people to take part in the Scheme, acting as a Kickstart gateway for their networks of small and medium employers, to encourage and support young people into a number of careers. This will help ensure that there is nothing to exclude young disabled people, or any disadvantaged groups, from accessing the Kickstart Scheme.

DWP also offers a range of support programmes including Access to Work and Disability Confident to advise and support employers looking to take on disabled jobseekers – this support can be accessed through local Jobcentres.

## ■ Occupational Pensions

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

**[95019]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that employers are aware of the need to make pension equalisation payments to those people entitled to receive such payments.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government published a consultation response discussing Guaranteed Minimum Pension equalisation methods in March 2017, and guidance on Guaranteed Minimum Pension conversion and equalisation in April 2019.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/599457/government-response-to-occupational-pension-schemes-regulations-2017-and-related-issues-consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/599457/government-response-to-occupational-pension-schemes-regulations-2017-and-related-issues-consultation.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equalising-pensions-for-the-effect-of-unequal-guaranteed-minimum-pensions/guidance-on-the-use-of-the-guaranteed-minimum-pensions-gmp-conversion-legislation>

The Government believes that schemes have a requirement to equalise in respect of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions and it is something they have been aware of, and should have been planning for, for many years.

**Gill Furniss:**

**[95164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all employers fulfil their legal duties to make contributions to workplace pension schemes.

**Guy Opperman:**

Automatic enrolment duties continue to apply to all employers with eligible workers.

The Pensions Regulators latest message on reporting duties and enforcement is published on its website, here: <https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/covid-19-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-consider/covid-19-an-update-on-reporting-duties-and-enforcement-activity>

Government is monitoring the implications of Covid-19 for savers, employers and the pension industry. And as part of supporting the United Kingdom's economic recovery, our aim remains to help workers achieve greater financial resilience for the long term.

## ■ Pension Wise: Coronavirus

**Neil Gray:**

**[95086]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have booked a Pension Wise guidance session since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Guy Opperman:**

Between 1 March 2020 and 24 September 2020, the number of Pension Wise guidance sessions booked totalled 69,815.

**■ Pensions: Coronavirus****Neil Gray:****[95085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have (a) accessed and (b) transferred their pension early since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak which is then potentially classified as an unauthorised payment from their pension fund.

**Guy Opperman:**

This government is committed to safeguarding consumer savings. We have introduced, with other departments, measures that assist all savers to understand their choices and the possible risks of the choices they make along with legislation to protect those most vulnerable to scams.

There is currently no information available about pension unauthorised payments since the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak. This is because administrators of a registered pension scheme must tell HMRC when certain reportable events occur; reportable events include unauthorised payments. The scheme administrator does this by completing and submitting an Event Report for a tax year, these must be received by HMRC by the 31<sup>st</sup> of January after the end of the tax year to which the Event Report relates. Therefore, reports for the period March to date are not available.

The data available from the industry has so far revealed little evidence of an increase in transfers or scams since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak. Similarly, independent regulators report less of a problem. We will continue to monitor and assess if there has been any increase in pension scams activity as a result of the crisis.

**■ Pensions: Fraud****Neil Gray:****[95087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is planning to take to increase public awareness of the risks of pension scams.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government is committed to safeguarding consumer savings. The Government is raising public awareness of scams through ongoing communications directly from DWP and with other organisations.

Joint and independent communications from the FCA and tPR spelling out the dangers, what to watch out for and giving clarity to trustees and providers on the boundaries between guidance and advice have been issued since April this year ( <https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/covid-19-savers-stay-calm-dont-rush-financial-decisions> ). Prior to Covid-19 the FCA and tPR conducted regular campaigns, through the ScamSmart branding, to raise awareness of pension scams and what to watch out for, these have been deemed very successful, over 222,000

visited the ScamSmart website to find out how to identify a scam scheme as a result of the most recent pre Covid campaign, July – November 2019.

In addition, Government is actively monitoring the numbers of transfers and scams and preparing further policy responses. At the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, the Department convened a cross-government and regulator group to closely monitor and respond to any increase in transfers and scams. The group includes DWP, HMT, both the Pensions Regulator and the FCA as well as the Money and Pensions Service and the Pension Ombudsman. All of the participating organisations have confirmed that to date no evidence has emerged of an increase in either transfers or scams, based on their internal monitoring of the industry.

DWP continues to communicate regularly on social media to set out the warning signs of a scam and has made multiple posts referencing Pension Scams and #ScamSmart in total across Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn in the period March to September 2020.

The Pension Schemes Bill was amended by Government in the House of Lords to add to the example conditions that can be placed on the statutory right to transfer by regulations. This amendment makes it explicit that the regulations can require that in certain circumstances the member demonstrates they have taken information or guidance before the transfer can proceed to ensure they are informed of the risks.

The Government wants to support all pension savers aged 50 and over in the lead up to accessing their pension savings, to make informed choices about their retirement income, which includes making them aware of Pension Wise through communications from their pension scheme trustees. We intend introducing Single page summary and single page risk warnings from age 50 and then every 5 years until the point they access their pension savings.

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) conducted trials to establish different ways to encourage more people to take Pension Wise guidance before accessing their pension savings under Pension Freedoms. These trials found that a nudge developed using behavioural science principles significantly increased take-up of Pension Wise guidance among those wishing to access their pension savings under pension freedoms. The evaluation report was published in July 2020. We are working to develop the most effective and proportionate way to implement this nudge to pension guidance. We intend to publish our proposed way forward shortly.

In addition we have banned cold calling and seek to provide and prosecute and publicise the conviction of all who commit pension scams.

**Neil Gray:**

**[95088]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of implementing a training programme for pension and finance professionals to help ensure they can readily identify scam risks.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government is committed to safeguarding consumer savings. The Government is raising public awareness of scams through ongoing communications directly from DWP and with other organisations.

Joint and independent communications from the FCA and tPR spelling out the dangers, what to watch out for and giving clarity to trustees and providers on the boundaries between guidance and advice have been issued since April this year. Prior to Covid-19 the FCA and tPR conducted regular campaigns, through the ScamSmart branding, to raise awareness of pension scams and what to watch out for, these have been deemed very successful, over 222,000 visited the ScamSmart website to find out how to identify a scam scheme as a result of the most recent pre Covid campaign, July – November 2019.

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Please see links below for more information about the joint statement from Regulators and the Money Advice Service, and help available, produced by the Pension Protection Fund and supported by government.

<https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/covid-19-savers-stay-calm-dont-rush-financial-decisions>

<https://www.ppf.co.uk/sites/default/files/file-2020-05/COVID-19-and-your-pension.pdf>

DWP continues to communicate regularly on social media to set out the warning signs of a scam and has made 18 posts referencing Pension Scams and #ScamSmart in total across Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn in the period March to September 2020.

The Pension Schemes Bill was amended in the House of Lords to add to the example conditions that can be placed on the statutory right to transfer by regulations. This amendment makes it explicit that the regulations can require that in certain circumstances the member demonstrates they have taken information or guidance before the transfer can proceed to ensure they are informed of the risks.

The Government wants to support all pension savers aged 50 and over in the lead up to accessing their pension savings, to make informed choices about their retirement income, which includes making them aware of Pension Wise through communications from their pension scheme trustees. We intend introducing Single page summary and single page risk warnings from age 50 and then every 5 years until the point they access their pension savings.

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We will continue to work collaboratively with organisations and regulators to look at all interventions which can better protect savers.

## ■ Social Security Benefits

**Dr James Davies:**

[\[92834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the welfare payments which people receive reflect the needs of the individual.

**Will Quince:**

The Government has introduced a package of temporary welfare measures worth around £9.3 billion this year to help with the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chancellor announced a series of policies to support people, jobs and businesses on 20 March 2020 during which he confirmed an increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance for 12 months by £1040 a year, which was in addition to planned uprating of 1.7% announced by the Secretary of State in November 2019. Further decisions on spending will be made at the next fiscal event.

In addition to the standard allowance increase, Universal Credit claimants have also benefited from an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates so that it covers the lowest third of local rents, and during Covid-19 the Minimum Income Floor, (an assumed level of earnings) has been relaxed to zero for self-employed claimants.

The Government has made significant investment to improve Universal Credit's generosity through the reduction in the taper rate from 65% to 63% in 2017, and an extra £1.7 billion a year put into Work Allowances by 2023/24, increasing them by £1,040 a year for working parents and disabled claimants, from April 2019 - an extra £630 a year in the pockets of 2.4 million of the lowest paid families.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Overpayments

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[95101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people affected by administrative errors made by her Department which led to the overpayment of benefits in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[95102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people affected by administrative errors made by her Department which led to financial hardship for claimants in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

**Will Quince:**

The Department does not hold this type of data by geographical area. We are therefore unable to provide this information, as to do so would incur disproportionate costs.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[95063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to improve communication and partnership working between the universal credit system and landlords and letting agents when there are concerns about a claimants' tenancy.

**Will Quince:**

We provide clear routeways for Landlords to raise general queries or concerns about individual cases, for example, through our Partnership Manager network.

In May 2020 we introduced a new online system for private landlords to enable better interaction with Universal Credit. Private landlords are now able to request a Universal Credit tenant's rent is paid directly to them online, which helps claimants who struggle with managing their money to pay their rent. This system replaces the arrangement of completing a form and submitting it via email or post.

This approach mirrors that used by Social Rented Sector (SRS) landlords, who have been able to request direct payment of housing support using the Social Rented Sector Landlord Portal since December 2019. The portal continues to be used by over 700 Social landlords to support the administration of SRS housing costs, and has been vital in helping landlords respond to the challenges of COVID-19. We are continuing to work with landlords to develop improvements to the portal and use their feedback to influence the features we release for the Portal.

Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) are available for those claimants who cannot manage their single monthly payment and there is a risk of financial harm to the claimant and/or their family. APAs may be considered at the outset of a claim by a work coach or case manager, or at any time during the claim, such as if the claimant is struggling with the single monthly payment. They can also be triggered by information received from the claimant, their representative or their landlord.

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[95139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the annual cost of ending the differential treatment of maternity allowance and statutory maternity pay in the calculation of universal credit awards.



**Mims Davies:**

No such estimate has been made as Statutory Maternity Pay is paid by an employer and is considered to be earned income, which can be taxed, and is therefore a form of earnings subject to Universal Credit's Work Allowance (where a claimant is eligible) and tapering, in the same way as other earned income.

Maternity Allowance is paid by the Department to people who are not eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay but who do meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance. The rate varies according to the criteria fulfilled which principally covers employed people who have worked less than the time before they become eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay, self-employed people and people out of work.

It is a longstanding principle of the welfare system that benefits are not paid to claimants with income available from other sources to support themselves. Unearned income, which is provided to meet everyday living costs, is taken into account in the calculation of Universal Credit and benefit entitlement may be adjusted accordingly.

**■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus****Owen Thompson:**[\[95138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women who have applied for universal credit since 1 March 2020 have had their universal credit award reduced as a result of being in receipt of maternity allowance.

**Mims Davies:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**■ Universal Credit: North East****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[95603\]](#)

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 payment in the North East in each month since that uplift was introduced.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[95605\]](#)

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 in Washington and Sunderland West constituency in each month since that uplift was introduced.

**Will Quince:**

The available information on the number of households with children with Universal Credit in payment, by parliamentary constituency and by region, 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>

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Inappropriate Behaviours in the Armed Forces Review

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[88830]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2020 to question 85970 on Inappropriate Behaviours in the Armed Forces Review, whether he has plans in place for the consultation of (a) charities, (b) Community Interest Companies and (c) other stakeholders for Danuta Gray's one year on review of the Wigston report.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 16 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**Johnny Mercer:**

Danuta Gray began her Review on 15 July 2020 and the terms of reference are attached.

The Review seeks to assess progress made against the Wigston recommendations over the past year. Tackling unacceptable behaviour requires a culture change, therefore Ms Gray's Review has engaged with personnel at all ranks and grades, with Non-Executive Directors and private sector experts; it has also been informed by a range of studies and feedback. Culture change is a long-term process and the Wigston Review estimated it would take five to ten years to make a measurable difference; it is too early to consult on a wider basis, but future work is likely to include liaison with Service charities.

**Attachments:**

1. **Wigston one year on review TOR (1).docx**

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

**Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove):** [\[HCWS476\]](#)

The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee met on 28 September 2020 in Brussels, with delegations attending in person and by video conference.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP and Vice President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Northern Ireland Executive and EU Member States.

The Committee undertook a stocktake of Specialised Committee activity since the second meeting in June and was updated on implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement more generally, including the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The UK reiterated the importance of commitment by both sides to upholding obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all respects.

The UK underlined the need for timely and proper implementation of citizens' rights commitments by the EU and Member States. The UK reiterated its commitment to supporting EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU.

The UK reiterated that the measures set out in the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill are designed to create a 'safety net' to ensure the communities of Northern Ireland are protected. The UK was clear that those measures would not be withdrawn.

The UK affirmed its commitment to ongoing constructive engagement with the EU through further Joint Committee meetings and making progress on all issues.

### HOME OFFICE

#### ■ Online right to rent checks

**The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Immigration Compliance and the Courts (Chris Philp):** [\[HCWS475\]](#)

The Right to Rent Scheme was launched to ensure only those lawfully in the country can access the private rental sector, and to tackle unscrupulous landlords who exploit vulnerable migrants, sometimes in very poor conditions. Right to rent checks are straightforward and apply equally to everyone seeking accommodation in the private rental sector, including British citizens. In April, the Court of Appeal ruling confirmed the Right to Rent Scheme to be lawful. Following this judgment, we committed to work with landlords and letting agents to make it easier for lawful residents to demonstrate their

right to rent, and to strengthen the support we provide to landlords when complying with the requirements of the Right to Rent Scheme.

As my Rt hon Friend, the Home Secretary said in this House, we have accepted the important findings in the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, including those in relation to the Compliant Environment. Urgent and extensive work is taking place across the Home Office, including a full evaluation of the Right to Rent Scheme. In parallel, we are working on improvements to the Scheme.

In November, the Home Office will be launching a new online right to rent checking service. This service builds on the successful introduction of the online checking services, for employers conducting right to work checks, holders of a biometric residence permit and those granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

We have worked closely with landlords and letting agents in designing the service, but we need to change right to rent legislation to enable them to rely on the new online service to discharge their legal responsibilities under the Scheme.

Today, I have laid before Parliament the Immigration (Residential Accommodation) (Prescribed Requirements and Codes of Practice) (Amendment) Order 2020.

Landlords will be able to undertake a right to rent check in real time for non-EEA citizens with a valid biometric resident permit or card, or an EEA citizen with status granted under the EU Settlement Scheme. In addition, the Order makes sure that landlords will be able to undertake online checks on those whose leave will be granted under the new points-based system.

The online service makes it simpler for landlords to carry out the checks and protects them. It allows checks to be carried out by video call, and landlords will not need to see documents as the right to rent information is provided in real time directly from Home Office systems.

The service works on the basis of the individual first viewing their own Home Office profile. They may then share this information with a landlord if they wish, by providing the landlord with a 'share code', which can be used to access the prospective tenant's record. This authorisation represents an important safeguard and means landlords will only be able to view an individual's right to rent information, and no other unrelated personal information.

Landlords will be able to undertake either the online check or the existing document-based check; online checks will, therefore, be a voluntary option whilst migrants and landlords develop familiarity with the new service and take-up becomes more widespread. EEA citizens will continue to be able to demonstrate their entitlement to rent to landlords by showing a valid passport or national ID card until 30 June 2021.

The Immigration (Residential Accommodation) (Prescribed Requirements and Codes of Practice) (Amendment) Order 2020 also makes a number of other important changes to improve the operation of the Scheme for landlords and tenants and to simplify the presentation of the list of prescribed documents.

It amends the document list for non-visa national visitors from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the USA who enter the UK using an ePassport gate.

The Order enables new documents issued to third-country-national family members granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme to be accepted by landlords and letting agents as evidence of a right to rent.

It also amends the list of documents that are deemed acceptable under the existing manual 'right to rent' check to include a short UK birth and adoption certificate as well as the long versions of these documents; making it easier for British citizens who do not hold a passport to demonstrate their right to rent.

Finally, the Order amends and updates the existing statutory Code of Practice to reflect these important changes which will improve the operation of the Right to Rent Scheme. A draft of the revised Code of Practice has also been laid before Parliament.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Introducing amendments to maritime international instruments by way of ambulatory reference

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):**  
[\[HCWS474\]](#)

I am making this statement to fulfil obligations relating to the implementation of amendments to internationally agreed merchant shipping requirements into UK domestic law. These requirements will be implemented into UK law by way of ambulatory reference provisions in secondary legislation. The ambulatory reference provisions give direct effect in the UK to these amendments and, in advance of those amendments taking effect in the UK, the Secretary of State has agreed to publish them by way of a Parliamentary Statement to both Houses of Parliament.

This statement relates specifically to amendments agreed in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPOL) and the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (IBC Code).

IMO Resolution MEPC.314(74) amends regulations 1 and 10 of Annex V to MARPOL (which relates to the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships) to allow the use of electronic record keeping. The requirements for the format and content of a ship's record books under Annex V are unchanged but operators may now choose whether these records are made and kept in electronic or hard copy form. The amendment to regulation 10 is implemented by updating the reference to regulation 10.3 of Annex V in regulation 12(2)(a) of the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships) Regulations 2020 (S.I. No. 2020/621). This is achieved by way of the ambulatory reference provision in regulation 4 of those Regulations. The amendment to regulation 1 (definition of "electronic record book") applies by virtue of the reference to it in regulation 10. The amendments come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

IMO Resolution MEPC.315(74) amends regulations 1 and 13, and Appendices 4 and 6 of Annex II to MARPOL. The amendments insert requirements in relation to high viscosity products which, in certain specified areas, will require a cargo tank prewash at the port of unloading until the tank is empty, the residue of which must be discharged to a port reception facility. The amendments to regulations 13 and Appendix 4 are implemented by updating the respective references to these provisions in regulations 24(2)(d) and 28(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution from Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 2018/68) (the NLS Regulations) pursuant to the ambulatory reference provision in regulation 4 of those Regulations. The amendments to regulation 1 (definition of “persistent floater”) and to Appendix 6 apply by virtue of the references to them in regulation 13 (paragraph 7). The amendments come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

IMO Resolutions MSC.460(101) and MEPC.318(74) amend chapters 1, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 of the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (the IBC Code). Chapters 17 and 18 of the IBC Code are referenced in regulations 3(1) and 24(8) of the NLS Regulations and these references are updated pursuant to the ambulatory reference provision in regulation 4 of the Regulations. As a result, ships carrying dangerous chemicals or noxious liquid substances in bulk will need to amend the list of products that they may carry and will require new Certificates of Fitness and Noxious Liquid Substances Certificates. The amendments come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

The amendments referred to in this statement will be published, with explanatory information, in a Marine Guidance Note and will be available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment (Mims Davies):**  
[\[HCWS473\]](#)

My Noble Friend The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (The Baroness Stedman-Scott) has made the following Written Statement.

Later today I will lay before this House the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020. These documents will also be published on the ONR website.

I can confirm, in accordance with Schedule 7, Section 25(3) of the Energy Act 2013, that there have been no exclusions to the published documents on the grounds of national security.