

Daily Report

Thursday, 1 October 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 1 October 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:28 P.M., 01 October 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

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Fraud

Wes Streeting: [\[96132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the amount fraudulently acquired from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

As part of the Bounce Back Loan Scheme application process lenders undertake fraud checks, including Know Your Customer and Anti Money Laundering checks as required. In addition, the application form is clear – any individual who knowingly provides false information is at risk of criminal prosecution. We are working across Departments, and with lenders and law enforcement agencies, to tackle fraudulent abuse of the scheme.

Further details of how we expect the Bounce Back Loan Scheme to perform are set out in our accounts for 2019-20, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of the House. At this early stage, such estimates are naturally highly uncertain as reflected in the explanatory notes of the Accounts.

■ Carbon Emissions

Scott Benton: [\[94568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the legislative proposals needed to enable electricity distribution companies to prepare electricity networks for decarbonisation; what steps he is taking to encourage investment to support the transition to low carbon infrastructure, energy and technology; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As the independent energy regulator, Ofgem regulates electricity distribution companies through a price control framework which governs networks' revenues, investments and performance standards. In its Decarbonisation Action Plan, Ofgem stated its commitment to creating a regulatory environment which enables and encourages networks to invest for Net Zero. The Government is supportive of this objective.

The Government's Green Finance Strategy set out our approach to accelerating green finance and catalysing private investment to support delivery of the UK's climate objectives.

■ Climate Change Convention

Paul Holmes:

[\[94570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what preparations his Department has made for the COP26 climate summit.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department is working closely with the COP26 unit in Cabinet Office and other government departments to bring the world together and commit to urgent action on climate change, supporting in particular work on energy transition, zero emissions vehicles, finance, innovation and nature.

■ Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[96064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what research the Medical Research Council is funding into diffuse midline glioma.

Amanda Solloway:

The Medical Research Council (MRC) is currently funding research relevant to Diffuse Midline Glioma (also previously known as Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG)) and Glioma research more widely. This includes research at the MRC Centre for Regenerative Medicine at the University of Edinburgh investigating cell-specific Polycomb Repressive Complex (PRC) Accessory proteins and the regulation of mammalian neurodevelopment. Mutations that block PRC activity occur in the majority of cases of DIPG. This research will help to understand the molecular basis of brain development and underlying deficits in developmental brain disorders. In addition, researchers at the University of Leeds are looking into the stem cell origins of brain tumours containing non-neural cells, such as glia; defining the cell types driving the formation of tumours will enable more effective design of therapeutic interventions in the future.

The MRC also supports a broader portfolio of research relating to brain tumours that may help to improve our understanding of this particular condition and inform future research and potential treatments. The MRC recently coordinated a brain tumour workshop, in collaboration with the British Neurosciences Association and the Brain Tumour Research Charity, to facilitate increased engagement between the cancer and neuroscience communities and stimulate research submissions.

■ Electric Vehicles

Bill Wiggin:

[\[94349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of electric vehicles produced in the UK in 2030.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Faraday Institution, which supports UK battery development, estimates that the UK will be producing nearly 1.6 million electric vehicles (EVs) per year by 2040. The

report 'UK electric vehicle and battery production potential to 2040' can be downloaded from the Faraday Institution's website at:

<https://faraday.ac.uk/publications/>.

The Government continues to create the right environment to support an increase in the production of EVs in the UK. We have announced up to £1 billion through the Automotive Transformation Fund to develop UK supply chains for the large-scale production of EVs and for further research and development (R&D). £10 million of funding will enable the first wave of innovative R&D projects to scale-up manufacturing of the latest technology in batteries, motors, electronics, and fuel cells. The Government is also encouraging industry to put forward investment proposals for gigafactories and to support supply chains to mass manufacture cutting-edge batteries for the next generation of EVs, as well as for other strategic electric vehicle technologies.

Bill Wiggin: [94350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that electricity supply is adequate to match the increase in demand for electric vehicles.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is working with the energy industry to plan for electric vehicle uptake, and the market is already set up to bring forward investment in new generation capacity; for example the Contracts for Difference scheme supports investment in new low carbon generation, and additional demand can be managed through adjustments to the amount of capacity secured through the Capacity Market auctions.

Electric vehicles also present an opportunity for consumers to contribute to the efficient management of electricity supply and demand, and share the benefits of doing so through smart technologies.

Bill Wiggin: [94351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of people who will be employed in the electric vehicle manufacturing sector by 2030.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Faraday Institution, which supports UK battery development, estimates that the overall industry workforce in the automotive and electric vehicle battery ecosystem could grow by 29% from 170,000 employees in 2020 to 220,000 employees by 2040. The report 'UK electric vehicle and battery production potential to 2040' can be downloaded from the Faraday Institution's website at:
<https://faraday.ac.uk/publications/>.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

John Redwood:

[\[94321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential increase in electricity demand in order to charge electric cars by 2025.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

There are a number of important factors that will affect the way in which electric vehicle charging demand could impact the electricity system. BEIS officials engage with National Grid over their production of the annual Future Energy Scenarios (FES), which looks ahead to show what the future of energy in Great Britain might look like. The latest FES shows that, under all scenarios by 2025, there will be sufficient generation to meet peak demand. It also shows benefits provided by smart charging of electric vehicles, for example during periods when electricity demand is low or where there is plentiful renewable electricity generation, which can reduce peak demand and overall system costs, as well as benefitting consumers.

■ Energy: Prices

Drew Hendry:

[\[96103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with Ofgem on their progress in implementing the Consumer Vulnerability Strategy 2025.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

BEIS regularly engage with Ofgem to discuss their progress in implementing the Consumer Vulnerability Strategy 2025. Since this was published, in October 2019, Ofgem has made progress on their first-year priorities, including:

- Creating an analytical framework to consistently assess the impact of regulatory policies on groups of consumers in vulnerable situations, published in May 2020;
- Strengthening protections for consumers who self-disconnect from prepayment meters or self-ration, and protections for consumers who struggle to pay their bills. Ofgem consulted on proposals in June 2020 and intend for protections to be in place by the end of 2020, and;
- Proposing a requirement on gas network companies to adhere to a vulnerability principle, making network companies more accountable for the service they provide consumers in vulnerable situations, through a licence obligation. Ofgem is planning to issue the statutory consultation in December and for the condition to come into effect on 1 April 2021.

■ Energy: Self-sufficiency

John Redwood:

[\[94319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure UK energy self sufficiency.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to making sure consumers have secure, affordable and increasingly clean energy. Maintaining a diverse energy market is essential as we move to end our reliance on fossil fuels as part of our Net Zero ambition.

Great Britain's (GB) gas market is one of the most liquid and developed markets in the world and provides security through diversity of supply. GB's gas sources include indigenous production, six pipelines with Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands and three Liquefied Natural Gas terminals. In addition, the United Kingdom has a number of gas storage facilities, which act as a source of system flexibility when responding to short-run changes in supply and demand.

As an increasing proportion of electricity is generated from inflexible and intermittent low-carbon sources, diversity of electricity supply will continue to be critical to providing the necessary flexibility and system reliability. Alongside domestic generation, interconnection with other countries will support delivery of lower costs for consumers, continued security of supply and better-integrated low carbon generation.

■ Energy: Standards**Alexander Stafford:**[\[94593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is providing to energy providers facing penalties for non-delivery of Capacity Market commitments that were terminated as a result of the closure of the Capacity Market in 2018-19.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Capacity Market is the Government's main tool for ensuring security of electricity supply. Capacity agreements impose a range of obligations and milestones on capacity providers both in the lead up to the delivery year and in the delivery year itself. This provides assurance that agreements will be met.

In light of the uncertainty created by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) judgment and subsequent standstill period, the Government recognised that in some instances capacity providers might find it difficult to achieve compliance with these obligations by the set deadline. A range of these obligations and milestones were modified where there was a high provider cost associated with the obligation and its modification would not create risks to security of supply.

■ Events Industry and Trade Fairs: Coronavirus**Andrea Leadsom:**[\[96059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is making an assessment of the potential merits of giving trade fairs and events organisers a three-month opening lead time to enable them to begin trading again.

Paul Scully:

We have worked closely with stakeholders through both the Visitor Economy and Events & Entertainment Working Groups to develop Covid-19 Secure reopening

guidance for providers of events. We continue to meet with sector representatives to discuss the specific issues impacting the full return of trade fairs and events.

Business meetings and events of up to 30 people indoors are allowed in permitted venues if social distancing can be maintained and the venue can demonstrate it has followed the COVID-19 guidance. The rule of six does not apply to work, education, and training activities. Larger business events will be only permitted once it is safe to do so based on public health advice.

■ Heating

Navendu Mishra:

[\[94577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to (a) support the roll-out of large scale non-residential heat pump projects and (b) meet representatives of the Pump it Up campaign.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

A new allocation of Tariff Guarantees has recently opened on the Non Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), supporting larger projects, including ground source heat pumps >100kWth. The Non Domestic RHI will close to new applicants on the 31st of March 2021 and we propose to launch the new Clean Heat Grant scheme, providing targeted support to consumers and small businesses for heat pumps and some limited biomass, in April 2022, following the end of the domestic RHI scheme. This is backed by £100 million of Exchequer funding as announced in the 2020 Budget and will be open for two years.

At the Budget, we also announced future support for large heat pump installations in heat networks through the Green Heat Network Scheme. BEIS will consult on this scheme later in the year. Additionally, our Industrial Energy Transformation Fund will be open to large heat pumps providing process heat.

In the Summer Economic Update, we announced £1 billion funding over the next year, to help public sector buildings through the installation of energy efficiency and low carbon heat measures.

BEIS officials met with representatives of the Pump It Up campaign on 15th September.

■ Heating: Housing

John Redwood:

[\[94322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the rate of transfer from gas home heating to electric over the next five years.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Meeting our net-zero target will require virtually all heat in buildings to be decarbonised, and we believe widespread use of electric heating has the potential to contribute very deep reductions in carbon emissions.

In 2017, 13% of heat was provided by electricity in comparison with 67% from natural gas. Electric heating on gas grid remains small scale. For example, of the c30k heat pumps installed in the UK in 2019, the majority has gone to new builds and off-gas-grid households. Over the next five years, we expect deployment to continue to focus on these sectors.

There are several key consumer barriers to the widespread deployment of heat pumps and BEIS is working with industry to address these. As part of this, we have launched a £16.5m Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project, which seeks to demonstrate the feasibility of a large-scale transition to electrification of heat in Great Britain, by installing heat pumps in a representative range of homes.

The Government is 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 buildings.

■ Natural Gas: Europe

John Redwood:

[\[94320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to avoid UK dependence on (a) continental European and (b) Russian gas.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK gas market is one of the most liquid and developed markets in the world, providing security through diversity of supply. In 2018-19 most of the gas supply to the UK came from domestic production (46 per cent) and imports from Norway (31 per cent).

The UK benefits from mutual gas trade with its mainland European partners (Belgium and the Netherlands). In the 2018-19 gas year our Continental interconnectors supplied 2 per cent of the UK's gas.

There are no gas pipelines directly linking the UK with Russia. In 2018-19, 20 per cent of UK gas supply came from the international Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market. Russian imports represented less than 4 percent of the total supply of gas to the UK and our LNG supply was sourced from 12 different countries.

The UK's gas market remains robust and the Government will continue to test national resilience to reflect the changing nature of gas supply chains and markets.

■ Retail Trade: Urban Areas

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[94447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase consumer confidence in high street retail shopping.

Paul Scully:

We have provided retailers with comprehensive COVID-Secure guidance to assist them in the safe operation of their business. Businesses must carry out a risk assessment and should display a poster confirming they have complied with

guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19. This helps increase consumer confidence that the business they are visiting have taken all reasonable steps to make their premises safe.

Over the summer we ran an Enjoy Summer Safely campaign, including a Shop Local Week, encouraging the public to take advantage of the reopening of the hospitality sector while taking care to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission.

Additionally from 24 September, we have extended the requirement to wear face coverings to include staff in retail.

We have allocated £50million to support the safe reopening of high streets which allows local authorities in England to put in place additional measures to establish a safe trading environment.

■ Wind Power

Paul Holmes:

[\[94571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is providing to new projects for wind-based renewable energy generation.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Wind-based renewable energy is a key part of the government strategy for the decarbonisation of the UK energy sector. Latest figures indicate we now have 14.2GW installed onshore wind (ONW) capacity and we are already a world leader with the largest Offshore Wind (OFW) capacity of 10.1GW (which will rise to 19.5GW by mid 2020s).

In the Clean Growth Strategy published in October 2017, the Government confirmed that we would be making up to £557m of annual support available for further Contracts for Difference (CfD) - the government's main scheme for supporting renewable energy projects.

In the last CfD allocation round (AR3) result in September 2019, 10 out of the 12 contracts awarded were wind based renewable energy projects. The next CfD allocation round (AR4) is planned for 2021 and both onshore and offshore wind projects will be able to bid for contracts.

The OFW Sector Deal published in March 2019 set out a strategic approach to deliver increased capacity of OFW and in partnership with the Sector to increase supply chain competitiveness, develop new technologies and boost the UK export potential.

CABINET OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Chris Green:**[\[906896\]](#)

What plans his Department has to introduce a national identity card.

Chloe Smith:

The Government has no plans to introduce national identity cards.

Elliot Colburn:[\[906901\]](#)

What steps he is taking to help ensure that SMEs are awarded public procurement contracts.

Julia Lopez:

The Government introduced a number of measures to address the barriers that SMEs face in the procurement process. Last financial year, we spent almost £2bn more than the previous year with SMEs.

Leaving the EU is an opportunity to further reform our procurement rules. We will cut red tape, drive innovation and make it easier for small businesses to win public sector business, delivering better value for taxpayers.

■ **Brexit****Sarah Olney:**[\[95166\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that Article 8 of the Withdrawal Agreement is implemented in full.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK government is committed to implementing the Withdrawal Agreement, including Article 8.

■ **Coal: Exports and Imports****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[93712\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the net effect of import and export of UK coal on the balance of payments in (a) each of the last five years (b) annually with individual countries.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Letter from the UKSA [PQ93712 (1).pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Death

Chris Green: [\[91663\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have died (a) with covid-19 symptoms and (b) from covid-19 to date.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Letter from the UKSA [PQ91663 (1).pdf]

■ Devolution: Public Opinion

Tommy Sheppard: [\[91669\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent in each of the last twelve months on polling the general public on their attitudes to the union.

Tommy Sheppard: [\[91670\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many contracts worth under £25,000 his Department commissioned in each of the last twelve months on polling the general public on their attitudes towards the union.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQs 82315 and 82316](#) on 9 September 2020.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith: [\[94457\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Age UK and (b) other organisations representing older people and people with dementia on the potential effect of introducing mandatory voter ID on the ability of such groups of people to be able to vote.

Cat Smith: [\[94462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of introducing mandatory voter ID on the ability of the Roma and Traveller community to vote.

Dan Carden: [\[94531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to make an assessment of the potential effect of introducing mandatory Voter ID on the ability of (a) Black, (b) Asian and (c) minority ethnic people to vote.

Chloe Smith:

Requiring proof of identity to vote in a polling station will strengthen the integrity of our electoral system, and give the public confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century.

Both Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office evaluations show that the voter identification pilots were a success and the overwhelming majority of electors cast their vote without a problem. There was no indication that any consistent demographic was adversely affected by asking for identification to vote.

Photo identification has been required in Northern Ireland since 2003, when introduced by the last Labour Government. Labour Ministers told Parliament: "The measures will tackle electoral abuse effectively without disadvantaging honest voters.... [ensuring that] no one is disfranchised because of them " (Hansard, 10 July 2001, Col. 739) and "the Government have no intention of taking away people's democratic right to vote. If we believed that thousands of voters would not be able to vote because of this measure, we would not be introducing it at this time" (Lords Hansard, 1 April 2003, Col. 1247). There has been no adverse effect on turnout or participation by such groups since then.

The Government has taken due regard to the public sector equality duty. We will continue to work with the Electoral Commission and other stakeholders including charities and civil society organisations to make sure that such reforms are inclusive for all voters. I have met with charities representing those who are elderly, suffer from dementia, are LGBTQ+, are BAME and other groups. For any voter who does not have one of the required forms of photographic ID, a local elector ID will be available, free of charge, from their local authority.

ID is already requested normally and reasonably in many areas of life, including by many constituency Labour parties, who require voter identification to vote in Labour Party selection meetings. The Labour Party's NEC also mandates two forms of ID for any members joining an association which is in special measures.

■ Imports**Louise Haigh:****[93631]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) guidance and (b) public information has been issued to businesses on complying with the import of products, animals, food and feed system.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Border Operating Model published on 13 July confirmed the requirements for checks and new documentary processes for animals and plant products. Details are available on gov.uk.

■ Infrastructure: North West

Paula Barker:

[\[92930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans his Department has to increase (a) infrastructure spending and (b) the number of large infrastructure projects in the North West of England.

Julia Lopez:

Spring Budget 2020 set out that the public sector will invest more than £600 billion in our future prosperity. The infrastructure plans set out at Budget included measures to invest in strategic roads around England, improve mobile coverage in rural areas, better support flood defences, and further fund urban transport systems. Specific allocations and delivery plans will be set out later this year.

■ Life Expectancy

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[96084\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of life expectancy in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in the last ten years.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ96084 [PQ96084.pdf]

■ Local Government: Elections

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[94353\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the 2021 local elections in England being conducted through all-postal votes.

Luke Pollard:

[\[94540\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he will take to ensure that everyone will be able to vote in the local council elections in May 2021; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing postal voting capacity.

Chloe Smith:

The UK Government is of the view that it would not be appropriate to impose an all-postal vote for the local and mayoral elections in England, and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, in May 2021. All-postal voting increases fraud risks, and removes choice from voters who wish to cast their vote in person.

Postal voting on demand already allows any registered elector to apply for a vote by post.

The Government is working with the electoral administrators and Public Health England to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections, including ensuring polling stations are safe and covid-secure places to vote. People will be able participate in the polls safely, and in a way of their choice, whether by post, proxy or in-person.

This work is outlined in my recent letter to Electoral Returning Officers, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-chloe-smith-mp-to-returning-officers>

■ Ministers: Correspondence

Daisy Cooper: [94554]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many letters Government Ministers have (a) received from MPs and (b) replied to since 1 May 2020.

Julia Lopez:

This information is not held centrally. Each department is responsible for its correspondence.

■ Mortality Rates

Mr Gregory Campbell: [94341]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the daily death rate was from (a) cancer, (b) dementia (c) Alzheimer's disease, (d) coronary heart disease, (e) stroke and (f) covid-19 in the latest period for which figures are available.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ94341 [PQ94341 (1).pdf]

■ Overseas Trade: Republic of Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: [94339]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the change in value was of (a) exports and (b) imports between the UK and the Irish Republic between (i) 2018 and (ii) 2019.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ94339 [PQ94339.pdf]

■ Polling Stations**Cat Smith:**[\[94458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made about the accessibility of polling stations to people with dementia.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone who is eligible can participate in our democracy. Local authorities are responsible for designating polling places and the law requires them to make sure that, as far as is practicable, these are accessible to the local community, including those voters with a disability.

■ Public Sector: Contracts**Dan Carden:**[\[94529\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness, and (b) value for money of private companies contracted to provide public services in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Dan Carden:[\[94530\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what penalties have been applied to private companies who have not fulfilled the terms of procurement contracts related to the covid-19 outbreak.

Julia Lopez:

As has been the case under successive administrations, departments are responsible for their commercial decisions, including the award and monitoring of contracts. All contracts, including those designed to address Covid-19 issues, must achieve value for money for taxpayers. Details of awards should be published in line with Government transparency guidelines on gov.uk.

■ Redundancy**Rachael Maskell:**[\[96106\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) people and (b) people who are (i) women, (ii) disabled, (iii) BAME, (iv) under 25 years old, (v) who are over 55, (vi) who are over 60, (vii) who are over 65 years old have been made redundant in each month in 2020.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ96106 [PQ96106.pdf]

DEFENCE**■ Centre of Excellence for Human Security**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[95703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on establishing the Centre of Excellence for Human Security.

James Heappey:

We are continuing to work across Government and with international partners to increase our commitment to this important agenda. In addition to the bi-annual International Human Security course delivered at the Defence Academy, we will continue to deliver international Human Security training programmes and participate in Human Security focused events despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Iraq: Compensation

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the number of cases brought against the armed forces by Iraqi nationals which were settled out of court.

Johnny Mercer:

Details of 326 cases brought against the Armed Forces by Iraqi nationals, which for the purposes of this response are deemed to be common law claims for damages brought against the Ministry of Defence by Iraqi nationals, where an agreement in terms of damages to be paid to the claimant are already in the public domain following responses provided to FOI requests received. Discussions between the claimants' solicitors and departmental officials with regard to the resolution of the outstanding remaining claims in the Iraq Civilian Litigation (ICL) have continued since early 2018, but the terms of these discussions and any outcomes remain the subject of a confidentiality agreement endorsed by Orders of the Court and we are therefore unable to provide a detailed and complete response to this question at this time. However, although the confidentiality agreement remains extant, it is hoped that we will be in a position to provide further information in relation to the remaining outstanding claims in the ICL in the near future.

■ Journalism: Vetting

Stephen Morgan: [95743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date he plans to publish the findings of the independent review that he commissioned into claims of journalists being blacklisted by his Department.

Stephen Morgan: [95744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure UK press access to his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by the Secretary of State for Defence on 21 September 2020 during Defence Oral Questions in the House of Commons.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-09-21/debates/1096F62B-E304-457A-A501-D7D2CD6F997B/TopicalQuestions>

Attachments:

1. 21 September 2020 Defence Orals; Media [Hansard Extract T1.docx]

■ Military Operations: Torture

Abena Oppong-Asare: [94582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on torture victims and their communities of imposing a time limit on claims for actions in respect of personal injuries or death which relate to overseas operations of the armed forces as proposed under the provisions of the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government unreservedly condemns the use of torture and we remain fully committed to our obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, including the UN Convention Against Torture.

The Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill will not deprive victims of torture and ill-treatment of their right to redress in the Civil Courts. They will still be able to bring claims for personal injury or death for up to six years from either the date of the incident, or from the date of knowledge. The six-year time limit is considered to be a reasonable timeframe for claimants to gather the necessary evidence to bring a claim. The Government believes that the prompt determination of civil claims by the courts will benefit both victims and the Ministry of Defence as a defendant in such claims; the later a claim is brought, the more likely it is that witnesses' recollections will fade, making it difficult for the victim to pursue a claim and for the defendant to properly defend the claim.

Royal Military Academy: Coronavirus**Peter Gibson:** [\[95747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst on the upper age limit for applicants to that Academy during the covid-19 outbreak.

James Heappey:

Candidates seeking a commission in the Regular Army should generally be over 17 years and 9 months and under 30 years on entry to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Anyone over 30 is considered on a case by case basis and age waivers can be supported. Officer recruitment is very healthy with the supply of high-quality candidates consistently meeting the demand for places. Places are filled well in advance of the intake date and due to the unique accommodation arrangements at the Academy social distancing measures are less complex to implement, meaning it continues to operate at full capacity. Covid 19 restrictions have not affected the application inflow and there has been no discussion regarding the upper age limit for applicants to the Academy during the covid-19 outbreak.

Saudi Arabia: European Fighter Aircraft**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[96167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) training and (b) other support Saudi pilots trained in the UK to fly Typhoons receive from the (i) RAF and (ii) his Department's contractors after they have returned to Saudi Arabia.

James Heappey:

BAE Systems personnel, including seconded RAF personnel, provide routine training support to RSAF aircrew in Saudi Arabia. This refresher training supports type-qualification on all UK-supplied platforms. BAE Systems personnel also maintain simulators providing synthetic training on the Typhoon platform.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[96168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the base locations are in Saudi Arabia of the Royal Saudi Air Force's Typhoon pilots who have been trained to fly in the UK by the RAF.

James Heappey:

Information about Royal Saudi Air Force bases is publicly available online.

Sri Lanka: Military Aid**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[96093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will review his Department's defence engagement programme with Sri Lanka in light of reported human rights abuses in that country.

James Heappey:

Our Defence Engagement programme with Sri Lanka is to encourage the development of a modern, accountable and human rights compliant military. Promoting adherence to international humanitarian law and human rights compliance is integral to our engagement. We constantly review our relationship with the Government of Sri Lanka and continuously monitor the context and viability of the approach, to ensure that UK assistance and engagement is in line with our values and is consistent with our domestic and international human rights obligations.

The UK Government will continue to work with international partners and press for truth, reconciliation, accountability and justice following the conflict in Sri Lanka, to ensure all communities can live peacefully.

Thangam Debbonaire:[\[96094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of withdrawing the UK's resident Defence Advisor from Sri Lanka in response to reported human rights abuses in that country.

James Heappey:

As we seek to influence change, the UK's resident Defence Advisor's engagement with the Government of Sri Lanka forms an important contribution to our efforts to hasten the development of a modern, accountable and human rights compliant military. We carefully consider our engagement with individuals accused of human rights violations against the operational urgency and essential nature of the discussion. Recent engagement with key Sri Lankan officials has been to discuss urgent Covid-19 operational issues, including the safe return of British nationals to the UK and the welfare safeguarding of the remaining British nationals in Sri Lanka.

■ Yemen: Military Intervention**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[96164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of whether UK-trained pilots have undertaken combat missions in Yemen.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:[\[96165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the UK does not monitor whether UK-trained pilots have gone on to undertake combat missions in Yemen.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:[\[96166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his Saudi counterpart on whether UK-trained pilots have undertaken combat missions in Yemen.

James Heappey:

Decisions on the employment of trained Royal Saudi Air Force personnel, including aircrew, are matters for the Saudi Arabian Government as they would be for any sovereign nation.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Bank Services**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[95598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure the transparency of the process by which funds are allocated through the Dormant Accounts Scheme.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[95599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of funds from the Dormant Account Scheme has been allocated to environmental causes in each year since that scheme's creation.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[95600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to increase the proportion of funds from the Dormant Account Scheme that are required to be allocated to environmental causes.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Funding unlocked through the Dormant Assets Scheme is distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF). Each nation in the UK directs TNLCF on how to distribute its allocation of the funding to social or environmental causes. In England, it is directed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and must be spent on causes related to youth, financial inclusion, or social investment. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Ministers direct funding to various youth and environmental initiatives. For example, the Welsh government has spent over £2m on a mix of projects focussing on climate change and sustainability.

The Government will soon publish a response to the consultation on expanding the Dormant Assets Scheme to include a wider range of financial assets. This is a long term process, also involving discussion on how potential future dormant assets funding could be spent.

■ **BBC: Public Appointments**

Christian Matheson: [\[96088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what role the Commissioner of Public Appointments will play in the process of selecting a new Chairman of the BBC.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments is the independent regulator of public appointments. The Commissioner's statutory functions are set out in the Public Appointments Order in Council 2016. The Commissioner's primary role is to provide independent assurance that public appointments are made in accordance with the Principles of Public Appointments and the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Christian Matheson:

[\[96089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the process will commence to appoint a new a Chairman of the BBC; and whether that process will be an open competition.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The process to appoint a new Chairman of the BBC will be a fair and open competition, run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. We expect to launch the process shortly.

Christian Matheson:

[\[96090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the criteria by which he is seeking a candidate for the Chairmanship of the BBC.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Once the process opens to applications, the full role specification will be publicly available on the Cabinet Office's Public Appointments website, where all roles are advertised.

■ Entertainments: Coronavirus

Paul Girvan:

[\[91791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that funding for the live entertainment industry is made available to all parts of the sector.

Caroline Dinenage:

- The Government recognises that the pandemic presents a significant challenge to the live entertainment industry.
- The £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund will secure the future of the performing arts and live events, protect jobs in the industry and ensure work continues to flow to other parts of the sector, such as freelancers, the self employed and people who work in production services.
- The Cultural Recovery Fund is devolved. Northern Ireland has received £33 million from the Fund under the Barnett formula.
- To complement the funding for organisations made available by Government, Arts Council England have announced £95m of additional support for individuals in England, including freelancers.
- ACE will also be adding £2m into relevant benevolent funds to support those less well supported by the existing programmes, including stage managers and technicians.
- The Chancellor has announced the Winter Economy Plan to protect jobs and support businesses over the coming months, once the existing Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme come to end.

Paul Girvan:

[91792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department plans to take to further steps to support the live entertainment industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinéage:

- The Government recognises that the pandemic presents a significant challenge to the live entertainment industry.
- We have provided a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them stay open. The Cultural Recovery Fund is devolved. Northern Ireland received £33 million from the Fund under the Barnett formula.
- In England, we have supported 135 grassroots music venues at the risk of imminent closure through £3.36m of emergency funding from the £1.57bn Fund.
- The Government has also provided unprecedented financial assistance worth over £100billion, which many organisations in the live entertainment sector have been able to access. This financial support includes a years' business rates holiday, a reduction in VAT for concert tickets from 20% to 5% for 6 months, and the Bounce Back Loans scheme.
- The Chancellor has announced the Winter Economy Plan to protect jobs and support businesses over the coming months, once the existing Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme come to end.
- On rent liabilities, the Government has extended temporary tenant protections, meaning businesses, including those in the live entertainment sector, will be protected from the threat of eviction until the end of the year, providing commercial tenants with greater security and protecting vital jobs.
- We will continue to work with the sector to find other ways to provide support.

■ **Gambling: Suicide**

Mr Richard Holden:

[96210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 on (a) levels of gambling-related harm and (b) rates of gambling-related suicide.

Caroline Dinéage:

The government launched a call for evidence on loot boxes on 23 September 2020 to seek detailed information on the impact of loot boxes on players, particularly children and young people. The call for evidence will run until 22 November 2020 and will examine concerns that loot boxes may encourage gambling-like behaviour and lead to problem gambling, as well as examining the size and scale of the loot box market in the UK, and the impact of current voluntary and statutory protections.

The government stands ready to take action should the outcomes of the call for evidence support taking a new approach to ensure users, and particularly young people, are better protected.

■ **Lord Moore of Etchingham**

Jo Stevens:

[\[96092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many meetings (a) he or (b) he and the Prime Minister has had with Lord Charles Moore in 2020; and on what dates those meetings took place.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Meetings with external organisations and individuals undertaken in a ministerial capacity are published on GOV.UK on a quarterly basis.

■ **Third Sector: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[94446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support volunteers in the third sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Volunteers have been an incredible force for good during the COVID-19 crisis. The Government is taking steps to ensure that volunteers are supported during these unprecedented times by providing up-to-date public guidance to enable volunteers to safely and effectively respond to the crisis, and working closely with voluntary and community organisations to ensure volunteers are deployed where they are most needed.

DCMS has provided a £4.8million grant to the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, to support its work to improve coordination in the voluntary sector, and match the country's strong base of volunteers with demands. It has enabled initiatives such as Journey Makers: so far, over 600 Journey Maker volunteers have been deployed at 64 bus and rail stations nationwide to support people to safely use the public transport network.

The Government has also extended its support for the NHS Volunteer Responders programme, and is recruiting additional volunteers in areas where demand for services is high.

EDUCATION■ **Children: Coronavirus****Abena Oppong-Asare:****[96213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking with local authorities to ensure that children's services are not adversely affected due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for the government.

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

We are also monitoring referrals to children's services via our regional teams and via the Vulnerable Children and Young People survey, which collects data fortnightly from local authorities in England. As well as this, as part of a phased return to routine inspection, Ofsted are making assurance visits to children's social care providers.

The government has provided an unprecedented package of support for vulnerable children, including:

- £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures, including in children's services. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area.
- £1.6 million of funding for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to help promote and expand their national UK helpline which provides advice and guidance and support to adults reporting safeguarding concerns.
- The Adoption Support Fund has £8 million to help families under pressure as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The Innovation Programme with more than £12 million for 14 projects tackling increased risk, including from domestic violence and supporting teenagers at risk of exploitation.
- See, Hear, Respond is a £7 million partnership of national children's charities and local organisations to provide targeted support to vulnerable children, young people and their families who are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Laptops and tablets for children with social workers and care leavers to help them keep in touch with the services they need, as well as 4G internet devices for connecting to the internet.
- Continuing the Social Work Together programme to match social workers to employers bringing back 8,000 former social workers onto the professional register.

We have also made temporary legislative changes to help reduce pressure on the system and enable children's services to continue to support vulnerable children during these unprecedented times.

Our latest guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak is available at:

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

■ Children: Day Care

Ian Lavery: [95643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps he has taken to support the childcare sector to ensure that parents can access the childcare that they need during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 29 September 2020 to Question [95158](#).

■ Children: Social Services

Ian Lavery: [95644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to increase funding for (a) children's centres, (b) youth workers and (c) other early intervention services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government has provided £3.7 billion of funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area, including on children's centres, youth work and other early intervention services. We will keep this under very close review.

This funding is in addition to the £2.9 billion core spending power available to local authorities this financial year. This includes £1 billion of grant funding that can be used flexibly by local authorities to deliver adult and children's services.

Longer term funding considerations are a matter for the next Spending Review.

■ Education: Disadvantaged

Zarah Sultana: [96203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of school closures on (a) Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils and (b) other pupils experiencing the poorest educational outcomes.

Nick Gibb:

The Department have commissioned an independent research and assessment agency to provide a baseline assessment of catch up needs for pupils in schools in

England. They will then monitor progress over the course of the year, based on existing assessments, to help us target support. This research is a priority for the Department.

This research will make use of existing assessments that schools already choose to use and are typically taken by over one million children each year. This will allow the Department to assess how a range of groups are performing this year – including the most disadvantaged and those with historically poor outcomes.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department has been clear that no child should fall behind as a result of COVID-19. Now children are back in school, teachers are assessing what support their pupils need to get back on track, and head teachers have the flexibility to spend their allocation from our £1 billion COVID-19 catch up fund in the way they decide is best for their pupils, using approaches that are known to have the most impact.

The Department also continues to provide pupil premium funding, worth £2.4 billion in the current financial year, that aims to reduce the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils.

■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus

Anthony Mangnall:

[94551]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of permitting UK-based school residential trips to take place where the venues hosting those trips are able to provide evidence that they are covid-19 secure.

Nick Gibb:

The guidance for full school opening enables schools to resume educational day visits but continues to advise against overnight educational residential visits. The Department's educational visits advice is in line with guidance from Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and will be reviewed again in November 2020.

The full guidance can be viewed at:

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

■ Foster Care: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis:

[96071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department has provided to foster carers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought unprecedented challenges to some foster families. Foster parents play an invaluable role, especially now, in the stability and care of some of our most vulnerable children and in our response to the outbreak. The department remains committed to taking the necessary action to ensure that

foster parents receive the respect and support that they need and deserve. That is why, in June, we launched the new FosterlinePlus service, providing free access to a range of specialist one-to-one support and advice services for foster families who need additional guidance during these uncertain times.

This year, the government has issued over £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures, including within children's social care. Fostering services have been using this funding to provide additional resources to families, including an increase in allowances and direct support, and to maximise foster carer capacity.

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

Our latest guidance for fostering services can be found here:

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

■ National Tutoring Programme: Travellers

Zarah Sultana:

[96202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will allocate ring-fenced funding as part of the National Tutoring Programme to children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities.

Nick Gibb:

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) will provide additional, targeted tutoring support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils who need the most help to catch up. It is important that decisions about what support pupils receive are made locally by those who understand their needs. Schools are encouraged to direct NTP support to those pupil premium pupils who have been hardest hit by the disruption to their education. However, they are able to exercise their professional judgement to include other disadvantaged and vulnerable children who are most in need of support.

As well as the NTP, the Department is also providing £650 million for a catch-up premium for all schools to help make up for lost teaching time. Schools can prioritise support based on individual needs, including pupils from deprived backgrounds and pupils facing other challenges, such as young carers, those working with a social worker, and those with mental health needs. Schools are free to use this funding to meet the needs of their pupils, including, for example, intervention programmes, extra teaching capacity or access to technology.

■ Physical Education

Anthony Mangnall:

[94552]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that all pupils are able to access physical education outdoors.

Nick Gibb:

It is important that children continue to remain fit and active and take part in the 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended by the Chief Medical Officers wherever possible. The Department encourages schools to offer outdoor opportunities for physical activity, but it is for them to decide whether they are satisfied that it is safe to do so given their circumstances and facilities.

Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education (PE), sport and physical activity will be provided for their own students, following the measures in their system of controls. The Department has published guidance on how schools can provide outdoor PE and opportunities for pupils to be active, including links to detailed advice from subject organisations. Schools can offer outdoor curricular and extra-curricular team sport, including contact sport, where there is approved guidance from national governing bodies. Further guidance is available at:

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

■ Pupil Exclusions**Colleen Fletcher:****[96085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the trends in the level of school exclusions in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Colleen Fletcher:**[96086]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children found in possession of a knife at school in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

Statistics on exclusions are available in the National Statistics release on permanent and fixed period exclusions in England, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>.

Data at national, regional and local authority level by year are available in the 'Download associated files' section, in the file 'Permanent and fixed period exclusions - by geography'. The same data can also be obtained with the 'create your own tables' function. This data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/4ee34700-daa5-4fb6-acc9-7d99f1d9ff0e>.

The Department does not hold data on the number of children found in possession of a knife at school. When a pupil is excluded, the category of the reason for exclusion is recorded, but possession of a knife is not a specific category. The categories used are available in Annex B of the exclusion statistics methodology document which can be viewed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/pupil-exclusion-statistics-methodology>.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Alex Davies-Jones:

[96225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Departments' policy is on measuring attendance rates at schools where children have been sent home from school due to a covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

School attendance rates are based on the data collected via the termly school census. Data relating to the autumn term of the 2020-21 academic year will be collected as part of the spring 2021 census.

The Department has included an additional category 'not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus' for use in situations as outlined in the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/addendum-recording-attendance-in-relation-to-coronavirus-covid-19-during-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year>.

Sessions recorded under this category will not count towards normal absence in the statistical releases derived from this data.

In addition to the termly school census, the Department is monitoring data collected daily from schools who are self-reporting and manually inputting data through a web portal each day. We ask schools where children have been sent home due to a COVID-19 outbreak to provide the number of pupils and students not attending due to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, and those that have been requested to remain home due to a potential contact with COVID-19.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[96226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children have been sent home from school due to a covid-19 outbreak since March 2020; if he will publish the number of those children who have been sent home who have been counted in his Department's attendance figures; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Keeping close track of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools is a priority for the Government. Public Health England (PHE) leads in holding data on infection, incidence and COVID-19 cases overall. PHE have published data on COVID-19 incidents by institution, including educational settings. This data can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports>.

The Department is currently collecting data from schools on a daily basis, as well as gathering information from local areas and following up with individual settings to confirm that procedures for requiring pupils to isolate are well understood and that necessary decisions are made on the basis of public health advice.

The Department collects data on the number of schools that have indicated that they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment measures. We are currently

looking at the quality of the data collected with a view to publishing it as part of the official statistics series. The series includes published data on school openings and attendance, which shows that at a national level approximately 93% of state-funded schools were fully open on 24 September. Of all schools that responded to the survey, 6% said they were not fully open due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 on 24 September. Approximately 88% of all children on roll in all state-funded schools were in attendance on 24 September. More information is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous:

[R] [96163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to disburse the additional funding and grants for costs associated with the covid-19 outbreak claimed for by (a) Eversely Primary School and (b) other schools.

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.

The first claims window for the COVID-19 schools fund closed on 21 July. There will be a further opportunity in the autumn for schools to claim for exceptional costs that fell between March and July. This second claims window will be available for schools who were unable to claim in the summer and will be for the same eligible cost categories.

Schools have claimed £104 million against the standard expenditure categories in the fund, as set out above. The Department will be making further payments in the autumn term to schools who either claimed outside of the standard categories or whose claims exceeded the cost limit, following an assessment of their claims. Along with other schools who made a claim outside of the standard expenditure categories, Eversley Primary School, Enfield, will receive a payment in the autumn term which will reflect the outcome of that assessment.

■ Students: Housing

Sarah Owen:

[96196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has had with (a) universities who operate student accommodation and (b) private providers of student accommodation on their response to the covid-19 outbreak since March 2020.

Vicky Ford:

The department is in frequent contact with representatives of the higher education sector, having regular interactions at both official and ministerial level with key parties, including Universities UK and the Office for Students. Officials have also been in frequent contact with representatives of private providers of accommodation, including Unipol, who operate the national codes of practice for private student accommodation providers.

I have spoken with representatives of Unite and Unipol at the Higher Education Taskforce, which the government convened in August. The Taskforce continues to work with the sector on the challenges universities, colleges and their students are facing due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

On 10 September, the government issued updated guidance for providers on reopening campuses and buildings to help providers make informed decisions about their provision, which is available at:

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

This guidance builds on the advice provided in June, and updated in July, which universities have been using to plan for a safe return. Policies are kept under review as the situation evolves, based on the latest advice from Public Health England and evidence of the effectiveness of interventions and support for students and providers. The guidance reflects the latest scientific advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.

The department has worked with universities to ensure that they all have outbreak plans. These have been developed in conjunction with local public health teams and all have been or are being agreed with local directors of public health. The plans should cover a range of scenarios, including outbreaks in accommodation, both on and off campus.

The government has published guidance for landlords and tenants who may be affected by current events, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>.

■ Students: Loans

Kate Green: [\[95623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what changes are made to a student's maintenance loan when circumstances require them to change from a student living away from home to a student living at their home.

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises that some may students may have to move back home as a result of changing circumstances due to COVID-19 and is considering what steps should be taken.

■ Teaching Excellence Framework Independent Review

Emma Hardy: [\[96175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the independent review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework conducted by Dame Shirley Pearce and submitted in August 2019.

Michelle Donelan:

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

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Pest Control**

Simon Hoare: [\[96129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the draft National Action Plan on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides will be published for consultation; and what steps it will include to encourage a reduction in pesticide use and increase in the uptake of integrated pest management by UK farmers.

Victoria Prentis:

The revised National Action Plan for the Sustainable use of Pesticides (NAP) will be published for public consultation later this year. In line with the 25 Year Environment Plan, the NAP will put Integrated Pest Management at the heart of the Government's approach to promote alternative techniques to protect crops, including physical, biological and other non-chemical methods. Through the NAP we aim to minimise pesticide use and reduce risks to human health and the environment while ensuring that farmers can protect their crops.

■ Air Pollution: Coronavirus

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[95991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will postpone the introduction of proposed Clean Air Zones until after the end of the covid-19 outbreak to minimise the financial and societal effects on businesses and residents; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

In many areas we have seen significant improvements in air quality as a result of the reduction in traffic caused by the Covid-19 outbreak, allowing people to breathe cleaner air than they have done in years. However, traffic levels are increasing in many areas. As my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said, we do not believe that the temporary drops in traffic levels should be used as a reason for not progressing actions to clean up our air. For this reason, we remain fully committed to working with local authorities on the introduction of Clean Air Zones in those areas where they have been identified as necessary.

While we accepted delays to the implementation of Clean Air Zones following the initial outbreak of Covid-19, we are now working with local authorities to introduce them as soon as possible where evidence shows they are still required.

Local authorities can continue to access support from the Clean Air Fund to help businesses impacted by Clean Air Zones, which forms part of the £880 million funding to deliver nitrogen dioxide reductions.

■ Anaerobic Digestion

Alan Brown:

[\[95135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with the agricultural sector to develop the market for digestate as an alternative to artificial fertilisers and encourage digestate upgrading.

Victoria Prentis:

The definition of fertiliser in current regulation is being updated in the Agriculture Bill to include alternatives to traditional mineral based fertilisers, as the current definition does not allow for the effective regulation of non-traditional fertilisers.

The UK-wide powers we are taking in the Agriculture Bill, currently before Parliament, will enable us to update current fertilisers legislation to enable new and innovative fertilisers to be marketed and provide farmers with a wider choice of more sustainable fertilisers (such as those from recycled wastes), as part of wider work to increase nutrient use efficiency, nutrient recycling and minimise pollution from fertilisers. The use of digestate needs to be considered alongside these other alternatives to traditional fertilisers.

Stakeholder engagement, public consultation and a full impact assessment will be essential to inform a wider legislative review and subsequent secondary legislation. The use of digestate will naturally form part of this discussion.

Defra has supported research into Anaerobic Digestion (AD) for over 20 years, first becoming involved in agricultural AD at the Silsoe agricultural technology institute and continuing this at a number of operational AD plants across the country.

In addition, following support at consultation, we are legislating through the Environment Bill to introduce a statutory duty for waste collection authorities to arrange for the separate collection of food waste from households in England, at least weekly. Businesses and other organisations generating food waste will also be required to arrange for the separate collection of food waste. This material must be collected for recycling or composting. AD represents the best waste treatment method for unavoidable food waste due to the generation of biofuel and digestate. Local Authorities would be free to decide on the recycling route resulting from locally available infrastructure.

AD can reduce greenhouse gas emissions (such as methane) from on-farm waste when best practice is used, though there is a risk of increased ammonia emissions, an environmental pollutant. AD represents the best environmental outcome for the treatment of unavoidable food waste, due to the generation of bio-fuel and digestate.

■ **Animals: Imports**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[94559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many post-Balai import checks took place between February 2019 and August 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

Between February 2019 and August 2020 there were 51,434 post-Balai import checks completed in Great Britain for commercially traded dogs, cats and ferrets imported under the Balai Directive. This will include both office-based documentary checks and post-import visits at the premises of destination.

■ **Clothing: Sustainable Development**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[94548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the recommendations set out in the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion's report, Making the UK a Global Leader in Sustainable Fashion, published in September 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

We have noted the report published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion on 15 September, and we are considering its recommendations carefully in line with our Resources and Waste Strategy.

Our existing plans for textiles were outlined in the answer I gave my hon. Friend on 17 June 2020 [PQ UIN 58081]. We intend to set out our detailed plans in a new Waste Prevention Programme to be published for comment later this year.

[<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-06-10/58081>]

■ Customs: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[96115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether plans to implement digitally the documentary and identity SPS checks on goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

As set out in the Command Paper on the UK's approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol, it is the Government's intention that checks required under the Protocol should be supported by relevant electronic processes.

Defra continues to work closely with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and relevant enforcement bodies, who have responsibility for undertaking controls for sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) purposes on goods entering Northern Ireland, on the process by which these controls will take place.

In line with our shared determination to maximise the free flow of trade, we are actively seeking to simplify and minimise electronic documentary requirements for SPS purposes.

■ Dogs: Coronavirus

Rosie Cooper:

[96031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on dog welfare.

Victoria Prentis:

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Defra's animal welfare team has been in regular contact with the sector to understand the impacts and what is needed from government. I am grateful for the work done by animal welfare charities to promote advice for pet owners and look after animals during this difficult time.

The Association of Dogs & Cats Homes undertook surveys in April and May 2020 of their members and wider rescue and rehoming organisations to establish the extent of the impact of Covid-19 on the sector. Many rescue organisations have reported a reduction in the number of dogs being abandoned during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, and there has been an increase in demand for dogs and other pets. We are continuing to monitor the effect on pet ownership of lifestyle changes stemming from the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Government recognises that the animal rescue and rehoming sector has been impacted by a significant reduction in income through charity shop closures, cancelled fundraisers and much reduced donations. It has been encouraging to see

the sector working collaboratively to safeguard the welfare of animals in their care (including dogs) in the face of real financial hardship and uncertainty.

We have worked closely with the Canine and Feline Sector Group to agree and update guidance to animal rescue and rehoming organisations and pet businesses to enable them to undertake core operations as far as possible, while maintaining compliance with the social distancing rules and need for hygiene precautions to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. We also provided pet owners, including those with dogs, with information about how to look after their animals during Covid-19:

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-people-with-animals.

The Government remains committed to continued engagement with welfare charities and the wider companion animal sector to understand the longer-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, monitor the animal welfare implications of this and offer appropriate advice.

■ Dogs: Imports

Kenny MacAskil:

[94558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the maximum penalty is for someone found to be illegally importing puppies.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra takes the illegal importation of pets seriously. It is an abhorrent trade which causes suffering to animals and puts the health of pets and people in the UK at risk. We have legislation in place to ensure those guilty of offences are duly punished.

A maximum penalty of 12 months in prison or an unlimited fine apply to the legislative requirements that regulate the import of puppies into England.

In terms of the regulation and enforcement of non-commercial pet travel movements, we operate one of the most rigorous and robust pet travel checking regimes in the world. All pet animals entering Great Britain on approved routes under the EU Pet Travel Scheme undergo documentary and identity checks, and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) works collaboratively with Border Force and other operational partners at ports, airports and inland, sharing intelligence to enforce the Pet Travel Scheme, disrupt illegal imports and seize non-compliant animals. Any animals found to be non-compliant with the Pet Travel Scheme rules may be refused entry or detained until compliant.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Rosie Cooper:

[96032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs were seized by the Animal Health and Plant Agency for having been illegally imported via (a) Eurotunnel, (b) Dover Port and (c) Harwich port in August 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of dogs seized and detained in quarantine at Eurotunnel, Dover Port and Harwich in August 2020 are as follows:

Eurotunnel – 35

Dover Port – 10

Harwich – 0

The number of animals detained in quarantine for Eurotunnel also includes dogs that were seized at Coquelles and moved into the United Kingdom for quarantine purposes.

■ Flood Control**Stephanie Peacock:****[96159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of flood warning systems in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Approximately 1.4 million people in England are signed up the Environment Agency's free flood warning service which sends a message directly to people by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued. On average, over 99% of messages sent are received within 15 minutes.

The Environment Agency is continually reviewing the adequacy and improving its warning service to enable people to take timely and appropriate action. These improvements mean that by 2022 the flood warning service will be expanded to all places at a high risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.

■ Flood Control: Finance**Stephanie Peacock:****[96160]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding the Government has allocated to flood resilience schemes in each year since 2010.

Rebecca Pow:

All the flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes delivered by the Environment Agency help to increase the resilience of people and places to flooding or coastal erosion risk.

Expenditure by the Environment Agency 2010/11 – 2018/19 can be found in table 2 (page 5) of the document available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/funding-for-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-management-in-england.

FINANCIAL YEAR	EA RESOURCE (£M)	EA CAPITAL (£M)	TOTAL (£M)
2010/11	291.6	360.0	651.6
2011/12	287.8	260.7	548.5
2012/13	268.0	269.1	537.1
2012/14	250.6	315.3	565.9
2014/15	282.6	466.7	749.3
2015/16	274.5	390.7	638.2
2016/17	314.6	446.9	761.5
2017/18	339.2	403.1	742.3
2018/19	304.8	453.0	757.8

Figures for 2019/20 spend are still in the process of being audited and will be available in an updated document on the GOV.UK website soon.

The Government invested in property flood resilience measures for homeowners as part of flood recovery schemes delivered by local authorities in 2013/4 (£24 million) and 2015/6 (£45 million). There are new recovery schemes underway for those impacted by the exceptional flooding of November 2019 (closes December 2021) and February 2020 (closes July 2022).

■ Flood Control: Forestry

Stephanie Peacock:

[96161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reforest upstream areas to reduce flooding risk.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's new £640 million Nature for Climate Fund will drive up tree planting and peat restoration rates, including in upland areas. This fund will complement many of the Environment Agency's existing flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes that include nature-based solutions such as tree planting. In addition, the Environment Agency's new National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy outlines the need to increase the use of nature-based solutions including tree planting to slow the flow of or store flood water to reduce flooding risk.

■ Flood Control: Shrewsbury

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[94381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what short-term flood prevention measures will be put in place to tackle the potential for flooding in Shrewsbury in winter 2020-21.

Rebecca Pow:

Over the winter of 2019/20 the River Severn catchment saw some of the highest river levels ever recorded. While, unfortunately, around 1,600 properties were flooded across the West Midlands, Environment Agency (EA) flood risk management assets prevented over 14,500 properties from flooding.

Since the winter floods, the EA has been delivering its recovery programme. This is to ensure that all of its flood assets that were affected by significant flooding are inspected and repaired where necessary.

In the 2020 budget, Government announced a national £120 million package to repair flood risk management assets damaged as a result of the winter floods. For Shrewsbury's assets the EA secured £605,000, covering both Frankwell and Coleham flood risk management schemes. Ahead of this winter, EA flood risk management assets in Shrewsbury have been fully inspected. Repair work to these defences is currently ongoing, however the defences will remain fully operational throughout this process.

As well as asset repairs, the EA continues to deliver its annual routine maintenance programme for the River Severn. This helps to ensure any blockages or debris that may cause an increase in flood risk have been managed and that Shrewsbury is winter-ready, should further flooding occur.

■ Nature Conservation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Wildlife and Countryside Link's campaign for a National Nature Service.

Rebecca Pow:

My department and I have worked closely with the NGO sector and representative bodies to understand the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on their fundraising and operations. Environmental organisations play a critical role in looking after the green spaces that are vital to our health and wellbeing. These organisations are also key delivery partners for the ambitious programme of investment that this Government has committed for nature restoration and tree planting. This is why on 14 September we launched the Green Recovery Challenge Fund which will bring forward up to £40 million of that investment to provide an immediate boost for the environment and to protect jobs, skills and momentum in the sector. I am delighted to say that the Fund has attracted very high level of interest from the sector and

successful bidders will be announced in due course. I note with interest the recent Wildlife and Countryside Link proposal and will continue to encourage the sector to come forward with new ideas.

■ Pesticides

Simon Hoare:

[96130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the addition of pesticides to the exclusions list in the UK Internal Market Bill means that devolved Governments will be able to (a) take additional action which goes beyond that of England to ban or restrict specific pesticide active substances due to concerns over effects on human health or the environment and (b) reduce maximum residue levels for specific pesticide active substances to levels below those of England due to concerns over effects on human health.

Victoria Prentis:

The intention of the pesticides provision in the UK Internal Market Bill is that each part of the UK will remain responsible for deciding which pesticide products can be authorised for sale and use in their respective territories, as they are now. After the end of the Transition Period, each administration in Great Britain will also have responsibility for approval of active substances, a pre-requirement for authorisation of products. This approach will ensure that each administration retains the ability to decide what pesticides can be used in their territory, and to take account of locally specific factors such as environmental conditions or farming practices should that be necessary.

While setting of maximum residue levels will also be devolved within Great Britain after the Transition Period, the intention of the Bill is that the mutual recognition principle will apply to rules on maximum residue levels in the same way it applies to rules on goods generally, to ensure effective functioning of the internal market. This will avoid the potential for new internal trade barriers on sale of food which has been produced lawfully should there be any divergence in maximum residue level decisions.

In practice, all administrations delegate their pesticide regulatory functions to the Health and Safety Executive to undertake on their behalf. This helps to ensure a consistent approach and we are committed to working closely together with the devolved administrations to continue to take joint decisions wherever possible.

■ Recreation Spaces: Health

Sir Gary Streeter:

[94331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) national parks and (b) other public open spaces can be accessed to improve people's health and wellbeing.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is taking a number of steps to encourage and ensure public access to parks, and green spaces more generally, now and more so in the future, to enhance health and wellbeing.

Over the summer we worked with stakeholders to plan and problem solve the easing of restrictions and funded a bespoke multi-media campaign that encouraged access to the outdoors and in a safe and responsible manner. This period saw a significant rise in visitor numbers to green and blue spaces as well as to membership of outdoor activities' organisations.

We are working to complete the England Coast Path and to support our network of National Trails, and intend to create a new National Trail across the North of England. We are ensuring that rights of way are recorded and protected, as well as developing ways to support access through the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme.

Rivers: Pollution Control**Navendu Mishra:**[\[94575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce pollution levels in rivers.

Rebecca Pow:

River pollution comes from a number of sources and requires a concerted efforts on many fronts which are coordinated through statutory River Basin Management Plans. We are tackling pollution from poor farming practice with regulation, financial incentives and educational schemes for farmers. In addition to government investment in many local improvement schemes, water company investment is being scaled up to £4.6 billion, the highest yet, in the next 5 year period. A new task force comprising government and water companies will help address the problem of sewage discharge from storm overflows and our new chemicals strategy will build on an already robust statutory regime to ensure chemicals are managed and handled safely. The Environment Agency is now in the process of developing the River Basin Management Plans that will run from 2021-2027.

Tree Planting**Jim Shannon:**[\[94426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what strategy his Department has in place to ensure that the Government's tree planting targets are met.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government stood on a manifesto commitment to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. This is in line with Committee on Climate Change recommendations, and we are working with the devolved administrations to achieve this target.

We will set out plans to increase planting in England through a new England Tree Strategy, which we have recently consulted on. We will deploy the £640M Nature for Climate Fund, agreed in the March 2020 Budget, to do so. The Prime Minister recently reiterated our commitment to tree planting when he set out the first steps in the strategy to rebuild Britain, building back better, greener and faster.

■ **Veterinary Services: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh: [\[96113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of veterinary officials that will be required at border inspection posts in Northern Ireland for trade from Great Britain; and how many of those veterinary officials have been recruited to date.

Louise Haigh: [\[96114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on the allocation of additional resources to recruit veterinary and other technical staff to manage the new requirements under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Victoria Prentis:

Decisions on the requirement for and recruitment of veterinary and other technical staff within Northern Ireland, including at points of entry from Great Britain, are for the Northern Ireland Executive. Defra continues to work closely with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on this and other aspects of implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol. We are also taking steps to increase official certifier capacity in Great Britain in line with the requirements of the Northern Ireland Protocol. In addition to funding provided last year, we recently launched a £200,000 scheme to provide training for Official Veterinarians and £100,000 for Certification Support Officers.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Air Pollution**

Layla Moran: [\[91717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government is providing support overseas to tackle (a) historical carbon emissions and (b) factory toxic and non-toxic waste resulting from UK (i) infrastructure projects and (ii) consumer demand.

James Duddridge:

The UK's domestic commitments on climate and environment, such as our legislated target for net zero emissions by 2050, and the Environment Bill, have put UK industry at the forefront of low carbon technological innovation and environmental standards.

The Government supports UK industry to export these strengths abroad and requires UK companies operating abroad to apply the highest climate and environmental standards.

For example, the Department for International Trade provides dedicated support for UK companies in waste management and hazardous waste supply chains. UK Export Finance is committed to high standards of environmental, social and human rights risk (ESHR) management. It employs a specialist ESHR team to review projects prior to taking a decision on whether to provide support and monitors to ensure compliance. In addition, the Government's Clean Growth Strategy sets out how carbon pricing will continue to incentivise industrial emissions reductions.

The Government provides extensive support for countries to tackle emissions, cope with the effects of climate change, reduce pollution from industry, and improve environmental standards. Since 2011, we have supported 66 million people to cope with the effects of climate change and avoided 31 million tonnes of emissions thanks to our international climate finance, which we have committed to doubling to £11.6 billion between 2021/22 and 2025/26. FCDO's funding to tackle pollution overseas, including the Sustainable Manufacturing & Environmental Pollution programme, will reduce pollution associated with a range of manufacturing process in developing countries across Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

■ Armed Conflict: Civilians

Dan Jarvis:

[\[96072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to implement the policies set out in the paper entitled UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

Nigel Adams:

HMG's policy paper on the UK's Approach to Protection of Civilians (PoC) in Armed Conflict reaffirms our commitment to the importance of PoC issues and aims to broaden understanding of our position. The paper reviews our 2010 strategy and outlines key domestic and multilateral activity. Taking into account the changing nature of conflicts and initiatives by a range of state and non-state actors, it outlines areas on which we will continue to focus our work across HMG, working with the international community and civil society to improve the protection of civilians. The UK will always uphold international laws, use our influence to encourage others to do likewise, seek to condemn those that do not, and push for accountability.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[96073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Minister is responsible for delivering the commitments set out in the new UK Approach to Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

Nigel Adams:

The Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda is a cross-Government initiative. HMG's approach paper was drafted in collaboration between the former Foreign and

Commonwealth Office, the former Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence. It does not change departmental responsibilities. In line with the breadth and complexity of PoC issues, ranging from humanitarian access to urban warfare, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence will continue to work closely together on the areas of focus set out in the paper.

■ **Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[94544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his timescale is for rescheduling the postponed Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative conference, Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First.

Nigel Adams:

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) International Conference, Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First, was postponed in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We will revisit plans when the international situation allows.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus**

Hannah Bardell:

[\[94479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Government plans to respond to the Third Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Flying Home: The FCO's consular response to the COVID-19 pandemic, published on 21 July 2020.

Nigel Adams:

The Government sent its response to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 25 September.

■ **Bahrain: Human Rights**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[96200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to meetings between his Ministers and Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7 September 2020, what assessment he has made of the veracity of reports from Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon lauded the efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain in promoting the protection of human rights and its countless achievements in this area.

James Cleverly:

The Minister of State for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised a number of human rights issues and cases with Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani during their meeting on 7 September. We believe that Bahrain is taking steps in the right direction to improve its human rights record, in line with the Bahraini Government's Action Plan, which follows the recommendations set out in the 2012 Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry Report. Bahrain is an FCDO

human rights priority country, and we continue to monitor developments on all matters that relate to human rights within the country closely, publishing our assessments in our annual Human Rights Report, most recently in July 2020.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Death**

Hannah Bardell:

[\[94478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to publish an official response to the APPG on Deaths Abroad, Consular Services and Assistance 2019 Report entitled Why families in the UK deserve better and what can be done.

Nigel Adams:

We welcome the report of the APPG's Death Abroad, Consular Services and Assistance 2019. On 28 August I, (Minister Adams) replied to APPG chair, Hannah Bardell's letter of 28 July. In that letter I confirmed that I and my predecessors have repeatedly offered to meet the APPG to discuss their concerns and recommendations. This offer has not been taken up. We have carefully considered the issues raised in the report.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Homicide**

Hannah Bardell:

[\[94480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his former Department's report of January 2015, Review of consular assistance following murder and manslaughter cases overseas, whether his Department plans to publish the outcome of the review of the Access to Justice Unit on support provided to bereaved families and friends after a murder or manslaughter abroad.

Nigel Adams:

The FCO noted in its January 2015 review of consular assistance following murder and manslaughter cases overseas, that a new Access to Justice Unit would be operational by January 2015, and that we would report on progress by June 2015. An update was included in a published report called "Consular Strategy 2013-16: progress during year two" published in May 2015.

Hannah Bardell:

[\[94481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his former Department's report of January 2015, Review of consular assistance following murder and manslaughter cases overseas, whether his Department plans to publish its internal guidance on how it decides (a) who is entitled to consular assistance, (b) what criteria are considered, (c) how vulnerability is assessed and (d) what forms consular assistance can take in cases where support is provided to bereaved families and friends after a murder or manslaughter abroad.

Nigel Adams:

"Support for British Nationals Abroad: A Guide" sets what we can and cannot provide in terms of consular assistance. In addition we have published guidance on gov.uk

outlining consular support available to those bereaved through murder of manslaughter abroad called "Consular support for those bereaved through murder or manslaughter abroad". Vulnerability is assessed individually, according to each person or family's need.

■ **Department for International Development: Staff**

Chris Law: [\[95663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of staff employed by the Department for International Development were from BAME backgrounds prior to the announcement of the merger of that Department with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 16 June 2020.

Chris Law: [\[95664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of staff employed by his Department identified as BAME immediately prior to the announcement of the merger of the Department for International Development with his Department on 16 June 2020.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 30 September 2020]: As of 30 June 2020, the proportion of staff who identified as BAME employed by the Department for International Development was 15%. This figure is for Home Civil Service staff only.

As of 30 June 2020, the proportion of staff who identified as BAME employed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was 17%. This figure is for Home Civil Service and Diplomatic Service staff only.

■ **Dual Use Goods and Technologies: Iran**

Stephen Crabb: [\[94379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the risk of the sale of dual-use goods that could be used for military purposes by Iran after the expiry of the UN conventional arms embargo in October 2020.

James Cleverly:

The UN conventional arms embargo prohibits the sale of military items to Iran. It does not cover dual-use items. All dual-use items for export to Iran are subject to export controls and licences are only granted where this is consistent with the Consolidated EU and UK Arms Export Licensing Criteria. The export of certain dual-use items relating to nuclear and missile technology is also prohibited subject to licensing under UN sanctions.

The UK has been clear that the scheduled expiry of the UN conventional arms embargo in October 2020 would still have major implications for regional security and stability. The UK Government continue to engage regional partners, the US, and others, to find a solution to Iranian proliferation in the region, whilst upholding the

authority and integrity of the UN Security Council. We will also continue to enforce sanctions regimes, including those under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1540, 1701, and 2216 which prohibit the proliferation of weapons to Lebanese Hizballah and the Houthis in Yemen. The UK encourages all states to implement national export control best practice in support of these regimes. The EU arms embargo and UN ballistic missile restrictions on Iran will also remain in place until at least 2023.

■ Education: Overseas Aid

Stephen Crabb:

[\[94380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that UK-funded educational material and teachers supported by UK aid do not promote violence in their teachings to (a) the Palestinian Authority and (b) other countries receiving aid.

James Cleverly:

The UK does not fund textbooks in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. UK Aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) helps to ensure it can deliver essential services, including by contributing to the salaries of vetted education and healthcare professionals in the West Bank. We have regularly raised our concerns about allegations of incitement in Palestinian textbooks, which the Foreign Secretary did most recently with the PA on 25 August. We have also lobbied our European partners to conduct an independent review of Palestinian textbooks, which is currently underway.

In 2019 we undertook an assurance check on contentious education materials for our education programmes and were satisfied that risks are being effectively managed.

■ Females: Equality

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[95233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to (a) progress the equality agenda for girls throughout the world and (b) eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is widely recognised for its leadership on gender equality and women and girls' rights. The challenges of advancing girls' education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's political empowerment and participation, women's economic empowerment, and ending gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, are more acute now, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to engage virtually with our international partners and champion gender equality in multilateral fora including in the UN. Promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls' rights on the international stage are core elements of the

UK's role as a force for good in the world, including fulfilling every girl's right to 12 years of quality education.

The UK is proud to be a world leader on efforts to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict as part of our broader ambitions on gender equality. The UK's continued leadership on these issues was most recently demonstrated at the UN Security Council Open video-conference on Women, Peace and Security on 17 July, which focused on conflict-related sexual violence. The UK will also co-lead the new global Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on Gender Equality. We will drive more concerted, coordinated and scaled-up global action across the international system to prevent gender-based violence.

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review: Conflict Prevention

Mark Pritchard:

[\[93564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to include conflict prevention as part of his Department's contribution to the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

James Cleverly:

When the Prime Minister launched the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, 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.

We fully expect the Integrated Review, together with a Comprehensive Spending Review, to propose fresh ideas to shape the objectives and systems of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, reflecting a drive towards a more effective and more joined-up foreign policy.

■ Kameel Juma Hasan

Zarah Sultana:

[\[96201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to his counterpart in Bahrain on (a) securing the release from prison of 17-year-old Kameel Juma Hasan and (b) the full realisation of his human rights and rights as a child.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the conviction and detention of Kameel Juma Hasan on terrorism charges and are monitoring his case. In response to recommendations in the BICI report and its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Bahrain is undertaking reform of its juvenile justice system. A new 'Child Restorative Justice and Protection from Abuse' Law awaits approval by the Shura Council (the

appointed Upper House). As currently drafted, the new law includes a revised definition of a child as someone under the age of 18 years and a revision of the age of criminal responsibility to 15 years (it is currently 7 years). Specialist child courts and prosecutors will be established for all under 18 years on trial, with separate detention facilities for 15-18 year olds, those below 15 years old and welfare cases. We continue to encourage the Government of Bahrain to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments.

■ **Mohammed al-Roken**

Martyn Day:

[\[96117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Emirati counterpart on the political prisoner Mohammed al-Roken.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of reports concerning the detention of Mohammed al-Roken and are monitoring his case closely. The UK urges all countries to comply with their human rights obligations. Our close relationship with the United Arab Emirates allows us to discuss important issues such as human rights. We consistently underline the importance of political freedoms globally. This includes respect for the right to peaceful protest, the rule of law, and freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. We continue to raise concerns about individual cases regularly. Where the UK has cause for concern, we raise these concerns at official and Ministerial level.

■ **Russia and USA: Arms Control**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[94543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation on the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary holds regular discussions with his US counterpart on a range of issues, including on arms control and strategic stability. These discussions are reflected and supported by daily cooperation at official level between the UK and the US, as well as by wider cooperation with NATO Allies.

US strategic arms, along with those of Russia, are limited by the New START Treaty. We recognise the contribution New START has made to international security and strategic stability by increasing transparency and mutual confidence among the two largest Nuclear Weapons States. As we have stated publicly, both in multilateral fora and in this House, we support its continued implementation and have encouraged the US to extend New START while negotiating a successor agreement.

However, we recognise that New START has its limits. It does not include new Russian systems, nor does it place any limits on China's growing nuclear arsenal. We

therefore urge China to engage seriously with US calls for a new trilateral arms control agreement.

■ Sudan: Education

Harriett Baldwin:

[94413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the education of former combatants reintegrating into civilian life in Sudan.

James Duddridge:

The UK continues to support the civilian-led Transitional Government to achieve peace, agree a permanent constitution, and hold democratic elections. This is vital to our shared vision of a more stable and prosperous region.

While we do not currently have a programme that supports education for former combatants, the August 2020 peace agreement signed between the Government of Sudan and armed groups includes a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process. This process will include removing weapons from members of armed groups, detaching those former combatants from their groups and helping them to reintegrate safely into civilian life. The establishment of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission which will assist Sudan in the implementation of any peace agreements will be central for the international community support of this process.

■ Sudan: Overseas Aid

Harriett Baldwin:

[94412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what programmes his Department is funding in Sudan.

James Duddridge:

The UK continues to be a leading humanitarian donor to Sudan. The UK's pledge of £150m at the Berlin Partnership Conference for Sudan includes £70m bilateral budget for 2020/21 and £80m to contribute to World Bank and International Monetary Fund to work with the Government of Sudan on economic reforms. The £70m bi-lateral budget is comprised of £60m in humanitarian aid to support the UN's \$1.63bn appeal for Sudan. The remaining programming includes work to combat Female Genital Mutilation, provision of clean, affordable water to rural and urban communities and specialist support on the economy, health and media freedom.

The UK also delivers programmes that promote long-term stability in conflict-affected areas, to support marginalised groups, and to encourage reconciliation within conflicted communities. We also support the Chevening Scholarship programme.

■ Tanzania: Coronavirus

Alberto Costa:

[\[95123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans his Department has to review the covid-19 guidance on travel to Tanzania.

James Duddridge:

The FCDO continues to advise against non-essential travel to Tanzania as part of our global travel advisory during the pandemic. All travel advice is under constant review, in consultation with Public Health England, the National Travel Health Network and Centre and our overseas Posts. We will make exemptions from our global advice for countries where the risks to British people are reduced. In the case of COVID-19, we consider the expert UK assessments on risk of exposure to the virus, alongside other relevant linked factors such as the availability of local healthcare, the safety of any local quarantine measures and the resilience of transport options.

■ Tibet: Surveillance

Jim Shannon:

[\[94425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the charges brought against a New York City policy officer for reportedly spying on Tibetan immigrants for the Chinese Government.

Nigel Adams:

It would not be appropriate to comment on this ongoing case. With regards to the implications for UK policy, it is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments not to comment on intelligence matters.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Addictions: Health Services

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[91605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding has been allocated for addiction services in (a) England and (b) each local authority in each financial year since 2009-10.

Jo Churchill:

The public health grant is allocated to local authorities to meet their public health responsibilities and no amount is specifically allocated for addiction services. It is up to each local authority how much of the grant they allocate to these services.

The following table shows the overall public health grant allocations for England in each financial year since 2013-14. Allocations to individual local authorities are published each year and are available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-circulars>

Public health grant allocation to local authorities between 2013-14 and 2020-21

YEAR	PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT (£'000 MILLION)
2013-14	2,662,919
2014-15	2,794,899
2015-16	3,031,236
2016-17	3,387,460
2017-18	3,303,958
2018-19	3,219,000
2019-20	3,134,000
2020-21	3,279,000

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-circulars>

Before 2013, there was specific funding allocated for substance misuse treatment, which was called the pooled treatment budget (PTB). The following shows the figures for 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13. Data before 2010 is not available.

PTB for substance misuse treatment between 2010-11 and 2012-13

YEAR	NATIONAL PTB (£ MILLION)
2010-11	406.70
2011-12	466.70
2012-13	466.70

Source:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20150504104404/http://www.nta.nhs.uk/funding.aspx>

■ Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund

Caroline Lucas:

[90997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he plans to provide to adult social care providers after the Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund ends on 30 September 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

On 17 September 2020 it was announced that the Infection Control Fund, set up in May 2020, is being extended until March 2021. This provides an extra £546 million for the care sector to take key steps to improve infection prevention and control.

The Government will continue to monitor the pressures on adult social care during this period and keep future funding under review.

■ **Ayanda Capital: Protective Clothing**

Deidre Brock:

[\[88342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Ayanda Capital before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in April 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: The Department's procurement records show that the Department has had no contracts with Ayanda Capital over the last five years prior to the award of the personal protective equipment contract.

■ **Blood Cancer**

Martyn Day:

[\[88355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of diagnoses there will be for (a) leukaemia, (b) myeloma and (c) lymphoma in England over the next 10 years; and what plans he is putting in place to respond to that estimated number of diagnoses.

Jo Churchill:

No such estimate has been made.

■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

Jim Shannon:

[\[89702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of women affected by the backlog in breast screening appointments that has arisen as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service has made significant progress in reducing the backlog of women waiting for breast screening following the pausing of some services due to the pandemic. Measures such as adapting mobile breast screening units so people can be safely seen have been implemented, and all services have now restarted routine screening. People at highest risk will continue to be prioritised.

Since the beginning of June there has been a reduction from just over 468,500 women waiting to be seen to around 143,500 women at the end of August. NHS breast screening services will continue to work to screen these women. A significant challenge now is getting women to uptake their appointment invitation.

■ Cancer

Jim Shannon: [91645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with pseudomyxoma in the UK in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the number of people diagnosed with pseudomyxoma are not available in the format requested. Pseudomyxoma is a rare cancer which is not routinely reported on.

Jim Shannon: [91646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with infantile fibrosarcoma in the UK in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the number of people diagnosed with infantile fibrosarcoma in the United Kingdom are not available in the format requested. Infantile fibrosarcoma is not routinely reported on as a separate group. The Childhood Cancer Statistics, England Annual report 2018 reports that for fibrosarcomas, peripheral nerve sheath tumours, and other fibrous neoplasms there were an average of nine diagnoses annually from 2001 to 2015.

The 2018 report can be viewed at the following link:

http://www.ncin.org.uk/cancer_type_and_topic_specific_work/cancer_type_specific_work/cancer_in_children_teenagers_and_young_adults/

■ Charities: Protective Clothing

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [89817]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of personal protection equipment for charities providing frontline care and support for patients with terminal illnesses.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: As demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) hit record levels during the global pandemic, the Government and industry joined forces to build a PPE distribution network from scratch. With the help of the Armed Forces, the NHS Supply Chain now delivers PPE to 58,000 settings including care homes, hospices and community organisations. Since 25 February 2020 the Department has distributed over 3.4 billion PPE items for use by health and social care services in England in this manner.

Additionally, the Government has authorised the release of over 164 million items of PPE to local resilience forums to help them respond to urgent local spikes in need across the adult social care system and some other frontline services, where providers are unable to access PPE through their usual, or dedicated wholesaler routes.

■ Chemical Intelligence: Contracts

Deidre Brock: [88887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Chemical Intelligence Limited before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in May 2020.

Deidre Brock: [88888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with PPE Medpro Ltd before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in June 2020.

Deidre Brock: [88889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Inivos Limited before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in June 2020.

Deidre Brock: [88891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Clandeboyne Agencies Ltd before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in May 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 September 2020]: The Department's procurement records show that the Department has had no contracts with these companies over the last five years prior to the award of the personal protective equipment contracts.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Justin Madders: [55704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the length of time that people identified as extremely clinically vulnerable will have to continue to shield for during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

From 1 August 2020, clinically extremely vulnerable people in England were no longer advised to shield. National advice for people at high risk from COVID-19 remains available at the following link:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/advice-for-people-at-high-risk/

Vicky Foxcroft: [56078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that any future reviews of guidance on shielding are undertaken in consultation with charities working with shielded groups and patient organisations.

Jo Churchill:

From 1 August 2020, clinically extremely vulnerable people in England were no longer advised to shield. National advice for people at high risk from COVID-19 remains available at the following link:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/advice-for-people-at-high-risk/

We continue to engage with key stakeholders, including charities and patient groups.

Vicky Foxcroft:**[90189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's policy is on the number of daily cases of covid-19 that would result in reintroduction of shielding advice and support.

Jo Churchill:

Shielding is an intervention of last resort, due to the potential mental, physical and other harms caused by social and financial isolation.

To date, clinical advice has not set a threshold for reintroducing shielding. The Chief Medical Officer include multiple factors when considering the need for the reintroduction of shielding advice, of which incidence rates are one element.

Although shielding guidance is currently paused, the National Health Service will continue to maintain the Shielded Patient List allowing us to maintain targeted advice and support to those who are most vulnerable and to change advice and support if necessary. We will continue to listen to medical advice on the level of clinical risk the virus presents to different groups of people at different points in time.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Gerald Jones:****[94488]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risk of the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency being given temporary authorisation allowing patients the covid-19 vaccine before that vaccine undergoes the full licensing process.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 28 September 2020]: All vaccines will undergo a thorough assessment of quality, safety and efficacy before being licensed. The preferred route to enable deployment of a new vaccine for COVID-19 is through the usual marketing authorisation (product licensing) process. If a suitable COVID-19 vaccine candidate, with strong supporting evidence of safety, quality and efficacy, becomes available, we will seek to license that vaccine through the usual route. Until the end of December 2020, European Union legislation requires biotechnological medicines, which would include candidate COVID-19 vaccines, to be authorised via the European Medicines Agency, and a marketing authorisation granted by them would automatically be valid in the United Kingdom. From January 2021, the UK's licensing authority Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will have new powers to license all

medicines, including vaccines. Any temporary authorisation of the supply of an unlicensed vaccine would be by exception and the timing of this would depend on the public health need. Following vaccine deployment, safety will be proactively and continuously monitored.

■ **Disability: Coronavirus**

Luke Pollard:

[92892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that disabled people exempt from wearing masks are not being discriminated against when visiting shops or events.

Jo Churchill:

Our guidance published online is clear that there are exemptions where people do not need to wear face coverings. We are also clear that people do not need to prove they are exempt and they should not be challenged about this.

If someone is more comfortable showing they are exempt from the requirement to wear face covering, they are able to use some form of optional visual cue. Different options are available on GOV.UK, on charity and organisations websites, or could be hand-made. This aims to tackle the stigma faced by people who are unable to wear a face covering due to hidden disabilities and/or mental health reasons

The Government is running a proactive communications campaign on face coverings to alert the public to the places where they are required to wear a face covering, who is exempt from wearing one, and how to wear one correctly.

We are actively engaging with stakeholders including disability charities to communicate new guidance to their members as well as highlighting this message to the general public on social media and via broadcasting opportunities.

■ **Foetal Alcohol Syndrome**

Peter Gibson:

[91158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what strategy his Department has to tackle Foetal Alcohol Syndrome; and what steps his Department is taking to make pregnant mothers aware of the risks to their unborn child of the consumption of alcohol.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines published in 2016 provide clear advice to women not to drink alcohol if they are planning for a pregnancy or are pregnant.

Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement, and local commissioners continue to raise awareness and provide education on the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant; for example, the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership 'Drymester' campaign to raise awareness of drinking alcohol when pregnant.

Midwives and health visitors have a central role in providing clear, consistent advice and early identification and support.

■ **Gambling: Health Services**

Mr Richard Holden:

[93708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on increasing NHS support for people with gambling addiction.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan made a commitment to expand the geographical coverage of NHS services for people with serious gambling problems.

In addition to the existing National Problem Gambling Clinic in London, the National Health Service has committed to opening an additional 14 new problem gambling clinics by 2023/24. The NHS Northern Gambling Service in Leeds opened in 2019 and now has satellite sites in Manchester and Sunderland. The NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan has committed to spending a total of £6 million on gambling-related harms by 2023/24.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement are improving referral routes for mental health services in primary care, by focusing on the integration of services.

The NHS continue to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the NHS Long Term Plan commitments and timescales outlined above.

■ **General Practitioners: Epilepsy**

Emma Hardy:

[89819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the GP to patient ratio for female patients between the ages of 15 to 45 years old with epilepsy in the Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle constituency.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the general practitioner (GP) to patient ratio for female patients between the ages of 15 to 45 years old with epilepsy is not available at national or regional levels.

Christian Wakeford:

[91199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the GP to patient ratio for female patients between the ages of 15 and 45 years old with epilepsy in Bury South constituency.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the general practitioner (GP) to patient ratio for female patients between the ages of 15 to 45 years old with epilepsy is not available at national or regional levels.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[91638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the GP-to-patient ratio for female patients between 15 and 45 with epilepsy in Stalybridge and Hyde constituency.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the general practitioner (GP) to patient ratio for female patients between the ages of 15 to 45 years old with epilepsy is not available at national or regional levels.

■ GP Surgeries: Coronavirus

Gill Furniss:

[92849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide support for GP practices to become covid-secure and allow for social distancing.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: The Department has provided support to general practitioners (GPs) throughout the pandemic, reflecting GPs' vital role in tackling the virus and maintaining business as usual services to patients. Our COVID-19 Support Fund is helping general practices with the additional costs of responding to the pandemic. Details of the Fund were laid out in a letter to GP practices on 4 August 2020 which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0651-covid-support-fund-letter-aug-2020.pdf>

NHS England and NHS Improvement have produced detailed guidance on treating individuals in a COVID-secure way. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/managing-coronavirus-covid-19-in-general-practice-sop/>

The guidance offers advice on maintaining social distancing during face-to-face appointments, sourcing personal protective equipment and on accessing the COVID-19 Support Fund.

■ Health: Leicestershire

Dr Luke Evans:

[84359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle health inequalities in (a) Leicester and (b) Leicestershire.

Jo Churchill:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) is reviewing the findings from Public Health England's reports to better understand the drivers behind the disparities and the relationships between the different risk factors so we can build on the existing action we are taking to tackle health inequalities. This includes our childhood obesity plan, NHS Health Checks, our tobacco control plan and diabetes prevention programme.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits all major national programmes and every local area across England to set out specific measurable goals and mechanisms by which they will contribute to narrowing health inequalities over the next five and 10 years.

Public Health England works with NHS England and NHS Improvement to support and assure the delivery of the health inequalities ambitions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan and local systems, which incorporate local authorities.

■ Health: Older People

Jim Shannon:

[84246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to use the workplace to promote improved health outcomes for people over 60.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working across the Government to deliver a range of activity to support workplaces to promote health and work outcomes, including for those over 60.

For example, last summer, in the consultation 'Health is Everyone's Business' we consulted on a range of proposals aimed at supporting employers to minimise the risk of health-related job loss, including by expanding employers' access to occupational health services and related advice and information. A response to the consultation is due later this year.

■ Home Care Services: Staff

Matt Western:

[91698]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) care providers and (b) local authorities on home carers receiving pay for the time that they spend (i) travelling between clients and (ii) changing into personal protective equipment between visits.

Helen Whately:

All social care workers must be paid at least the national minimum wage or national living wage for the time that they work. Time spent caring for clients, travelling to appointments, and waiting to start the appointment should be included in the pay calculation. Time spent between appointments donning and doffing personal protective equipment should also be included in the calculation. Further guidance on what counts as working time is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/minimum-wage-different-types-work>

We have now made £3.7 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care. The Infection Control Fund, set up in May 2020, is being extended until March 2021, with an extra £546 million for the care sector to take key steps to improve infection prevention and control.

■ Horses: Slaughterhouses

Chris Evans:

[\[91024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many soliped and equidae were slaughtered at each abattoir licensed to slaughter horses in 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The Food Standards Agency holds the following data.

In 2019, the numbers of soliped and equidae slaughtered at each abattoir licensed to slaughter horses was 2,146 and 24, totalling 2,170.

Notes: Numbers are recorded under one heading of 'soliped'. No soliped or equidae were slaughtered in Northern Ireland in 2019.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Kate Osamor:

[\[91107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that it (a) secures and (b) maintains an adequate supply of the influenza vaccine for population groups eligible for that vaccine in Winter 2020-21.

Kate Osamor:

[\[91109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the timetables for the (a) manufacture and (b) delivery of the Winter 2020-21 influenza vaccine remain on track.

Jo Churchill:

The manufacturing of the flu vaccines is a complex biological process. In February, each year, the World Health Organization makes recommendations on the composition of the flu vaccine for the northern hemisphere based on its international surveillance programme. It takes six to eight months to manufacture the vaccines and following regulatory clearance they start to become available to service providers at the start of the flu season in September. The flu vaccine is currently available and will continue to be supplied throughout the winter.

In relation to the supply of vaccine for the adult programme, general practitioners and pharmacists are directly responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults. In addition, the Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available this winter.

Kate Osamor:

[\[91110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people his Department estimates will require a Winter 2020-21 influenza vaccine; and how many of those vaccines will be available throughout that season.

Jo Churchill:

This winter we expect to offer the seasonal flu vaccine to over 30 million people. On 5 August 2020 we published the Annual Flu Letter Update 2020/21, which set out our

ambitions for uptake for all eligible groups. The Annual Flu Letter is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907149/Letter_annualflu_2020_to_2021_update.pdf

In relation to the supply of vaccine for the adult programme, general practitioners and pharmacists are directly responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults. In addition, the Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure supply of the flu vaccines are available this winter.

■ Leukaemia

Jim Shannon: [91045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

Between 2014 and 2018, 3,329 people were diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in England. The data is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/datasets/cancerregistrationstatisticsengland> and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cancer-registration-statistics-england-2018-final-release>

This is the most recent available data.

■ NHS: Ophthalmic Services

Marsha De Cordova: [89834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on a national eye health strategy; and what assessment he has made of the effect of medical research on finding solutions to the capacity issues that NHS ophthalmology services face.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to develop a national eye health strategy. Given the size of England, and the diversity of the health needs of different communities, we believe commissioning needs to be owned and managed locally.

However, no specific assessment has been made of the effects of medical research on finding solutions to the capacity issues faced by National Health Service ophthalmology services. We welcome medical research and the contribution it makes to the development of better treatments, improved diagnostics, prevention, care and quality of life for everyone.

NHS England and NHS Improvement's outpatient transformation programme is working with key stakeholders to help local systems redesign and improve outpatient services across primary and secondary care, including ophthalmology, so that trusts are better able to meet future demand.

■ Obesity: Children

Colleen Fletcher:

[91068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of children under five years old who are obese in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: NHS Digital holds data on severe obesity in children in Reception by local authority for school years 2018-19 through the National Child Measurement Programme.

The latest report from the National Child Measurement Programme can be viewed at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2018-19-school-year>

NHS Digital has advised that it does not hold any further information on the number of children under five years old who are obese or data for Coventry North East constituency.

■ Obesity: Shops

Philip Davies:

[87522]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of exempting small shops under 280sqm from the siting restrictions set out in the Tackling Obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives strategy.

Philip Davies:

[87523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the Association of Convenience Stores' estimate that refitting convenience stores under the proposals to restrict promotions by prominent location, as proposed in the Tackling Obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives strategy, will cost the sector of up to £483 million.

Jo Churchill:

A full public consultation and impact assessment has been carried out for the proposal to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in stores. This includes an assessment of the impact on small businesses. The Government's response to the consultation and the impact assessment will be published shortly.

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Food and Rural Affairs recently met with representatives from the food and drink industry to discuss measures set out in “Tackling Obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives”.

■ **P14 Medical: Contracts**

Deidre Brock: [\[88890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with P14 Medical LTD before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in April 2020.

Deidre Brock: [\[88892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Uniserve Limited before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in May 2020.

Deidre Brock: [\[88893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Draeger Safety Limited before the awarding of a contract to provide FFP3 respirators in July 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The Department's procurement records show that the Department has had no contracts with these companies over the last five years prior to the award of the personal protective equipment contracts.

■ **Protective Clothing: Coronavirus**

Grahame Morris: [\[89679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria must be met for the Government to review its policy on mandatory face coverings in enclosed spaces.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place) (England) Regulations 2020 set out that a review of these requirements must take place within six months to ensure they continue to be necessary to prevent, protect against, control or provide a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection in England. These Regulations will expire after 12 months.

United Kingdom advice on face covering follows advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies. As always we are committed to following the evidence and will keep reviewing evidence from around the world and update our position as and when we need to.

Sir Graham Brady:

[90048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of face coverings in reducing the level of covid-19 cases since the wearing of face coverings was made compulsory in shops and on public transport on 24 July 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: There is strong scientific evidence that the risk of transmission is higher in enclosed spaces compared to outdoors, it is this risk of transmission that wearing a face covering will reduce.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies advised that using cloth masks as a precautionary measure could be at least partially effective in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not possible consistently, creating a risk of close social contact with multiple parties the person does not usually meet.

This advice does not replace or change existing advice on other measures – such as hand washing, social distancing and self-isolation – which remain more important (because of stronger evidence and larger effects).

People should continue to follow the advice on using face coverings closely, which is to wash hands or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on and after taking it off. People should try to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth and store used face coverings in a plastic bag until they have an opportunity to wash or dispose of them.

Sir Graham Brady:

[90051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria the Government will use to decide whether the wearing of face coverings (a) in shops and (b) on public transport will remain compulsory.

Jo Churchill:

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place) (England) Regulations 2020 set out that a review of these requirements must take place within six months to ensure they continue to be necessary to prevent, protect against, control or provide a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection in England. These Regulations will expire after 12 months.

United Kingdom advice on face covering follows advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies. As always we are committed to following the evidence and will keep reviewing evidence from around the world and update our position as and when we need to.

■ **Ramfoam: Coronavirus**

Deidre Brock:

[88345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Ramfoam before the awarding of a contract to provide personal protective equipment in May 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: The Department's procurement records show that the Department has had no contracts with Ramfoam over the last five years prior to the award of the personal protective equipment contract.

■ **Respiratory System: Diseases**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[86080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of fuel poverty on trends in the level of respiratory problems.

Jo Churchill:

Respiratory problems are usually caused by a number of different factors, making it difficult to quantify the contribution of an individual risk such as fuel poverty.

Public Health England published the 2nd Atlas of variation in risk factors and healthcare for respiratory disease in England in 2019. This is available to view at the following link:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/atlas-of-variation>

The atlas looks at variation in the percentage of houses that experience fuel poverty and the Excess Winter Deaths Index at lower-tier local authority level.

■ **School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[91765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he will issue guidance to schools on using locally grown produce in the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 September 2020]: The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is run centrally by the Department of Health and Social Care, and funded jointly by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education. It is not commissioned locally by schools themselves.

The Scheme is operated by a private contractor on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care and produce grown in the United Kingdom is used as part of the Scheme.

■ **Skin Cancer**

Sir Edward Leigh:

[81515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is available patients with non-melanoma skin cancer to help with the psychological effect of (a) the disease and (b) the treatment for that disease.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan sets a clear ambition that where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer should have access to personalised care by 2021. Over the next five years, Cancer Alliances will be embedding personalised care interventions, which will identify and address the changing needs of cancer patients from diagnosis onwards.

■ Unispace Global Health: Protective Equipment**Deidre Brock:**[\[88343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a relationship with Unispace Global Health before the awarding of a contract for personal protective equipment in April 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: The Department's procurement records show that the Department has had no contracts with Unispace Global Health over the last five years prior to the award of the personal protective equipment contract.

HOME OFFICE**■ Action Fraud****Daisy Cooper:**[\[95749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria Action Fraud use to decide whether a matter reported by the public is referred to a police force.

Daisy Cooper:[\[95751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September to Question 85113, how many reports have been made to Action Fraud that were not recorded as crimes.

Daisy Cooper:[\[95752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 85114, in how many cases has a decision not to (a) record a crime or (b) refer a crime to a police force for investigation been reversed following a complaint to (i) the Independent Office for Police Conduct or (ii) the City of London Police's Professional Standards Directorate.

James Brokenshire:

As noted in the response to PQ 85113, the Home Office collects data on the number of fraud and Computer Misuse Act (CMA) cases reported to Action Fraud that have been recorded as criminal offences by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB). The Home Office does not hold the information requested in questions 95751 and 95752.

Reports submitted to Action Fraud are considered by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB). Where enough evidence is available and viable leads are identified, actionable intelligence packages are created and sent to the appropriate local police force.

Reports not deemed viable for investigation by local police forces are not closed but remain under constant consideration for links to newly reported crimes. The intelligence is also used to identify opportunities to disrupt offenders, protect victims, and prevent further frauds.

■ Asylum: Applications

Martin Vickers:

[94386]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applications were awaiting assessment in the latest period for which figures are available; what recent estimate she has made of the average time taken to process an asylum application; and what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken to process those applications.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not publish data on the average time taken to process an asylum application. However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision, broken down by duration. 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).

■ Asylum: Housing

Martyn Day:

[94482]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there is a legal requirement for asylum seekers to be given advance notice of the accommodation that they are to be placed in.

Chris Philp:

If an asylum seeker would otherwise be destitute they can apply for accommodation and other support under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

There is no requirement in the legislation to inform an individual of where they will be accommodated if their application is successful. However, an individual is informed of the area in the UK where they will be housed at the time arrangements are made for them to travel to their accommodation.

■ Asylum: Interviews

Caroline Lucas:

[95055]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has issued guidance to staff undertaking face-to-face substantive interviews of asylum claimants to ensure that they facilitate social distancing to enable (a) legal representatives, (b) translators and (c) support workers to attend the interview; if she will make it her policy that claimants do not have to attend interviews alone and without representation; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office published guidance on the resumption of substantive asylum interviews on 6 August 2020. It is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-resumption-of-substantive-asylum-interviews>.

The resumption of substantive asylum interviews has been facilitated by the use of videoconferencing. Where the interview room is large enough to allow the required social distancing, legal representatives, interpreters and support workers can attend interviews in-person.

Where the room is too small to facilitate the attendance of others, legal representatives, interpreters and support workers can join the interview remotely via videoconferencing.

Should a claimant wish to attend their interview with a legal representative, interpreter or support worker, then they should contact the Home Office at least three working days prior to their interview to discuss options, as outlined in the invitation to interview letter. Alternative solutions can be offered such as rescheduling the interview from a VFS centre to a Home Office location or booking a larger room in a Home Office location that will safely accommodate the presence of others.

■ Emergency Calls: ICT

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[95192]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure police and fire emergency control room computer systems have effective back-ups and safeguards to prevent control room staff from having to use paper based systems for 999 calls.

Kit Malthouse:

Police and Fire and Rescue services have tried and tested business continuity arrangements for the loss of control room functionality. This may include fall-back to

secondary locations or remote call handling to another Police Force or Fire and Rescue Service.

Where necessary the local Business Continuity Plans may necessitate additional on-call staff or reverting to paper based system to maintain critical functionality.

■ Fraud: Pensions

Neil Gray:

[95090]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have contacted Action Fraud regarding potential pension scams since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

James Brokenshire:

The Government is committed to protecting people from pension scams and pursuing those who perpetrate these scams.

In the period from 24 March 2020 to 25 September 2020, 166 reports of pension fraud were received by Action Fraud.

The latest available data on Action Fraud reporting, covering the year to March 2020, can be found in table A5 of Crime in England and Wales on the ONS website, currently available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesappendixtables>

We have launched a gov.uk page on coronavirus-related fraud and cybercrime, including easy-to-follow steps for people to better protect themselves from online scams, as well as signposting all relevant advice and tips:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime>

Victims in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are encouraged to report these crimes directly to Action Fraud, the centralised reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime. Those in Scotland should report directly to Police Scotland, via the 101 service.

■ Immigrants: Tibet

Jim Shannon:

[94424]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies on preventing infiltration of the police by foreign intelligence agents of the charges brought against a New York City Police Department officer for spying on Tibetan immigrants for the Chinese Government.

James Brokenshire:

The Government takes the threat posed by hostile state activity extremely seriously, and seeks to protect the UK through strategies and structures that combine the UK's diplomatic, intelligence and military capabilities, and its hard and soft power, to

maximum effect. We act in concert with our allies, seeking to lead the West's collective response to hybrid threats to our societies and values. And as set out in the Queen's Speech in December 2019, we are developing new legislation to tackle hostile state activity.

Decisions on the recruitment of officers across England and Wales are for the chief officer of the police force concerned to make, on a case by case basis. These decisions must be taken in accordance with the statutory Code of Practice on Vetting and Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on vetting, which are issued by the College of Policing.

■ Immigration: Overseas Students

Daisy Cooper:

[\[94555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce a new immigration route to allow international students to enter the UK on a work or study-based placement of between six and 12 months from 1 January 2021.

Kevin Foster:

As part of the new Student route, which launches on 5 October, international students will be able to undertake work placements as part of their course. To be able to undertake a work placement, the placement must be an integrated and assessed part of the course and must account for less than 33 percent of the total length of the course (or 50 percent if the student is undertaking a course at a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance).

Students undertaking study at an Overseas Higher Education Institution can come to the UK on a Student visa to undertake a short-term study abroad programme as part of their course at degree level or above.

In addition, the Government Authorised Exchange Scheme provides individuals with opportunities to come to the UK for a short time for work experience, training, to complete an Overseas Government Language Programme, or for research or a fellowship.

■ Internet: Fraud

Yvonne Fovargue:

[\[95068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to tackle user-generated fraudulent and scam content on online platforms.

James Brokenshire:

We know that people are spending more time online during this period and this can put them at greater risk of experiencing online harm. We have been working closely with technology companies, civil society and academia to understand and respond to the risks presented during this period.

The department is committed to tackling all forms of crime, including those that exploit technology and the internet. We are considering all routes to ensure law

enforcement have the tools they need to go after these criminals and to protect the vulnerable.

HMG published new guidance on April 23rd to help all users to stay safe online during the coronavirus outbreak. It includes detailed advice on protecting personal data, cyber security and disinformation. It also provides additional guidance for parents on online safety issues affecting children such as child sexual abuse, exposure to age-inappropriate content and cyberbullying.

This Government is committed to delivering legislation to tackle online harms. This will introduce a statutory duty of care on companies to take steps to protect their users from harm, including child sexual exploitation and abuse. We are currently working swiftly to prepare a full Government response, which we will publish later this year. This will include more detailed proposals on online harms regulation and will be released alongside interim voluntary codes of practice on tackling online terrorist and child sexual exploitation and abuse content and activity. We will follow the full Government response by introducing Online Harms legislation.

■ Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

Stephen Crabb:

[\[95051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the UK's designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters, including whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription.

The Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under review

■ Offences against Children: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[94502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to collect data on the incidence of crime against children during the lockdown restrictions due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

We have worked closely with our partners to monitor the crime impacts of COVID-19, drawing on data and evidence provided by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the National Crime Agency (NCA), third sector partners and other sector stakeholders.

We will continue to work closely with the police to monitor the situation as social distancing measures evolve. We remain fully committed to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the resources and powers they need to keep the public safe .

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ House of Commons: Staff****Neil O'Brien:**[\[93678\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many members of House of Commons staff have roles with equality, diversity, inclusion or disability, gender, LGBT and race in their job title.

Pete Wishart:

Currently eight people in the House of Commons have job roles including these words in the title: seven in the Diversity & Inclusion team and one person in HR, responsible for the disability specific workplace adjustment process.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Building Safety Bill (Draft)****Sarah Jones:**[\[95189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria the Government will use to determine eligibility for membership of the Building Advisory Committee.

Sarah Jones:[\[95190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the composition of the Building Advisory Committee will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny.

Christopher Pincher:

The provisions in the draft Building Safety Bill place a duty on the Building Safety Regulator to establish a new committee of experts to give advice and information to the Regulator on its building functions. The process to set up and recruit the committee and its members will follow in due course.

■ Buildings: Insulation**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[94496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support he is providing to people who are unable to sell their properties because (a) their building still has non-Aluminium Composite Material cladding and (b) they are not able to obtain an EWS1 certificate.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[94498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of mandating mortgage lenders to accept alternatives to EWS1 forms in evaluating high-rise residential buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

We have made £1 billion available to fund the removal of unsafe non-Aluminium Composite Material cladding in 2020/21.

The Department is aware of challenges in obtaining the RICS EWS1 form. We are working with mortgage lenders to support a more pragmatic approach in their valuation of homes within multi occupancy, multi storey residential buildings.

Not all lenders request an EWS1 form. We are encouraging lenders to accept a broader range of evidence to assure themselves of a build's value.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[94497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that building owners complete EWS1 forms when that has been requested by residents attempting to sell their homes.

Christopher Pincher:

Where a lender requires the RICS EWS1 form for valuation purposes, the building owner will need to commission a competent professional to assess the external wall system and complete the RICS EWS1 form on their behalf.

The Department is addressing the capacity of competent professionals which are making it difficult for building owners to obtain an EWS1 when they need to. Building owners have the responsibility to ensure their buildings are safe and therefore should be able to provide alternative evidence to lenders for lower risk buildings.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[94499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of professionals available to complete EWS1 forms; and what steps he is taking to increase the number of people who are qualified to undertake that role.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is aware that there are capacity challenges with the availability of professionals to undertake fire safety assessments of external wall systems. We are working with industry on measures that will boost the number of professionals who can undertake this work. The Department is also working with the insurance industry on solutions to address constraints in private indemnity insurance that impact professional capacity.

Neil Coyle:[\[96080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to improve the clarity of guidance on buildings where lenders are requiring External Wall Fire Review assessments.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 process was designed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) to support valuations of high-rise residential blocks. It is not a regulatory requirement and the Department does not support a blanket approach to the use of

EWS1 forms on all buildings. RICS have published guidance on use of the EWS1 form, and lenders have internal policies on the assurances they require before agreeing a mortgage. The EWS1 process should only be used where there is clear need, and where no reasonable assurances or regulatory evidence exists to support valuations.

Neil Coyle:

[96081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to work with mortgage providers and insurers to ensure that they are complying with his Department's guidance on requiring External Wall Fire Review assessments on buildings under 18 metres.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department published advice from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel in January advising all building owners to ensure that their buildings are safe and that this should include the building's external walls regardless of height. This was guidance for building owners, not lenders or insurers. To support the valuation process for high-rise residential blocks, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors designed the EWS1 process. This is not a regulatory requirement and we are working with lenders and professional bodies to support a pragmatic approach, especially for lower rise blocks.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[96096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many leaseholder feedback forms have been received by his Department in each month since the form's introduction.

Christopher Pincher:

Government published the leaseholder feedback form on 1 June 2020. We are continuing to verify the data collected, including examining any duplication, and will use it to inform our engagement with building owners.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[96099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Minister for Building Safety's evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government on 18 May 2020, Question 31, when he plans to publish data on waking watch costs.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has worked with key stakeholders, including local authorities, housing associations, leaseholder groups and Fire and Rescue Services, to collect information and data on Waking Watch costs. We have now completed that exercise and are currently checking and collating the data, and will publish it shortly.

■ Empty Property: Shops**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[94448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the number of vacant shops on high streets in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of vacant retail units.

Luke Hall:

Government recognises the challenge that empty properties on our high streets poses and the risk of the number of vacant units increasing due to the economic impacts of Covid-19.

We do not have a breakdown on the number of vacant shops in Coventry, however we are aware that vacancy rates across Great Britain were reported to be 12.4 per cent after Q2 2020, with the number of vacant units on the high street in line with the national average. Regionally, the West Midlands' vacancy rate was reported to be 14.4 per cent.

To mitigate against a rise in the number of vacant units, government has introduced a range of measures to protect businesses that are struggling to pay their rent due to Covid-19. Through Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act, government provided for a moratorium on commercial landlords' ability to evict businesses due to the non-payment of rent. In addition, government has introduced a temporary ban on the use of winding-up petitions and statutory demands for rent payments, and amended regulations regarding Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery.

Colleen Fletcher:[\[94449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of empty shops on high streets in England.

Luke Hall:

It is vital that we continue to help our local economies by supporting town centres and high streets to recover, adapt and evolve.

This is why government is providing support to places through the High Streets Task Force. Over five years this is providing hands-on support to local areas like Coventry to develop data-driven innovative strategies to tackle issues such as empty properties and connect local areas to relevant experts. The Task Force will be rolling out its expert, training and data offer across the country in due course and has already launched a range of online support.

We have also set out our plans to reform the planning process in the *Planning for the Future* consultation, open until 29 October. As part of this, we seek to streamline and modernise the planning process, meaning places across the country are able to respond to the needs of their communities and best utilise the land available for more homes in and around town centres and high streets, levelling up the economic and social opportunities available to our communities.

Government has also recently delivered the Open Doors pilot project in five town centres. This project seeks to bring empty properties back into use by matching landlords of vacant premises with local community groups looking for space. Since July 2019 more than 43 community groups have benefitted from using the spaces.

■ Flood Control

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[95990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to (i) review, (ii) improve and (iii) expand the Flood Recovery Framework, and the resources available, to manage more effectively future severe flooding; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

Following the first activation of the Flood Recovery Framework in November 2019, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government agreed with HM Treasury to lead a cross-government review on the efficacy and effectiveness of the Framework. The review will consider how to improve the Framework and support future severe flooding.

■ Hate Crime

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[96162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timetable is for updating the Hate crime action plan 2016 to 2020; and what the process is for engaging stakeholders in its development.

Luke Hall:

The Government remains committed to stamping out hatred in all its forms. Many of the initiatives outlined in the action plan will continue, and we also remain committed to delivering on our existing priorities. We are considering a range of options for our work from July 2020 and will work in close consultation with stakeholders.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[94500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many high-rise residential buildings in the Hampstead and Kilburn constituency still have unsafe non-Aluminium Composite Material.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to publishing in future data and analysis related to the ongoing External Wall Systems data collection for high rise buildings.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[94501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much the Government spent on removing unsafe non-Aluminium Composite Material from high-rise residential buildings in the Hampstead and Kilburn constituency to date.

Christopher Pincher:

We are currently reviewing registrations for the Building Safety Fund and are working closely with building owners to assess their eligibility for the scheme.

Registration statistics for the Fund were published on the 30th September 2020 and are available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>.

■ **Homelessness: LGBT People****Anthony Mangnall:****[94547]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in 2018, what progress he has made on researching the needs and experiences of LGBT homeless people.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise that LGBT homelessness is an important issue, and that LGBT people who find themselves homeless may have a different experience of homelessness due to their protected characteristics.

To help us better understand LGBT homelessness and the experience of LGBT people who find themselves homeless, as well as to ensure any interventions are tailored and effective, we are conducting research with the Government Equalities Office.

The first stage of this research includes a review of existing evidence on LGBT homelessness and interviews with LGBT people with lived experiences of homelessness and the second may include a review of services working with LGBT homeless people. This work is ongoing and the research will be published in due course.

■ **Housing: Construction****Mike Amesbury:****[94536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the proposed national infrastructure levy on the delivery of sustainable transport solutions within new housing developments.

Christopher Pincher:

The proposal to create a new Infrastructure Levy, as set out in the *Planning for the Future* White Paper, will support a more streamlined and accessible planning system. Sustainable transport systems make a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. The new Levy will raise at least as much value as is currently captured through Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 and will continue to be collected and spent at the local level, on priorities including infrastructure and affordable housing. The White Paper also sets out that when authorities are identifying land or future development

through Local Plans, it will be important for them to consider how to most effectively support climate change mitigation and adaptation, including, for example, the ability to maximise walking, cycling and public transport opportunities.

■ Local Plans: Transport

Mike Amesbury:

[\[94537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to provide for (a) shared mobility solutions, (b) public transport and (c) other sustainable transport in (i) the proposed National Model Design Code and (ii) Government guidance to local authorities on the production of new Local Plans.

Christopher Pincher:

As part of the work on the National Model Design Code (NMDC) the Department is working closely with the Department for Transport to take forward the Government's ambitions for sustainable transport, taking into account the need for shared mobility solutions and public transport. This includes close joint working on the NMDC and the update to the Manual for Streets. The Department is also producing Planning Practice Guidance on Sustainable Transport and Accessibility which will set out how sustainable transport should be considered as part of the evidence base for local plans. This guidance will be published in due course.

■ Marriage: Coronavirus

Crispin Blunt:

[\[95976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of the equity of permitting 15 attendees at religious weddings and six at humanist weddings; and whether he plans to take steps to tackle that issue.

Luke Hall:

Humanist wedding ceremonies can take place at this time with 15 people present, as well as for the legal solemnisation of the marriage.

We understand the unique significance that weddings hold in people's lives but, by their nature they are events that bring families and friends together. For this reason, only up to 15 people can attend a wedding. We will keep this under review.

■ Mining: Government Assistance

Alexander Stafford:

[\[94592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government if he will provide support to mining communities to maintain recreational grounds and miners' welfares where they are withdrawn by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

Luke Hall:

This government is dedicated to levelling-up so that all corners of the UK benefit from growth and prosperity after leaving the European Union and make the most of the opportunities ahead. We are committed to improving the prospects of communities in

former industrial and mining towns and villages across England. All have distinct competitive advantages that will be essential to shaping our economic future.

This government has provided funding to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) which seeks to support mining communities in England. Over the last seven years the government has provided £22 million in support of their activities, which are designed to assist the CRT in becoming a self-sustaining organisation. The government also announced in the 2018 autumn budget that we would invest £8 million to support repairs to village halls, Miners' Welfare facilities and Armed Forces organisations' facilities.

The government has also provided a package of support for regeneration in areas affected by steelworks closures. In January this year the government announced £71 million of new funding towards ambitious local plans to turn the former site of the SSI Steelworks in Redcar into a huge business zone, home to world-leading clean energy, manufacturing and tech companies.

Dedicated funding for towns is being delivered through the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. Through Town Deals, an initial 101 towns across England to benefit from investment worth up to £25 million, or more in exceptional cases. Over half of these places are former industrial or mining towns. Funding from the Towns Fund will drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth. The former mining town of Stainforth is one of 101 towns selected to benefit from up to £25 million investment through the Towns Fund. Stainforth has just received an initial payment of £500,000 which will help improve the town's parks and green spaces, including new walking and cycling facilities and play areas.

Looking to the future, the government has also committed to the creation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will be used to bind together the whole of the United Kingdom, tackling inequality and deprivation in each of our four nations. It will replace the overly bureaucratic EU Structural Funds – and not only be better targeted at the UK's specific needs, but at a minimum match the size of those funds in each nation. It will be driven by domestic priorities with a focus on investing in people. Decisions on the design and operation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be made following a cross-government Spending Review.

■ Property Development: Transport

Mike Amesbury:

[94538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the (a) planning system and (b) National Planning Policy Framework on the delivery of sustainable transport options within new commercial and residential developments in line with Government (i) public transport, (ii) active travel and (iii) decarbonisation objectives.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to promoting sustainable travel as part of the work to tackle climate change and achieve net zero by 2050. The Department has been

working closely with the Department for Transport on the Government's ambitions to promote public transport, active travel and decarbonisation objectives. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out policies for promoting sustainable transport to be taken into account in plan making and decision taking. We will continue to work with the Department for Transport to ensure the planning system aligns with, and helps to deliver, the Government ambitions for sustainable transport.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia

Emily Thornberry:

[\[92735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to paragraph 76 of the report of the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen dated 9 September 2020, whether she has made an assessment of the alleged violations of international humanitarian law in that report with respect to the recruitment, transportation, training and deployment as combatants of children by forces under the command of the Saudi-led coalition and government of Yemen; and if she will make an assessment of the risk that arms or equipment licensed for export from the UK were used by the forces responsible for those alleged violations of international humanitarian law, or by the children they placed in combat roles.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government takes any such allegations extremely seriously and was deeply concerned by the allegations contained in the Group of Eminent Experts' latest report. The United Kingdom urges the parties to the conflict to investigate these allegations, to take action to uphold rights and responsibilities, and to cooperate with the Group in future.

We take our export responsibilities seriously and assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). We will not issue any export licences where to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the air-strike on houses in Al-Silw on 29 October 2016 was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia, whether the 14 November 2016 air-strike on a food truck in Yarim was among the 310 incidents

assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia, whether the 23 November 2016 air-strike on a car in Hayran was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 26 November 2016 air-strike on houses in Al-Marawi'ah was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 4 December 2016 air-strike on a boat in Al-Mukha was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 8 April 2018 air-strike on a house in Khadir was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 22 April 2018 air-strike on a residential area in Al-Sawadiyah was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 24 June 2018 air-strike on a residential area in Amran was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 3 July 2018 air-strike on a wedding in Al-Dhaher was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 4 July 2018 air-strike on a market in Zabid was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 14 August 2018 air-strike on a residential area in Al-Durayhimi was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 on Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 12 September 2018 air-strike on a bus station in Al-Hali was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[94368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 20 September 2016 air-strike on a car in Al-Matmmah was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law

analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[94369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 20 September 2016 air-strike on vehicles in Al-Matmmah was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[94370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598 Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade, whether the 25 September 2016 air-strike on a house in Sihar was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Rt Hon. Lady to the answer I gave on 11th September 2020 (UIN: 84666).

Emily Thornberry: [\[95030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 19 November 2017 air-strike on a house in Al-Maslub was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 8 December 2017 air-strike on a residential area in Razih was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 15 December 2017 air-strike on a market area in Mawza was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[95033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 17 December 2017 air-strike on a wedding in Harib Al-Garamish was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[95034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 19 December 2017 air-strike on a house in Bayhan was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[95035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 9 January 2018 air-strike on a vehicle in Al-Mukha was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[95036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 10 January 2018 air-strike on a market in Kitaf Wa Al-Boqe'e was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[95037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 21 February 2018 air-strike on taxis in Al-Safra'a was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[95038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 22 March 2018 air-strike on a house in Ghamir was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be

one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 29 March 2017 air-strike on a house in Baqim was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 17 June 2017 air-strike on a market in Shada'a was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 18 July 2017 air-strike on a house in Al-Mukha was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 16 September 2017 air-strike on a vehicle in Harib Al-Garamish was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 3 February 2016 air-strike on a residential area in Kitaf Wa Al-Boqe'e was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry: [\[95044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 24 February 2016 air-strike on food

trucks in Al-Matmmah was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[95045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 25 March 2016 air-strike on a residential area in Sabir Al-Mawadim was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[95046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 9 May 2016 air-strike on ambulances in Harf Sufyan was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[95047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 16 July 2016 air-strike on a car in Nihm was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[95048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 24 July 2016 air-strike on a house in Al-Mukha was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[95049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 9 August 2016 air-strike on a vehicle in Al-Wazi'iyah was among the 310 incidents assessed as credible (a) to which her Department's International Humanitarian Law analysis was applied and (b) which was determined to be one of the small number of incidents assessed to be a possible violation of international humanitarian law.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Rt Hon. Lady to the answer I gave on 11th September 2020 (UIN: 84666).

■ **Department for International Trade: Publications**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[95610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she approved (a) the original publication of DIT ministers' meetings, hospitality, gifts and overseas travel: January to March 2020 on 30 July 2020 and the updates to that document of 19 August 2020.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

All such publication is subject to clearance, in line with HM Government guidelines.

■ **Institute of Economic Affairs**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[96011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reasons items relating to the Institute of Economic Affairs were removed from the official record of her ministerial meetings and hospitality for January to March 2020 on 19 August 2020.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[96012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which (a) official or (b) Minister in her Department authorised on 19 August 2020 the removal of items relating to the Institute of Economic Affairs from the official record of her ministerial meetings and hospitality for January to March 2020.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[96013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, on what date she was made aware that items relating to the Institute of Economic Affairs had been removed from the official record of her ministerial meetings and hospitality for January to March 2020.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[96014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what disciplinary proceedings have been undertaken against the individual who authorised the removal of items relating to the Institute of Economic Affairs from the official record of her ministerial meetings and hospitality for January to March 2020 on 19 August 2020.

Greg Hands:

The Secretary of State's attendance at a dinner and two meetings on 10 February and 17 March was declared in line with the Government's transparency requirements. The three engagements were conducted in line with the guidance to Ministers on meetings with external organisations.

After carefully considering Cabinet Office guidelines, and in the interests of full transparency, these entries have been reinstated as per the original departmental publication.

The Government does not routinely release detailed information about the operation of the ministerial private office.

■ Rules of Origin

Sarah Olney: [\[96144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish guidance on how rules of origin will operate after the end of the transition period.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We have already made our guidance on non-preferential rules of origin publicly available on GOV.UK. The guidance sets out the product specific rules, to determine the origin of imports outside of a preferential agreement.

We are working at pace to progress our discussions with existing and future trading partners and will continue to update our guidance on preferential rules of origin as we agree new provisions with them. Guidance can be found on GOV.UK for those countries with whom we have already signed a Free Trade Agreement.

■ Trade Agreements: Israel

Stephen Crabb: [\[94378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of sectors requiring trade cooperation with Israel beyond the trade continuity agreement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

As the Foreign Secretary noted during his recent visit to the region, the United Kingdom's relationship with Israel is strong. We wish to strengthen it even further. We have identified opportunities to do so in sectors such as financial services, infrastructure and technology. We will work with Israeli counterparts to realise these, including through reinstating plans to host a United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Investment Conference in London.

■ Trade Agreements: Turkey

Gareth Thomas: [\[93508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what contingency preparations she plans to make for a continuity trade agreement with Turkey in the event of not reaching a deal with the EU by the end of the transition period; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Turkey remains an important trading partner. HM Government is conscious of the need to plan for all scenarios and will continue working with Turkey to make sure goods continue to flow.

JUSTICE■ **Civil Proceedings**

Mr David Lammy: [\[94324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information he uses to measure the backlog of cases in civil and county courts.

Mr David Lammy: [\[94325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the backlog of cases in civil and county courts.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr David Lammy: [\[94326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil trials listed to be heard before county and civil courts excluding the High Court were outstanding as of 23 September 2020.

Mr David Lammy: [\[94328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many outstanding civil trials were listed to be heard before the High Court as of 23 September 2020.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr David Lammy: [\[94327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many outstanding civil hearings excluding trials were listed to be heard before county and civil courts excluding the High Court as of 23 September 2020.

Mr David Lammy: [\[94329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many outstanding civil hearings excluding trials were listed to be heard before the High Court as of 23 September 2020.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Courts: Coronavirus**

Peter Kyle: [\[96134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of court closures on victims during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Chalk:

In response to COVID-19, HMCTS temporarily closed around half of its buildings to focus effort and resources more effectively, and the most urgent cases were prioritised by the judiciary to ensure public safety, protect the vulnerable and

safeguard children. 74 out of 81 Crown Court buildings have now resumed jury trials, alongside two other existing court sites and four Nightingale Courts. 152 out of 155 magistrates' courts are now open.

Early on in the pandemic, MoJ mobilised a multi-agency Victim and Witness Silver Command Group, to ensure criminal justice system wide awareness of the issues affecting victims during COVID-19, and to monitor and respond to victim related issues that might arise.

In response to COVID-19, HMCTS has also accelerated the rollout of the Section 28 (pre-recorded cross examination) service and is now on track to complete national roll out of this service to all Crown Courts by the end of November.

Peter Kyle:

[\[96135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to mitigate the risk of increased victim attrition from court cases as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is committed to understanding and mitigating the impact that Covid-19 is having on victims' engagement with the justice system. We know that victim support services have a vital role to play in ensuring victims continue to engage with the criminal justice process. In recognition of this, we have distributed £22m as part of the £76m government package for charities supporting vulnerable people including victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse, made almost £600k of funding available to assist helpline services, and committed an additional £3m per annum to Independent Sexual Violence advisers until 2022.

Significant progress has been made over the last 18 months to increase the scale of the Section 28 (pre-recorded cross examination) service, with the most recent extension to a third wave of Crown Courts, bringing the total to 34 Section 28 enabled courts across England and Wales. The Section 28 service is now available to at least one court in every Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals (HMCTS) region. HMCTS aim to complete a national roll out of this service to all Crown Courts by the end of this year, to vulnerable victims and witnesses. There is real benefit in having this service available to support more victims and witnesses in giving their best evidence.

Following the prioritisation of domestic abuse cases by HMCTS, the MoJ coordinated the development of a triage process for trials listed in the Magistrates' Courts prior to 28 March. The triage process aims to maximise the effectiveness of court hearings through early identification of issues and a clear understanding of the needs of victims and witnesses in domestic abuse cases.

■ Crime: Victims

Peter Kyle:

[\[94491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Victims Strategy, what progress has been made on publishing revised police guidance on interviewing and supporting victims.

Alex Chalk:

The Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) guidance is an important document in providing the police with good practice advice on the process and considerations for interviewing victims and witnesses, and preparing them to give their best evidence in court.

The Ministry of Justice remains committed to working with criminal justice partners to update and align the ABE guidance to reflect the upcoming changes to the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code).

■ Criminal Proceedings: Victims**Peter Kyle:****[96133]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the level of victim satisfaction with the criminal justice system.

Alex Chalk:

The Government recognises that public confidence in the criminal justice system is a principle on which a fair and effective criminal justice system is dependent. In order to support victims and witnesses in giving their best evidence, and improve their experience of the criminal justice system, significant progress has been made over the last 18 months to increase the scale of the Section 28 (pre-recorded cross examination) service, with the most recent extension to a third wave of Crown Courts, bringing the total to 34 Section 28 enabled courts across England and Wales. The Section 28 service is now available to at least one court in every Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals (HMCTS) region. HMCTS aim to complete a national roll out of this service to all Crown Courts by the end of this year to support vulnerable victims and witnesses.

The MoJ have put in place robust and flexible plans to ensure we can continue to support victims both within and outside the criminal justice system during the pandemic. To date, we have distributed £22m as part of the £76m government package for charities supporting vulnerable people including victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse, made almost £600k of funding available to assist helpline services, and committed an additional £3m per annum to Independent Sexual Violence advisers until 2022. We also mobilised the Victim and Witness Silver Command Group, to engage with stakeholders, ensure criminal justice system wide awareness of issues, and monitor victim related issues with the system. The Group meets fortnightly to discuss topical justice issues as a result of Covid-19, particularly focussed on those with the potential to impact victims and witnesses. The Group identifies developing risks and issues that may have an impact on victim and witness strategy, policy or operational effectiveness and resolves or escalates those issues where necessary to mitigate any potential impact on levels of victim satisfaction.

■ **Marriage: Coronavirus**

Crispin Blunt:

[\[95977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to covid-19 regulations providing for 15 people to gather only for legally recognised marriages, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending that legal recognition on (a) an interim and (b) a permanent basis to humanist weddings.

Alex Chalk:

In respect of legal recognition of humanist weddings, the Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of that review, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent. The Government will decide on provision on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations.

The Law Commission has now published a consultation paper as part of its review and will welcome responses from all.

■ **Prisoners On Remand: South West**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[95120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what planning (a) his Department and (b) HM Courts and Tribunals Service have carried out for the future provision of virtual remand hearings in the Avon and Somerset area.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[95121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on courts of the Avon and Somerset Police being unable to provide virtual remand hearings.

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.

■ Private Rented Housing: Evictions

Mr Steve Baker: [96054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many illegal evictions took place in England and Wales between the implementation of the stay on possession proceedings on 25 March 2020 until the end of that stay on 21 September 2020, and how that figure compares to the same period in 2019.

Mr Steve Baker: [96055]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that tenants facing eviction or who have been illegally evicted have access to legal advice and representation.

Chris Philp:

With the exception of evictions for trespass under rule 55.6 of the Civil Procedure Rules, which were exempt from the stay on possession proceedings, HM Courts & Tribunals Service county court bailiffs undertook no evictions during the period of the stay from the 25 March 2020 to 21 September 2020.

The notice of eviction (N54) advises tenants to seek help and advice about the eviction, or about re-housing from an advice agency, solicitor or their local authority housing department. In addition, as part of initiatives to assist tenants facing eviction, the notice must now also include a list of local debt advice agencies who tenants can contact for further advice. These steps have been put in place to support the existing legal, debt and housing advice already available in many courts to tenants when attending possession hearings.

Subject to statutory means and merits, legal aid is available for cases concerning evictions. The Legal Aid Agency has recently launched a tender to secure additional housing legal aid providers.

We are working with the judiciary on measures to support all parties now possession hearings have resumed, and as part of this we are exploring the option of mediation.

■ Private Rented Housing: Repossession Orders

Thangam Debbonaire: [96097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference section 1.19 of his Department's Guidance for landlords and tenants, what plans he has to collect and publish data on the number of tenants and landlords who mark their possession claim COVID-19.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS are working to collect data on various aspects of the possession process including the 'Covid marking' of cases. We have no plans at present to expand on the current published data which is available here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics>.

■ Remand in Custody

Navendu Mishra: [\[94573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what was the average amount of time spent on remand in 2019.

Navendu Mishra: [\[94574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what was the average amount of time spent on remand between 2014 and 2019.

Chris Philp:

Centrally held court data does not include the amount of time spent remanded in custody, and therefore obtaining this information would result in a disproportionate cost to the department.

Prison receptions data has enabled an approximation of the data that has been requested. The attached table provides information on the mean and median amount of time that individuals were remanded in custody up to the point that they were sentenced.

Attachments:

1. Table [20200925 - PQ 94573 94574_final.xlsx]

■ Remand in Custody: Stockport

Navendu Mishra: [\[94572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people are currently on remand in Stockport.

Chris Philp:

There are no prisons in Stockport and so remand populations for the three closest prisons (HMP Styal, HMP Manchester and HMP Forest Bank) have been provided.

Data obtained from the latest published quarterly prison population statistics indicates that on 30 June 2020 the total numbers of individuals remanded in custody in each of these prisons was 71, 51 and 515, respectively.

■ Television Licences

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[95986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people are in custody for non-payment of a fine arising out of a TV Licensing conviction.

Chris Philp:

As at 30 June 2020, there were zero people in prison for failing to pay the fine in respect of the non-payment of a TV licence in England and Wales.

■ Television Licences: Prosecutions

Mr Barry Sheerman: [95987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many ongoing prosecutions there are for TV licence non-payment.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [95988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prosecutions and (b) convictions there were (i) in total and (ii) of women for the non-payment of TV licence fees in 2019.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published the number of prosecutions, convictions and sentencing outcomes for the non-payment of TV licence fees up to December 2019, available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888664/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

- Select '191A Television licence evasion' in the Offence filter; prosecutions can be found in row 23 and convictions are in row 24.
- To see these figures for females, select '02: Female' in the Sex filter.

The Ministry of Justice court proceedings database counts prosecutions at the point of completion at magistrates' court and therefore we do not hold the number of ongoing cases for TV licence non-payment.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Buses: Northern Ireland**

John Spellar: [906640]

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on increasing support for the hydrogen-powered bus sector in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 30 September 2020]: Northern Ireland has proven expertise with hydrogen-electric power in the bus sector and we have seen the introduction of the world's first hydrogen-electric double-decker bus by Wrightbus this year.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland visited Wrightbus in August and recently discussed the opportunities for Northern Ireland with the Transport Secretary. I and my officials are engaging with DfT and BEIS on the UK bus and hydrogen strategies and aim to capitalise on our joint ambitions for these areas. It was good to see Wrightbus recently securing orders for hydrogen-electric buses through its H2Bus consortium and we look forward to forthcoming announcements on the UK's Hydrogen and National Bus Strategies.

TRANSPORT**■ Department for Transport: Holiday Leave****Paula Barker:**[\[96216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the compliance of his Department's rules on annual leave carry-over with the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport has reviewed its annual leave policy against the legislation and is content that no change to existing policy is required. Employees of the department and its agencies are encouraged to use their annual leave allowance if possible, but may already carry over excess annual leave.

The department has issued advice to staff about annual leave arrangements, reflecting the recent legislation and guidance from Civil Service Employee Policy.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[96087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points in towns and cities in England.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is providing £500 million over the next five years to support the rollout of infrastructure for electric vehicles through a range of grant schemes which are available for both urban and rural areas. Part of this is our On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), which assists local authorities with the cost of installing chargepoints on residential streets. Government funding has been doubled to £20 million for the ORCS in 2020/21. This could help fund up to 7,200 chargepoints and make charging at home and overnight easier for those without an off-street parking space. The Government has also provided £40m of funding, via our Go Ultra Low city scheme, to 8 cities across the UK to support the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles in those cities. To date, over 300 chargepoints have been installed as part of this scheme. Additional charging hubs will be installed across the country later this year such as a new hub in York. We have also consulted on proposals for chargepoint infrastructure to be installed in all newly built homes and non-residential buildings in England, where appropriate.

■ Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[94518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect on open access train operating companies of his recent decision to move away from rail franchising with Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[94519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to (a) support open access train operating companies and (b) manage potential conflicts of interest between the interests of open access operators and Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements backed operators.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Unlike franchised passenger services, Open Access Operators run services without a contractual relationship with Government and there is no obligation on the Secretary of State under Section 30 of the Railways Act to run those services. Open access operators were therefore not offered Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs). During the COVID-19 outbreak, Open Access Operators have been able to draw upon the general support measures Government has made available across the economy, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Government also provided support for more bespoke measures, such as applications for extensions to track access contracts and deferrals of payments to the British Transport Police. The independent regulatory system, overseen by the Office of Rail and Road, ensures fair treatment for all companies providing rail services.

■ **Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements: London North Eastern Railway and Northern Rail**

Mary Glendon:

[\[94420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the total amount that will be paid to (a) LNER and (b) Northern Rail under the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

London North Eastern Railway and Northern remain under government control through the operator of last resort. As such, they do not have an Emergency Measures Agreement or Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement.

■ **Greek Islands: Quarantine**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[94335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to publish the (a) data and (b) evidential basis for the Government's decision-making on including the Greek islands on the UK's quarantine list during the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The Government takes a range of factors into account when deciding which countries to add or remove from the Travel Corridor list. This includes:

- an estimate of the proportion of the population that is currently infectious in each country
- virus incidence rates and rates of change
- trends in incidence and deaths

- transmission status and international epidemic intelligence
- information on a country's testing capacity, testing regime and test positivity rate
- an assessment of the quality of the data available
- effectiveness of measures being deployed by a country
- volume of travel between the UK and that country

As this remains a relatively new virus, data about global infection rates and the trajectory of the disease are not always consistent or predictable between countries. That is why each destination is considered on an individual basis, and taken together, the different factors provide a risk assessment that allows Ministers to decide whether a country needs to be removed from the travel corridors list.

I refer the honourable member to the Secretary of State for Transport's Written Ministerial Statement on travel corridors made on 6 June 2020.

■ **London North Eastern Railway and Northern Rail: Contracts**

Mary Glindon:

[94421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to tender the (a) LNER and (b) Northern Rail contracts to private sector companies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No decisions about whether to tender the LNER or Northern Rail contracts have yet been taken, although the intention is to tender these to the private sector at an appropriate point in the future. However, currently the government is focused on delivering essential rail services during the pandemic. Last week the Secretary of State announced the introduction of new Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements which will enable franchised train operators to continue delivering for passengers at the current time.

■ **M11: Accidents**

Robert Halfon:

[96048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many collisions there have been at Junction 7 on the M11 in each of the last three years; and what has been the nature of those collisions.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of reported personal injury road accidents on junction 7 of the M11 for the past three years can be found in the table below.

 REPORTED PERSONAL INJURY ROAD ACCIDENTS ON JUNCTION 7 OF THE M11, 2016 TO 2018

Year	Fatal	Serious	Slight
2016	0	0	7
2017	0	1	5
2018	1	0	2

Source : DfT, STATS19

■ Official Cars: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of commercial fleet vehicles on air quality in (a) Huddersfield and (b) the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

Data from the government's national air quality model indicates that in Huddersfield, emissions from HGVs, LGVs and buses combined contribute, on average, 45% of roadside NOx emissions. This is compared to 55% from cars. For the UK as a whole the average contribution is 48% from HGVs, LGVs and buses, and 51% from cars.

■ Railway Track

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[95197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total mileage is of track in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Great Britain.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The total miles of track open for rail traffic in Great Britain in 2018-19 (in Single Track Miles - STM) was 19,319 STM. This breaks down to 16,665 STM in England and Wales and 2,654 STM in Scotland.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Ian Mearns:

[\[94397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of extending the Operator of Last Resort to each rail franchise as an alternative option to Emergency Recovery Management Agreements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My Department considered the options to maintain rail services after the end of the Emergency Measures Agreements, including potential scope for use of the Operator of Last Resort in view of the legal framework, and the costs and benefits of multiple options. My Department decided to offer Emergency Recovery Measures

Agreements to the relevant franchised train operators as the best solution to secure outcomes for passengers, taxpayers and the wider industry.

Ian Mearns:

[\[94398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 September 2020, HCWS460, if he will publish the tougher performance targets for operators under the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements referred to in that statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The performance targets will be specific to each franchise operator. The Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements will be published in redacted form on gov.uk in due course, as will any variations made to them.

■ Railways: Electrification

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[95195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of the UK rail network is electrified.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

3,736 miles of the mainline railway route in Great Britain (GB) is electrified. This is 38% of all route miles on the GB rail network.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[95196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of the UK rail network does not benefit from electrification.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

9569 Single Track Miles of Great Britain's railway network is currently unelectrified.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[95200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of the rail network have been electrified in England in each year since 2010.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

A total of 481 route miles of Great Britain's rail network has been electrified since April 2010. A year by year breakdown of this from 2010 to 2019 is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL ROUTE MILES OF THE GB	
	RAIL NETWORK ELECTRIFIED	VARIATION ON PREVIOUS YEAR
2009-2010	3255	
2010-2011	3270	+15
2011-2012	3269	-1
2012-2013	3272	+3

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL ROUTE MILES OF THE GB	
	RAIL NETWORK ELECTRIFIED	VARIATION ON PREVIOUS YEAR
2013-2014	3273	+1
2014-2015	3276	+3
2015-2016	3313	+37
2016-2017	3339	+26
2017-2018	3583	+244
2018-2019	3736	+153

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[95201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential cost savings that could be achieved from introducing a rolling programme of rail electrification compared with a start-stop approach; and if he will make it his policy to implement such a rolling programme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail's ongoing work to develop a Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS) will inform Government decisions about how further electrification of the network should be carried out. The final version of TDNS will inform the Department's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, due to be published at the end of this year.

Electrification will play a significant role in our programme to decarbonise the railway and will deliver other benefits for railway users and neighbours.

■ Railways: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[94521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 September 2020, HCWS460 on Rail Update, what performance targets have been set; and if he will publish details on how those targets are tougher than previous targets.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Under Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs), a far higher proportion of the fee is based on performance than under the previous EMAs. Operators are measured against a range of performance criteria, including operational performance (such as cancellations, short-formed services, and delays), financial efficiency, effective industry collaboration, customer service satisfaction and service quality standards. Further performance targets may be set by my Department within the ERMAs, which will be appropriately calibrated to ensure they are sufficiently tough and stretching for the circumstances of each franchise.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[94522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 September 2020, HCWS460 on Rail Update, what steps he plans to take to ensure that operators improve co-ordination with each other to reduce capital costs.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements have obligations to co-ordinate across the industry to reduce fragmentation and cost duplication, and encourage efficiency. Capital budgets and spend will face enhanced scrutiny and challenge. Performance assessments of the quality of cross industry collaboration and financial performance will be made, and outcomes of this will be linked to the performance fee which can be earned by well-performing franchisees.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[94524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 September 2020, HCWS460 on Rail Update, who is responsible for operational decisions and performance of the passenger rail network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Responsibility for operational decisions and performance continues to rest with the train operating companies. As was noted in the Secretary of State's statement of 21 September 2020, operators have been placed on far more demanding management agreements, with tougher performance targets and lower management fees. The fee paid by Government to the operators is partly dependent on performance, thus ensuring that operators are incentivised to maintain good performance.

■ **Rolling Stock: Procurement**

Grahame Morris:

[\[94393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to continue to cover the cost of rolling stock company contracts under the new Emergency Recovery Management Agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA) arrangements cover the operators' costs including the costs of rolling stock contracts for the duration of the ERMA.

■ **Taxis: Protective Clothing**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[96010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 25 September 2020 to Question 93554, what the scientific basis is for his Department's decision not to enforce mandatory face coverings for taxi and private hire drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport's guidance for transport operators (Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators) advises that the risks of

coronavirus should be identified through operator's conducting risk assessments. These inform decisions and measures to be put in place to protect both transport workers and customers. We continually review guidance for safer transport in line with scientific advice.

Evidence tells us that the most effective measures are social distancing, rigorous hand hygiene, not touching one's face and good ventilation of fresh air. It is up to the operator to use their risk assessments to determine if face coverings are a practical and safe protective measure based upon specific job roles.

■ **Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[94406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing for open access train operators during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

During the COVID-19 outbreak, open access operators have been able to draw upon the extensive support measures that Government has made available across the economy, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Government has supported applications by Hull Trains and Grand Central for extensions to their track access contracts, in order to allow them to seek more favourable terms from lenders and suppliers. The British Transport Police Authority has allowed Hull Trains and Grand Central to defer the contributions they make towards the cost of policing the railway during the period when the companies were in hibernation and not running trains.

■ **Train Operating Companies: Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements**

Ian Mearns:

[\[94399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish the Emergency Recovery Management Agreements signed with Train Operating Companies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements will be published in redacted form on gov.uk in due course.

■ **Train Operating Companies: Finance**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[94523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 September 2020, HCWS460 on Rail Update, what estimate he has made of the level of debt that operating companies on Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements have to the Government; and if he will take steps to guarantee that any monies owed to the public purse by franchised operators will be collected in full before any profits are paid by the taxpayer to those companies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) and underlying franchises contain a number of protections. Franchisees have obligations to settle any payments or debts owed to the Government in a timely manner. Shareholder distributions are restricted by the terms of the ERMAs to prevent shareholder payments unless and until franchise agreement financial obligations have been fulfilled to the satisfaction of the Department, which would include settling any overdue debts to Government.

■ Train Operating Companies: Incentives**Ian Mearns:**[\[94396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Management Fee Performance Payment was at the end of the initial Emergency Measures Agreement period for each train operating company; and how that payment was calculated.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Management and Performance Fees in relation to the Emergency Measures Agreements (EMAs) have not yet been paid, pending final assessment of performance by my Department and final assessment of the financial performance of the franchises under EMAs. Payments will be calculated based on the requirements of the EMAs, which are published online.

■ Train Operating Companies: Operating Costs**Mary Glendon:**[\[94419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether train operating companies will be subject to obligations to reduce their operating costs as a condition of Emergency Recovery Management Agreements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements have obligations to co-ordinate across the industry to reduce fragmentation and cost duplication, and encourage efficiency. Capital budgets and spend will face enhanced scrutiny and challenge. Performance assessments of the quality of cross industry collaboration and financial performance will be made, and outcomes of this will be linked to the performance fee which can be earned by well-performing Franchisees.

■ Trains: Batteries**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[95199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of the UK rail network are suitable for battery technology powered trains to operate.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail has recently published its Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy Interim Programme Business Case (TDNS IPBC), a study to recommend how best to decarbonise Great Britain's rail network. In TDNS IPBC, Network Rail has

recommended that battery train deployment could be considered for deployment across approximately 500 Single Track Miles of Great Britain's rail infrastructure, in order to decarbonise the railway.

■ Trains: Hydrogen

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[95194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to introduce early stage projects with the objectives of (a) progressing the introduction of hydrogen trains on the UK rail network and (b) increasing exports of UK-made hydrogen trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government supports the use of new technologies like hydrogen trains on the railway to deliver our legally binding target of net-zero UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. To achieve railway decarbonisation, the Department is currently working with Network Rail and the rail industry to determine which parts of the network are best suited to the use of hydrogen or battery trains, and which parts are best suited to further electrification.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[95198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many miles of the UK rail network are suitable for hydrogen technology powered trains to operate.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail has recently published its Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy Interim Programme Business Case (TDNS IPBC), a study to recommend how best to decarbonise Great Britain's rail network. In TDNS IPBC, Network Rail has recommended that hydrogen train deployment could be considered for deployment across over 800 Single Track Miles of Great Britain's rail infrastructure, in order to decarbonise the railway.

TREASURY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[\[96044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate funding to local authorities to enable them to create their own discretionary business support schemes based on local information.

Kemi Badenoch:

The business grant funds, including the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, were primarily intended to support small businesses which faced high fixed property-related costs during the strict lockdown period, when consumer footfall was dramatically reduced. Just under 900,000 business premises have received over £11 billion in grants from the three business grant funds. As most businesses in most areas are now able to reopen, it is right that we wind up the grant schemes, all of

which closed to new applicants on 28 August. The Government continues to review the economic situation and consider what support businesses need. However, there are currently no plans to provide further funding to Local Authorities to enable them to create their own new discretionary business support schemes.

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

Businesses across the country should also be able to benefit from the additional support measures which the Government announced on 24 September as part of the Winter Economy Plan. These new measures include:

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

■ Child Trust Fund

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[95994]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many 18 year olds are estimated to be eligible for proceeds under the Child Trust Fund in September 2020.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[95996]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much Child Trust Funds, introduced in September 2002 and now eligible for maturity, are worth as of September 2020.

John Glen:

Since 2002, around 6.3 million CTF accounts have been set up, roughly 4.5 million by parents or guardians and a further 1.8 million set up by HMRC where parents or guardians did not open an account. From 1 September 2020, the oldest children eligible for a Child Trust Fund will have turned 18 and will be able to access their

money. As set out in HMRC's press release in August 2020 it is expected that over 700,000 accounts will mature each year.

HMRC cannot provide an estimate on how much Child Trust funds, which were introduced in September 2002 and now eligible for maturity, are worth as of September 2020. This analysis would require a significant amount of resource and therefore unachievable in the timescale provided.

■ Clean Air Zones

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[96007\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to create a national clean air fund to support the implementation of Clean Air Zones in cities.

Kemi Badenoch:

We are determined to tackle air pollution given its significant negative impact on public health, the economy and the environment. Air quality has improved significantly over recent decades and will continue to improve thanks to the action we have already taken.

The Government has committed £880m to support Local Authorities deliver their Air Quality plans. Alongside this, the Government has also recently announced a £2 billion package to create a new era for cycling and walking – the largest ever boost for cyclists and pedestrians – which includes £225 million to help local authorities create pop-up cycle lanes and reallocate road space.

■ Disadvantaged: Coronavirus

Dan Carden:

[\[96181\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on regional economic inequalities.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to levelling up opportunity across the country, including as we respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19. For example, we have so far helped over 1.2 million employers across regions to furlough 9.6 million jobs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; we have supported 2.6 million self-employed individuals through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme; and we have provided over £11 billion in Small Business Grants. The Winter Economy Plan will further protect jobs and businesses, including through introducing the Job Support Scheme and extending the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

■ Duty Free Allowances

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96109\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason he plans to remove the ability for customers to reclaim VAT on luxury good sales in the UK at custom points.

Rachael Maskell:

[96110]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on retailers in the UK of removing the reclaiming of VAT by customers on luxury good sales at custom points.

Jesse Norman:

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

The detailed rationale for this change is included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>.

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

■ Employee Ownership

Paul Bristow:

[95238]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the Share Incentive Plan (SIP) holding period from five to three years.

Jesse Norman:

Share Incentive Plans (SIPs) are tax-advantaged employee share schemes, intended to encourage businesses to share financial rewards with their staff, to help to motivate their workforce, support productivity and recruit and retain staff.

SIPs provide generous tax reliefs on shares, including exemption from IT and NICs, and CGT benefits if shares are kept in the plan until sold. To receive the full tax relief, shares must be held for at least five years. The Government believes this is an appropriate length of time to support the policy's aims to assist staff retention and improved productivity, as well as helping to align company and employee interests.

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review.

■ Employment: Coronavirus**Gill Furniss:** [\[96142\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make available additional support beyond the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and Job Support Scheme for people working in industries prevented from operating as a result of health protection regulations.

Jesse Norman:

The Job Support Scheme will help employers that are facing reduced demand due to COVID-19, helping those businesses to retain their employees. The Government has also introduced several additional support schemes for businesses, in addition to the extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. The Government has extended the temporary loan schemes (the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Bounce Back Loans, and the Future Fund), provided flexibility with the repayment of these loans, deferred VAT payments, reduced the rate of VAT for the hospitality and accommodation sectors, and introduced the Job Retention Bonus to encourage employers to keep their previously furloughed staff employed.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[96058\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the treatment by Germany and Italy of (a) business events and (b) trade fairs as critical business opportunities for tax purposes.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury monitors domestic and international policies when considering changes to UK tax policies, and the Government keeps all tax policy under review.

Andrea Leadsom: [\[96060\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is making an assessment of the potential merits of introducing funding schemes similar to the Eat Out to Help Out initiative in support of events organisers and trade fairs.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like events and the trade fair industry.

That is why the Government has announced unprecedented support for businesses and individuals during the pandemic, including those in events industries. This includes the deferral of VAT payments, a yearlong business rates holiday for eligible businesses, a range of government-backed and guaranteed loan schemes, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Fund, and the Discretionary Grant. Additionally, many events are able to reopen at a small scale with social distancing measures.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments to understand the long-term effects of social distancing across all key areas of the economy.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors as we respond to this pandemic, and keep all policies under review

■ Housing: Insulation

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[95232\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support he is making available to eradicate fuel poverty through the insulation of homes in Bosworth.

Steve Barclay:

The Government recognises the importance of energy efficiency in tackling fuel poverty.

Through the new £2 billion Green Homes Grant scheme announced by the Chancellor in July, homeowners and landlords across England, including in Bosworth, will be able to apply for vouchers to fund at least two thirds of the cost of upgrading the energy performance of their homes, up to £5,000. Low income households will be eligible for up to 100% government funding, up to £10,000.

Leicestershire County Council also has the opportunity to bid for part of the £500m of the scheme that is being made available to local authorities to directly help low income households.

The scheme could support more than 100,000 green jobs, upgrade more than 600,000 homes, and save households hundreds of pounds a year on their energy bills. This is in addition to existing measures to support improvements in energy efficiency in the homes of those in fuel poverty, such as the Energy Company Obligation (ECO).

■ Investment Income

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[95066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department made of the effect of the number of UK-listed companies which have suspended or cancelled dividend payments on (a) pension contributions and (b) household incomes.

John Glen:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish official statistics on household incomes, including the contribution from dividend income. The latest data indicates that dividend income accounted for 4% of household disposable income in the second quarter of 2020.

The Covid-19 outbreak poses an unprecedented challenge to the UK. The government has taken substantial action to rescue the economy from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the Plan for Jobs, published in July.

The government has kept people in work, protected their incomes and supported businesses, delivering one of the most generous and comprehensive packages of support globally. This includes support for over 1.2 million businesses, totalling £57

billion from Government-backed loan schemes, and over £39 billion on the furlough scheme, protecting over 9.6 million jobs.

■ Revenue and Customs: Research

Dan Carden: [\[96183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for HMRC Datalab.

Jesse Norman:

The HMRC Datalab has been an important element of HMRC's transparency agenda since 2012, allowing external researchers access to de-identified tax data to answer significant questions about the tax system and the economy.

The Datalab is currently fully funded by HMRC. Options for expanding the capacity of the Datalab to meet anticipated future demand are currently being reviewed by HMRC, while ensuring that the personal information held is suitably protected in line with all relevant data protection legislation. As part of this review, HMRC are assessing funding options, which include the Chancellor's next spending review allocation to the department, as well as external research council support.

■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[94585\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether reusable menstrual underwear is defined as a reusable menstrual product for the purposes of the forthcoming VAT zero rate for menstrual products.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[94586\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2020 to Question 84371 on Sanitary Protection: VAT, what recent estimate he has made of the potential cost to the Exchequer of including reusable menstrual underwear in the scope of the zero VAT rate for women's sanitary products from January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The zero rate for women's sanitary products from 1 January 2021 will apply to those products which are currently subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent. This covers the supply of any sanitary protection product that is designed and marketed solely for the absorption or collection of menstrual flow or lochia, whether disposable or reusable. The relief specifically excludes dual purpose period and incontinence products, items of clothing such as reusable menstrual underwear, or purely incontinence products.

The Government has not estimated the potential cost to the Exchequer of including reusable menstrual underwear in the scope of the zero VAT rate for women's sanitary products.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[96056\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional provisions he has under assessment to help self-employed individuals who do not qualify for the Self-employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) is helping those that have been adversely affected by COVID-19, and has already helped 2.6 million people with over £7.6 billion of support. As set out in the Winter Economy Plan last week, the Government is extending the SEISS Grant; 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.

Those ineligible for the SEISS Grant Extension may still be eligible for other elements of the very large package of financial support available. The Government has temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 by £20 per week and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly reduced, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. The self-employed also have access to other elements of the package, including tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

Furthermore, the Winter Economy Plan announced further support to reduce pressure on business finances. The application deadline for four temporary coronavirus loan schemes – Bounce Back Loans, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loans (CBILS) and the Future Fund – has also been extended to 30 November. The Government is introducing Pay as you Grow, a new option for Bounce Back Loan borrowers to repay their loan over a period of up to ten years, and enabling CBILS lenders to extend the term of these loans to ten years where they deem this necessary.

Up to half a million businesses who deferred their VAT bills will also be given more breathing space through the New Payment Scheme, which gives them the option to spread their payments over the financial year 2021-2022. All 11 million UK self-assessment taxpayers will be able to benefit from the recently enhanced Time to Pay 'self-service' facility to create a 12-month, interest-free payment arrangement for up to £30,000 of self-assessment debt.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Julian Sturdy:

[\[94405\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a sector specific extension to the Self Employment Income Support scheme for industries that are adversely affected by the rule of six and other covid-19 restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has announced the SEISS Grant Extension, which is a targeted form of support for the self-employed and viable traders who are actively trading but suffering from low demand, to help them continue to trade in the forthcoming winter months.

The Government will provide eligible claimants with a taxable grant covering 20 per cent of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering 3 months' worth of profits, and capped at £1,875 in total.

Robert Halfon:[\[96047\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason his extension of the Self-employed Income Support Scheme is a grant covering 20 per cent on average monthly trading profits.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension has been introduced to help the self-employed who are actively trading but are suffering from reduced demand due to COVID-19, to help them continue to trade through the winter months. The Government has broadly aligned the size of the grant with the Government's contribution provided for employees through the Job Support Scheme.

Alex Davies-Jones:[\[96224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 September 2020 to Question 93721 on Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Personal Care Services, which (a) industries and (b) businesses are included in the other service activities sector bracket when calculating the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics.

Jesse Norman:

The sector "Other service activities" includes the activities of membership organisations, the repair of computers and personal and household goods and a variety of personal service activities. A breakdown of the activities in the sector is provided below.

- Activities of membership organisations
 - o Activities of business, employers and professional membership organisations
- Activities of business and employers membership organisations
- Activities of professional membership organisations
 - o Activities of trade unions
- Activities of trade unions
 - o Activities of other membership organisations
- Activities of religious organisations
- Activities of political organisations

- Activities of other membership organisations not elsewhere classified
- Repair of computers and personal and household goods
 - o Repair of computers and communication equipment
- Repair of computers and peripheral equipment
- Repair of communication equipment
 - o Repair of personal and household goods
- Repair of consumer electronics
- Repair of household appliances and home and garden equipment
- Repair of footwear and leather goods
- Repair of furniture and home furnishings
- Repair of watches, clocks and jewellery
- Repair of other personal and household goods
- Other personal service activities
 - o Washing and (dry-)cleaning of textile and fur products
 - o Hairdressing and other beauty treatment
 - o Funeral and related activities
 - o Physical well-being activities
 - o Other personal service activities not elsewhere classified

■ Tax Allowances

Dan Carden:

[96182]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many policy evaluations of non-structural tax reliefs have been undertaken by (a) HMRC and (b) his Department in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC carry out evaluations either internally or through external contracts to evaluate the effectiveness of reliefs. HMRC have published evaluations of 15 tax reliefs since 2015. The reliefs evaluated account for over £11 billion of the total cost of reliefs as estimated in 2018-19.

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 on the monitoring and evaluation of tax reliefs. This includes new commitments to define and publish criteria for determining which reliefs to evaluate, to put in place a more structured programme of internal evaluation, and to aim to publish more of this internal analysis.

HMT and HMRC work in policy partnership to consider the effectiveness of policies as part of continuing policy maintenance and development, which forms the foundation of evidence-based advice to ministers. They do this as part of the fiscal event cycle, where tax policy changes are decided and put forward by ministers, voted on by Parliament, and legislated for through the Finance Bill.

■ Taxation

Dan Carden: [\[96179\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 September 2020 to Question 93667, if he will (a) request and (b) publish aggregate statistics on the data held by HMRC as reported by UK financial institutions under the International Tax Compliance Regulations 2015 (as amended) for the total and average value of holdings in financial accounts by (i) year and (ii) country of tax residence of the account holder.

Jesse Norman:

Publication of aggregate statistics on the data held by HMRC on non-resident account holders, as reported by UK financial institutions, will be considered so far as the disclosure of such information would not prejudice international relations.

Dan Carden: [\[96180\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will (a) request and (b) publish aggregate statistics on the data held by HMRC from countries participating in information exchange under the (i) OECD Common Reporting Standard, (ii) EU Savings Directive, (iii) US Foreign Account Compliance Act and (iv) any similar arrangements for the (A) total and (B) average value of holdings of UK tax residents in financial accounts by (1) year and (2) country of the accounts.

Jesse Norman:

Some information concerning data received by HMRC from countries participating in information exchange on financial accounts has been published in the document 'No Safe Havens 2019'. Publication of further aggregate statistics will be considered, so far as the relevant treaty provisions allow.

■ UK Government Investments: Business Interests

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[95997\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who the UKGI's annual declaration of interests compliance officer is.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[95998\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has held the position of the UKGI's compliance officer for annual declaration of interests in the last 10 years.

John Glen:

UKGI became operational from 1 April 2016. The compliance officer role was initially held by its Chief Operating Officer before transferring to its Chief Financial Officer. It is now held by its General Counsel.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[96116]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Trusted Support Service will be operational for all eligible declarations between Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 1 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Trader Support Service (TSS) was launched on 28 September and will operate on behalf of traders from 1 January.

The Trader Support Service will be able to help all traders, regardless of size and at no additional cost, to move their goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and to import goods into Northern Ireland from the Rest of the World.

■ Working Tax Credit: North East

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[95604]

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

Steve Barclay:

The latest available information on the number of families with children receiving Working Tax Credit at the English regional level is for April 2020. In April 2020, the number of families with children receiving Working Tax Credit in the North East was 40,200.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-and-working-tax-credits-statistics-provisional-awards-geographical-analyses-december-2013>

Information on following months is not readily available. The next update to this publication will provide statistics relating to December 2020 and will be available in January 2021.

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

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

■ Working Tax Credit: Washington and Sunderland West

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[95606]

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

Steve Barclay:

The latest available information on the number of families with children receiving Working Tax Credit at the English regional level is for April 2020. In April 2020, the

number of families with children receiving Working Tax Credit in Washington and Sunderland West was 1,700.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-and-working-tax-credits-statistics-provisional-awards-geographical-analyses-december-2013>

Information on following months is not readily available. The next update to this publication will provide statistics relating to December 2020 and will be available in January 2021.

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

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

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Bereavement Benefits

Jeremy Wright:

[95053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the proposed Remedial Order to extend the legislation governing widowed parent's allowance and bereavement support payments will be applied 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.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Neil Gray:

[95096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many staff of her Department have been transferred from working on Child Maintenance Service issues since March 2020.

Mims Davies:

To meet the unprecedented demand for benefits during the pandemic, and ongoing challenge to front line services that the Department for Work and Pensions has faced since the outbreak, from March 2020, of the approximate 6,800 Child Maintenance staff, 322 FTE (to date) have been transferred on a permanent basis to support benefit delivery. This means we can continue to support separated parents, as part of the departments wider efforts to provide financial support through the welfare system.

Child Maintenance Service are currently recruiting to provide backfill for the people who have been moved to support welfare delivery.

■ Jobcentres: Staff

Seema Malhotra:

[\[96075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent work coaches are employed by her Department in each region.

Mims Davies:

The total number of full-time equivalent Work Coaches employed by the Department is 14,007, broken down as follows:

Central England and Wales – 3,603

North of England – 3,852

Scotland – 1,414

South of England – 5,138

■ Pensions: Advisory Services

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[94569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will review the mandatory financial advice requirement for people wishing to transfer or convert a DB pension with a transfer value worth more than £30,000 through the pension freedoms regulations 2015.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has a duty to review this requirement to take financial advice. The first report must be published before 6 April 2023, as set by the Pension Schemes Act 2015 (Transitional Provisions and Appropriate Independent Advice) (Amendment) Regulations 2017. At this time, the Government has no immediate plans to review or lower the threshold at which individuals are required to take financial advice.

In 2015 Parliament passed the requirement to take financial advice for anyone seeking to transfer or convert a cash equivalent value of £30,000 or more from a defined benefit pension to an arrangement where they could flexibly access those savings. This statutory legal requirement was introduced to ensure individuals with valuable pension benefits are fully aware of the risks involved in giving up a secure income in retirement to one that may be susceptible to fluctuations in the financial markets, and carefully consider the implications of permanently surrendering their guarantees before they decide to transfer or convert those benefits.

Government's commitment to maintain the existing threshold forms part of a wider commitment to safeguarding consumer savings – we want individuals to better understand their choices and the risks that exist. To this end, DWP will be introducing new information requirements from the age fifty to those with defined contribution pension savings, that will inform them in more simplified terms, about their retirement options and the availability of guidance to help with their decisions. DWP also see accessing guidance as a natural part of the journey savers take, before making a

decision relating to the pension freedoms. Following the recent trials, which showed a nudge to guidance during the application process is effective, we will be commencing section 19 of the Financial Guidance and Claims Act 2018, which amends the Pension Schemes Act 1993.

■ Social Security Benefits

Kirsten Oswald: [\[95675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she next plans to review the benefit cap.

Mims Davies:

The Secretary of State has a statutory obligation to review the levels of the benefit cap at least once in each Parliament unless an early election is called, as it was last year. A review will take place at an appropriate point in the future.

■ Universal Credit: Disability

Neil Coyle: [\[96079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the introduction and implementation of universal credit on its ability to meet Equality Act 2010 obligations towards disabled people compared to its ability to meet those obligations with legacy benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department published an Equality Impact Assessment for Universal Credit in 2011, which stands overall, although in line with Ministers' legal duties equality impacts have been considered on all major changes to Universal Credit.

We recognise that claimants with disabilities or health conditions may face extra challenges in their lives and so Universal Credit provides unprecedented personalised support for people by simplifying the benefit system. Universal Credit will provide an extra £2.1bn a year once fully rolled out, compared to the legacy benefit system it replaces. Millions of people who move onto Universal Credit from legacy benefits will be better off, including around a million disabled households who will gain on average around £100 per month.

Additionally, where people are unable to make or manage their Universal Credit claim online, telephone and face to face support in Jobcentres is available. Our Work Coaches are committed to delivering what is right for a person's circumstances and receive training to ensure they can offer effective support to different claimant groups. This enables them to provide tailored support and gain an excellent understanding of whether their claimants have conditions that require extra support.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): [\[HCWS482\]](#)

As the Covid-19 incidence rate continues to rise across the country, a suite of local and national action is required to break the trains of transmission and enable people to maintain a more normal way of life.

The Government will act swiftly and decisively to limit further spread, reduce disruption and contain local outbreaks. The Local Action Committee Command structure reviewed the latest evidence during two urgently convened meetings yesterday, in which we worked with local leaders and the scientific community to assess the data and consider whether further evidence was required.

Despite local interventions being put into place in the North West of England since 5th August, the latest data in the 7 day period 19-25 September, shows a continuing increase in incidence rates per 100,000 population and also the percentage of positive test results, especially within the Merseyside region. The impact of this has resulted in increased hospital admissions and ICU occupancy in the Merseyside area.

As a result, from **00:01 on Saturday 3, October** we are implementing stricter restrictions in Regulations to apply across the **Merseyside region**, which consists of **Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral** and for these purposes also **Halton and Warrington**. The new restriction will prohibit inter-household mixing in any indoors venue, unless there is an exemption in place. This restriction includes hospitality, leisure, retail and entertainment venues (including bars, pubs and restaurants).

We reviewed the position in the **North East**. In addition to the North East measures we announced last week, from **00:01 on Saturday 3, October** we are also implementing further regulations in the form of a regional approach to **Hartlepool and Middlesbrough** to replicate the restrictions in place since 30 September in **Durham County, Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland**. These regulations will prohibit inter-household mixing in any indoors venue, unless there is an exemption in place. This includes hospitality, leisure, retail and entertainment venues (including bars, pubs and restaurants).

We reviewed the level of current interventions in **Bolton**, and from **00:01 on Saturday 3rd October**, we will be **aligning these with measures in place across the rest of Greater Manchester**.

We are also recommending that **Sheffield** is escalated as an Area of Enhanced Support and that **Rotherham, Luton, Wakefield, Barrow-in-Furness, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester** are added to the Watchlist as Areas of Concern.

The recommendation is also that **Spelthorne** and **Hertsmere** are removed from the Watchlist.

We appreciate that this will be difficult news for the people living in these areas, profoundly affecting their daily lives. These decisions are not taken lightly, and such measures will be kept under review and in place no longer than they are necessary.

There are exemptions to these measures so people can still meet with those in their support bubble. There are other limited exemptions such as for work purposes or to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person. Through the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Protected Areas and Linked Childcare Households) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, people may create an exclusive childcare bubble for the purposes of informal childcare for children under 14, helping ease pressure on those living under local restrictions so they can get to work.

The guidance on GOV.UK covering these areas will also be amended to fully reflect these changes.