



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 October 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:46 P.M., 05 October 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS 6
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY 6
Bereavement Leave 6
Climate Change 6
Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme 6
Coronavirus: Vaccination 7
Employment: Urban Areas 7
Events Industry and Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus 8
Galileo System 8
Land Registry 8
Music: Internet 9
Post Office and Royal Mail 9
Post Office and UK Government Investments 9
Post Office: ICT 10
Post Office: Reviews 10
Remote Working 10
Research: Publishing 11
Skilled Workers: Greater London 12
CABINET OFFICE 12
Coronavirus: Deaths 12
Employment: Brexit 12
Local Government: Elections 13
DEFENCE 13
Armoured Fighting Vehicles 13
Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia 14
Fleet Solid Support Ships 15
RAF Leeming and RAF Valley: Average Earnings 15
RAF Valley 15
Saudi Arabia: European Fighter Aircraft 16
Saudi Arabia: Hawk Aircraft 17
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT 17
Charitable Donations: Greater London 17
Coronavirus: Disease Control 18
English Football League: Government Assistance 18
Events Industry: Coronavirus 19
Football: Coronavirus 20
Gambling: Video Games 21
Rugby: Finance 21
EDUCATION 22
Apprentices 22
Apprentices: Greater London 23

■ Children: Bereavement Counselling	24	■ Marine Protected Areas: Devolution	42
■ Children: Coronavirus	25	■ Meat Products: Exports	43
■ Children: Day Care	26	■ Meat Products: Labelling	44
■ Education: Disadvantaged	26	■ Meat: Exports	44
■ Free School Meals: Disadvantaged	27	■ Members: Correspondence	45
■ Further Education: Expenditure	27	■ Peat	45
■ Hindi: GCE A-level and GCSE	29	■ Sanitary Products: Plastics	46
■ National Tutoring Programme: Roma and Travellers	29	■ Trees: Disease Control	46
■ Nurseries: Coronavirus	30	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	47
■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus	31	■ Abortion: Gender Selection	47
■ Remote Education: Coronavirus	32	■ China: Muslims	47
■ Skills Toolkit	34	■ Developing Countries: Drugs	47
■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus	34	■ Developing Countries: Maternal Mortality	48
■ Swimming: Children	35	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy	49
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	35	■ Iraq: Kurds	49
■ Air Pollution	35	■ Maternal Mortality: Overseas Aid	49
■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals	36	■ Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict	50
■ Animals: Exports	36	■ Nagorno-karabakh: Armed Conflict	52
■ Environment Protection: Crime	37	■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe	52
■ Fisheries: Norway	38	■ Overseas Aid	53
■ Flood Control: Finance	38	■ Overseas Aid: Standards	53
■ Food Supply: Coronavirus	39	■ Poverty	54
■ Food: Imports	39	■ Rwanda: Females	54
■ Food: Labelling	40	■ Syria: Armed Conflict	55
■ Food: Waste	41	■ USA: Elections	55
■ Food: Waste Management	41	■ Yemen: Military Intervention	56
■ Marine Protected Areas	42	■ Zimbabwe: Political Prisoners	56

■ Zimbabwe: Politics And Government	57	■ Undocumented Migrants: Wakefield	68
HOME OFFICE	57	■ Visas: Applications	69
■ Asylum: British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies	57	■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review	70
■ Asylum: Interviews	57	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	70
■ Asylum: Newcastle Upon Tyne	58	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	70
■ Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill	59	■ Affordable Housing: Construction	71
■ Crimes of Violence: Females	60	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	72
■ Crimes of Violence: Firearms and Knives	60	■ Floods: Expenditure	72
■ Criminal Investigation: Children	60	■ Homelessness	73
■ Environment Protection	61	■ Housing: Construction	73
■ Firearms: Licensing	61	■ Housing: Standards	74
■ Food Standards Agency	62	■ Leasehold: Reform	74
■ Food: Standards	63	■ Local Government Finance	74
■ Hate Crime: Coronavirus	63	■ Marriage: Coronavirus	75
■ Home Office: Written Questions	64	■ Members: Correspondence	75
■ Immigrants: Domestic Abuse	64	■ Planning Permission: Local Press	75
■ Members: Correspondence	64	■ Property Development: York	76
■ Mining: Industrial Disputes	65	■ Refuges: Closures	76
■ Overseas Students: Assessments	65	■ Tenants: Loans	76
■ Refugees	66	■ Towns Fund	77
■ Refugees: Chimney House Hotel	66	■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund	77
■ Undocumented Migrants	67	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	79
■ Undocumented Migrants: Dudley	68	■ Department for International Trade: Apprentices	79
■ Undocumented Migrants: Temporary Accommodation	68	■ EU External Trade	79
		■ Hydrogen: Exports	79
		■ Institute of Economic Affairs	80
		■ Shipping: Trade	80

■ Trade Agreements: Australia and Canada	80	■ Customs	91
JUSTICE	81	■ Job Support Scheme	92
■ Coroners	81	■ Public Expenditure: Wales	92
■ Courts: Coronavirus	81	■ Revenue and Customs Digital Technology Services: Agency Workers	92
■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Coronavirus	82	■ Revenue and Customs: Agency Workers	93
■ Marriage	83	■ Service Industries: Coronavirus	94
LEADER OF THE HOUSE	83	■ Students: Loans	94
■ Council of Europe	83	■ Tax Allowances	94
■ Members: Correspondence and Written Questions	83	■ Treasury: Agency Workers	95
NORTHERN IRELAND	84	WALES	95
■ UK Government-Northern Ireland Executive Joint Board	84	■ Shipping: Wales	95
TRANSPORT	84	WORK AND PENSIONS	96
■ Acceleration Unit	84	■ Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals	96
■ Bus Services: Coronavirus	84	■ National Insurance: Coronavirus	96
■ Driving Instruction: Coronavirus	85	■ Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus	96
■ Driving Tests: Standards	85	■ Social Security Benefits	97
■ Licensing of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill	86	■ Social Security Benefits: Stockton North	97
■ Motorways: Safety	86	■ Unemployment: Sutton Coldfield	97
■ Network Rail: Staff	86	■ Universal Credit	98
■ Railways	87	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	101
■ Railways: Coronavirus	87	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	101
■ Railways: Season Tickets	88	■ Gambling: Suicide	101
■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions	88	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	102
■ Shipping: Finance	89	■ Health: Leicestershire	102
■ Shipping: Investment	89		
■ Shipping: Technology	90		
TREASURY	90		
■ Business: Coronavirus	90		

WRITTEN STATEMENTS	103	PRIME MINISTER	107
CABINET OFFICE	103	■ Publication of the Intelligence and Security Committee's Report on Northern-Ireland Related Terrorism	107
■ Negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU: update	103	TRANSPORT	108
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	104	■ Union Connectivity Review	108
■ Domestic Abuse Announcement	104	TREASURY	108
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	105	■ Bilateral loan to Ireland	108
■ Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Programme	105		

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

■ Bereavement Leave

Peter Gibson:

[\[95748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will review the threshold at which statutory bereavement leave is provided for parents that lose a child during the second trimester.

Amanda Solloway:

Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay was introduced earlier this year, in April 2020, and applies to parents who lose a child under the age of 18, including individuals whose child is stillborn from 24 weeks of pregnancy. 'Parent' is broadly defined and employees have 56 weeks from the date of their child's death or stillbirth to take their leave and pay.

Where a mother experiences a miscarriage before 24 weeks, it is often the case that a GP will sign her off work. The duration of this leave will depend on her personal circumstances, and the pay she is entitled to will be dictated by her standard workplace sick leave policy (for which there is a statutory minimum).

A partner will also be entitled to time off for dependents under the Employment Rights Act. Many employers will also have an existing compassionate leave policy or will operate one on a discretionary basis following such loss.

We strongly encourage employers to be sensitive and considerate at such a time.

■ Climate Change

Alan Brown:

[\[97641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 93621, if the Government will publish its Nationally Determined Contribution by 12 December 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are currently working on our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), including on the timing for its publication.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Marco Longhi:

[\[95754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of applications to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme have been declined to date.

Amanda Solloway:

As of 20 September, 66,585 loans have been approved under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, with a total value of £15.45 billion.

The Scheme has received 142,076 applications. The applications figure includes: approved applications; applications that are still to be processed; applications that have been declined; and applications that may turn out not to be eligible or cases where customers will decide not to proceed. Decisions on whether to specifically capture information relating to declined loans are at the discretion of the lender.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Mick Whitley:**[\[97028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in the awarding of contracts to develop a vaccine for covid-19.

Amanda Solloway:

All decisions on spend are made in line with expectations in Managing Public Money.

External experts are required to complete a conflict of interest declaration; these are then assessed on a case-by-case basis and where conflicts arise, those individuals are required to recuse themselves from the decision-making process.

■ Employment: Urban Areas**Ian Lavery:**[\[95641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of developing work hubs in towns to (a) support remote working and (b) increase opportunity when people apply for work.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognises that access to flexible working practices, including remote working, is key to helping many workers enter and remain in the labour market. There is currently a legal framework in place that grants all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service with their employer the statutory right to request flexible working, which includes working remotely.

As part of the Government's Towns Fund programme, the 101 towns selected for "Town Deals" are each developing their own proposals for investment of up to £25m, or £50m in exceptional circumstances. Regeneration and skills are key themes of the Towns Fund and it is possible that some towns may wish to propose work hubs or similar shared spaces as part of their plans.

In our manifesto we committed to further encouraging flexible working and consulting on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to.

■ Events Industry and Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher: [\[96916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of people employed in the (a) events, (b) hospitality and (c) exhibition sectors.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government has sought to minimise job losses with its economic support package with measures such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), grants, the Jobs Support Scheme and the Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

The Office for National Statistics has been collecting up to date figures on the business impacts of the covid-19 outbreak:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/datasets/businessimpactofcovid19surveybicsresults>.

Data collection has necessarily been at a broad industrial level, to optimise accuracy and speed of reporting, so figures on the specific detailed sectors requested are not available.

■ Galileo System

Owen Thompson: [\[96957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to seek access to the EU's Galileo system in order to avoid disruption to existing satellite navigation capabilities.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK and the EU discussed the Galileo programme during the Withdrawal Agreement negotiations. The EU's offer on Galileo did not meet the UK's security and industrial requirements.

Our position remains unchanged and as such, the UK is not seeking to continue participation in Galileo.

■ Land Registry

Colleen Fletcher: [\[97594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) ease of use of the search facilities HM Land Registry uses to allow individuals to establish land ownership.

Amanda Solloway:

HM Land Registry has provided individuals with online search services since 2008, enabling anyone to view and download information about land ownership.

As part of its business strategy and transformation plans, HM Land Registry analyses customer satisfaction and experience to underpin service improvements including to

examine accessibility, ease of use and plain English. Improved services are in development with the first iteration of a new search service launched on GOV.uk during February 2020.

■ **Music: Internet**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[97529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with music streaming companies on the rates of remuneration for minority language artists.

Amanda Solloway:

Streaming contracts are private agreements between the parties concerned and the Government plays no role in them.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[97531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of setting an increased fixed statutory level for which music streaming companies remunerate publishers.

Amanda Solloway:

Ultimately, such remuneration is a private, contractual matter.

The Government recognises the importance of understanding how rights holders are remunerated in the global streaming environment. To this end, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is working closely with the UK Council of Music Makers on a research project to investigate the flow of money from streaming to creators. This will run for 12 months and is due to report in summer 2021. This project will help improve our understanding of the issue.

■ **Post Office and Royal Mail**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the Partner Organisation Assessment made by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2011 of (a) Royal Mail Holdings and (b) Post Office Limited.

Amanda Solloway:

The Department has no plans to publish such assessments.

■ **Post Office and UK Government Investments**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether any Government internal audit has identified the Post Office Limited or UKGI as entities which lacked a Framework Document or Memorandum of Understanding with his Department.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) issued a report on Post Office Sponsorship in October 2019, noting that a Framework Document and MOU were in the process of being finalised. A Framework Document outlining key activities, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities between BEIS, UKGI and Post Office Ltd has been agreed and was published on 25 March 2020. The document is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-limited-shareholder-relationship-framework-document>.

■ **Post Office: ICT**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department retained a copy of Second Sight's final report into the Post Office Limited's Horizon IT system.

Amanda Solloway:

The Department has retained a copy of Second Sight's final report into the Post Office Limited's Horizon IT system.

■ **Post Office: Reviews**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[96798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Triennial Reviews there have been of Post Office Limited; and when those reviews were carried out.

Amanda Solloway:

At the time of triennial reviews, all non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) undergo a substantive review at least once every 3 years. As Post Office Ltd is classified as a Public Corporation, they are out of scope. The published guidance on the reviews can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/triennial-reviews-guidance-and-schedule>.

■ **Remote Working**

Derek Twigg: [\[96774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to his Answer of 21 September 2020 Question 90945 on Remote Working, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of providing greater protections for online platform workers using crowd work platforms.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is committed to ensuring we make workplaces fairer by bringing forward a range of measures through the Employment Bill, and this will include considering options for new protections for those in the gig economy.

The Director of Labour Market Enforcement's 2019-20 strategy also recommended the Government examine the threat to labour hire compliance from online and app-based recruitment businesses. The Government will respond to the 2019-20 strategy in due course.

■ **Research: Publishing**

Sarah Olney: [\[96977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic effect of UK Research and Innovation's proposed Open Access policy.

Sarah Olney: [\[96978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of UK Research and Innovation's open access policy on research-intensive universities.

Sarah Olney: [\[96979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of UK Research and Innovation's Open Access policy on international collaboration between UK-based and overseas researchers.

Amanda Solloway:

Open Access is central to the Government's ambitions for research and innovation, with openness being key to world class research. Public funding should result in public benefit, and therefore the Government and UKRI support the principle that published outputs of publicly funded research should be widely and freely accessible to all, under conditions that allow for maximum reuse, as recently reiterated in the R&D roadmap.

Understanding the overall economic impact of the Review's proposed policy is important and UKRI has commissioned independent analysis to assess the possible implications for various groups such as Learned Societies, Research Organisations, Disciplines and Publishers. BEIS will consider the wider social and economic implications, using this independent evidence on costs and benefits, and the responses to the consultation on the proposed policy run by UKRI from Feb-May 2020.

UKRI's mission is to work in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities and Government to create the best environment for research and innovation to flourish and to create social and economic impact. The Open Access Review will continue under these principles, with UKRI continuing to conduct further evidence gathering, analysis and stakeholder engagement and the issues raised by the Honourable Member are all being considered by UKRI as part of the ongoing process.

■ Skilled Workers: Greater London**Helen Hayes:**[\[97651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the publication by the Mayor of London entitled Skills for Londoners: a Call for Action, published in September 2020, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of devolving skills and employment policy in the manner set out in that report.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognises the importance of having an employment and skills system that responds to local economic need. We have taken significant steps to deliver this through devolution of around half of the Adult Education Budget (AEB). The Greater London Authority and six of the Mayoral Combined Authorities have had devolved responsibility for the AEB since the start of the 2019/20 academic year, with the North of Tyne MCA having taken on responsibility at the start of the 2020/21 academic year. We have already started to see how they have been able to use this budget to support local residents impacted by COVID-19.

The Government is now developing both a Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper and a Further Education White Paper that will set out how we intend to take forward this work in due course.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Coronavirus: Deaths****Sir David Amess:**[\[96742\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on the number of deaths caused by covid-19 among people without underlying health conditions aged (a) 13 to 20, (b) 21 to 30, (c) 31 to 40, (d) 41 to 50, (e) 51 to 60, (f) 61 to 70, (g) 71 to 80, (h) 81 to 90 and (i) 91 or above years since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

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 PQ96742 [PQ96742.pdf]

■ Employment: Brexit**Seema Malhotra:**[\[86061\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he had made of the effect on employment levels in the event that an agreement is not reached on a future relationship with the EU by the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

Any responsible Government has a duty to prepare for all scenarios. Planning for the end of the transition period is well underway and we have already been engaging with businesses and industry, including ensuring our borders are ready by the end of the year, and will continue to do so.

■ **Local Government: Elections****Mr Clive Betts:**[\[97455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that staff at polling stations to be used in the 2021 local elections will be able to socially distance.

Mr Clive Betts:[\[97456\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that staff at electoral counts for the local elections in 2021 will be able to socially distance.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is working with the electoral sector and Public Health England to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections, including supporting Returning Officers to ensure polling stations and count venues are safe and covid-secure.

DEFENCE■ **Armoured Fighting Vehicles****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[96800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the track miles or equivalent figure is for Foxhound; and how many years of data his Department holds on the track miles of Foxhound.

Jeremy Quin:

The Foxhound Protected Patrol Vehicle entered service in 2012. The recorded mileage records for each year since then are provided in the following table:

YEAR	ODOMETER MILES	MILES
01-01-2012 – 31-12-2012	96816.67	Miles
01-01-2013 – 31-12-2013	199244.80	Miles
01-01-2014 – 31-12-2014	239340.52	Miles
01-01-2015 – 31-12-2015	267258.21	Miles
01-01-2016 – 31-12-2016	315747.93	Miles

YEAR	ODOMETER MILES	MILES
01-01-2017 – 31-12-2017	286941.10	Miles
01-01-2018 – 31-12-2018	339738.16	Miles
01-01-2019 – 31-12-2019	373282.89	Miles
01-01-2020 – 30-09-2020	207997.17	Miles

■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia

Emily Thornberry: [\[92730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the methodology used by his Department to evaluate allegations of violations of international humanitarian law caused by fixed-wing aircraft in Yemen differs from the methodology used for the same purpose by the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen in its report of 9 September 2020; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

[Holding answer 29 September 2020]: The Secretary of State for International Trade set out the UK's revised methodology to evaluate allegations of violations of international humanitarian law caused by fixed-wing aircraft in Yemen in her written statement of 7 July 2020.

Attachments:

1. HCWS339 [HCWS339 Trade Update.docx]

Emily Thornberry: [\[92731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the definition of what constitutes a pattern of incidents, used by his Department in its evaluation of allegations of violations of international humanitarian law caused by fixed-wing aircraft in Yemen, differs from the definition used for that purpose by the United Nations Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen in its report of 9 September 2020; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

[Holding answer 29 September 2020]: The UK supports the work of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts of Yemen and takes account of its reporting as part of the export licencing process. The Group's report of 9 September 2020 does not clearly define its interpretation of a pattern of incidents with regard to allegations of violations of international humanitarian law involving fixed-wing aircraft in Yemen. The UK's revised methodology does not adopt a prescriptive approach in considering whether there are indications of patterns of non-compliance but considers, for example, whether there are similarities in the factual nature of incidents, the reasons/explanations for the incidents and the timescale in which they have occurred.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships

Gill Furniss:

[\[96974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy solely to use UK steel in the building of new Fleet Solid Support Ships.

Jeremy Quin:

It is too early to say what the steel requirement for the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ships might be. Responsibility for sourcing steel for the FSS ships will rest with the Prime Contractor and in line with Cabinet Office guidelines, it will be for the Prime Contractor to make its steel requirements known to the UK steel industry in order that they may consider bidding.

■ RAF Leeming and RAF Valley: Average Earnings

Stephen Morgan:

[\[97698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average salary is for people employed in maintenance jobs at (a) RAF Valley and (b) RAF Leeming as at 30 September 2020.

Johnny Mercer:

All Hawk maintenance at RAF Valley and RAF Leeming is undertaken by contracted personnel. The pay scales are therefore a matter for the contractor and are likely to be commercially sensitive.

■ RAF Valley

Stephen Morgan:

[\[97699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the business case is for moving work carried out on the Hawk Contract for T1 and T2 jets from RAF Valley to RAF Leeming.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[97700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of the effect of moving work carried out on the Hawk Contract for T1 and T2 jets from RAF Valley to RAF Leeming on jobs at RAF Valley.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[97701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions has he had with representatives of (a) BAE, (b) Babcock and (c) UNITE Union on the potential effect of moving work carried out on the Hawk Contract for T1 and T2 jets from RAF Valley to RAF Leeming on jobs at RAF Valley.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[97702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date the RAF Board plans to make a decision relating to where work will be carried out on the Hawk contract for T1 and T2 jets.

Jeremy Quin:

As part of routine contract negotiations between the Ministry of Defence and BAE Systems to provide Hawk aircraft engineering and support services until 2033, a range of options are being considered. Any decision will be based on a series of factors, including operational requirements.

The negotiations with BAE Systems have yet to conclude and any subsequent business case will be subject to a robust scrutiny process to ensure value for money and balance of investment. As part of these negotiations, consultation and meetings have taken place between BAE Systems and the Unite Trade Union.

A formal decision on the future support arrangements for Hawk TMk1 and TMk2 will complete once the scrutiny process has concluded.

■ **Saudi Arabia: European Fighter Aircraft**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:[\[96986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of the Royal Saudi Air Force's current Typhoon pilots were taught to fly the Typhoon by the RAF.

James Heappey:

Since 2008, 25 Saudi pilots have completed Typhoon conversion training alongside the RAF. We do not maintain a record of how many of these pilots continue to fly the Typhoon, nor do we monitor the size of current RSAF Typhoon pilot cadre.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:[\[96987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many pilots are undergoing RAF training to fly the Typhoon, by nationality.

James Heappey:

As at 30 September 2020, the number of pilots training on the Typhoon Operational Conversion Unit, by nationality, are as follows:

NATIONALITY	NUMBER OF PILOTS (*ROUNDED)
UK (RAF Pilots)	20
Qatar	~
Saudi Arabia	~
United States of America	~

*In accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, the data has been rounded in the table to the nearest 10 and a '~' denotes a number equal to or less than 5.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[96988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the location is of the RAF bases in the UK where Royal Saudi Air Force Typhoon pilots are learning to fly the Typhoon.

James Heappey:
RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[96990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the simulator used by Royal Saudi Air Force Typhoon pilots in the UK is operated by a private contractor.

James Heappey:
The simulator is operated under a joint enterprise between BAE Systems, the Royal Air Force and Defence Equipment and Support.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Hawk Aircraft**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[96989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what types of munitions Royal Saudi Air Force pilots are able to simulate using from the Hawk T2.

James Heappey:
All student pilots, including Royal Saudi Air Force student pilots, can simulate the use of the following types of munition during training on the Hawk T2:
Generic Medium Range Air to Air Missile
Generic Short-Range Air to Air Missile
Generic Gun for Air to Air Training and Air to Ground Strafe profiles
Emulated Paveway IV (Precision Guided Munition) for Air to Ground profiles.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Charitable Donations: Greater London**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[95174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the report *Levelling Up Our Communities: Proposals for a New Social Covenant* commissioned by the Prime Minister, published September 2020, whether he plans to implement the proposal to use the Official Development Assistance budget to attract the world's super-rich to invest their philanthropic funds in London.

Mr John Whittingdale:
The *Levelling Up Our Communities* report is an independent piece of work requested by the Prime Minister of my hon. Friend, the Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger). DCMS will be considering all of the recommendations mentioned in the report and an update on the government's work will be provided in due course.

Philanthropy is at the heart of the voluntary and community sector's funding mix, and the British people continue to give generously to support the sector's important work. The government is keen to continue supporting the growth of philanthropy, and is looking at a range of options for future work.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Sarah Owen: [\[96199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department is providing to local authorities to help them plan for and enable large scale events to take place safely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Outdoor events organised by businesses, charitable organisations, and public bodies are currently permitted provided event organisers follow all relevant Covid-19 Secure guidance, organisers and attendees adhere to all legal requirements - including only allowing groups of 6 people and following any additional local interventions - and that the event does not pose a risk to public health.

Guidance developed by the Events Industry Forum in collaboration with DCMS outlines the Covid-secure measures that a Local Authority should assess have been put in place by event organisers.

Local Authorities can also consult the Government's Covid-19 Secure guidance for a range of other indoor and outdoor events, including business events, cultural performances and sporting events.

Local authorities should avoid issuing licenses for events that could lead to larger gatherings forming and provide advice to businesses on how to manage events of this type. Local authorities have the power to prohibit, restrict or impose requirements on events at any time in response to any public health concerns.

■ **English Football League: Government Assistance**

Dan Jarvis: [\[95645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to provide financial support to English Football League football clubs through the 2020-21 season.

Dan Jarvis: [\[95646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak on English Football League football clubs.

Nigel Huddleston:

Ministers have spoken to all of the major spectator sports, including football, to see what they need, and have asked for detailed financial returns so the Government can understand what support they might need.

We have worked closely with football throughout the pandemic including getting the Premier League and English Football League back behind closed doors but we have been clear that we expect the game - where it can at the top tiers - to support itself. The Government will then focus our support on those in the sector most in need as a result of the October 1 decision.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Paul Girvan:

[\[91790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with advisory bodies on identifying the type of businesses which require different types of covid-19 support in the live events industry.

Caroline Dinenage:

- We recognise that the live events industry and its supply chain has been severely impacted by Covid-19. The ministerially-chaired Events and Entertainment Working Group ensures we understand the issues facing all our Creative Industries sectors and that we are helping them as effectively as possible. The membership of the Working Group includes live events industry trade bodies such as the Production Services Association, the Music Venue Trust, the Concert Promoters Association and the National Arenas Association.
- In addition, officials are in regular contact with live events industry stakeholders, ensuring that the needs of the industry are fully understood.
- We will continue to work with the representatives of the live events industry to understand the difficulties the different parts of the sector faces and support the industry through these challenging times.

Maria Eagle:

[\[97470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the live events industry; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Eagle:

[\[97471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on financial support for the live events industry.

Caroline Dinenage:

We appreciate the important role that the live events sector plays in the UK's economy, and that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge to the sector.

The Chancellor has announced the Winter Economy Plan to protect jobs and support businesses over the coming months, once the existing Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme come to end. From November, the Jobs Support Scheme will provide further support to returning workers, while the extended Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will aid the self-employed who are currently actively trading but are facing reduced demand.

We are also offering businesses who face a drop in demand for their services and possible cash flow issues generous terms for the repayment of deferred taxes and government-backed loans, and are extending the application window of the government-backed loan schemes and continuing reduced VAT (from 20% to 5%) on concert tickets to March 2021.

We will give all businesses that borrowed under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme the option to repay their loan over a period of up to ten years. This will reduce their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. We also intend to allow CBILS lenders to extend the term of a loan up to ten years, providing additional flexibility for UK-based SMEs who may otherwise be unable to repay their loans.

In addition, the Secretary of State provided a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. This support package will benefit the live events sector by providing support to venues and many other cultural organisations to stay open and continue operating.

Sport England have announced a £195 million package of support to help community clubs through this crisis. It recently boosted its Community Emergency Fund by a further £15 million to meet the demand, taking the total package up to £210 million.

We recognise that the live events industry and its supply chain has been severely impacted by Covid-19. We continue to meet with the stakeholders to discuss the specific issues facing the industry.

■ Football: Coronavirus

Jim McMahon:

[\[94506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support he plans to provide to lower league football clubs to compensate for lost gate receipts as a result of the postponement of enabling spectators to attend football matches during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

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

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

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

■ **Gambling: Video Games**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[96928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the launch of his call for evidence on loot boxes, what discussions (a) Ministers and (b) officials have had with representatives of organisations with commercial interests in loot boxes.

Caroline Dinéage:

Ministers and officials have had regular discussions with a range of companies and representative organisations from the creative industries on a variety of issues, including loot boxes. Ministerial meetings with external organisations and individuals are published on gov.uk on a quarterly basis.

In addition to our written call for evidence on loot boxes which is currently underway, we plan a number of roundtables with stakeholders during the autumn to discuss elements of the topic in detail.

■ **Rugby: Finance**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[95758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had on additional specific financial support for rugby league clubs, and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

On 1 May this year the Government announced that the Rugby Football League would receive a £16 million cash injection to safeguard the immediate future of the sport for the communities it serves. This emergency loan will help the sport deal with the extreme financial impact of COVID-19. We are continuing to engage with the Rugby Football League and other sporting bodies on the consequences of the decision not to reopen stadia to spectators on 1 October.

Government is also supporting rugby league through more than £11m of Sport England investment in the Rugby Football League over 2017-21 and investment of up to £10m in rugby league facilities to help drive a legacy from the 2021 Rugby League World Cup.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[97538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Level 2 apprenticeships were (a) started and (b) completed in each year from 2010 to 2020.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[97539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many Level 3 apprenticeships were (a) started and (b) completed in each year from 2010 to date.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[97540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of level (a) 2 and (b) 3 apprenticeships were completed by (i) Further Education colleges and (l) independent providers in each year since 2015.

Gillian Keegan:

The number of level 2 and 3 apprenticeships started and achieved from the academic year 2009-10 to the third quarter of the academic year 2019-20 are published at the links below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/900237/Further-education-and-skills-July-2020-main-tables.xlsx ;

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435642/apprenticeships-starts-by-constituency_v2.xlsx.

The number of apprenticeship level 2 and 3 achievements in further education colleges, and independent providers between 2014/15 and 2018/19 are published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/848359/PT4_Nov_19_FINAL_v0.2.xlsx ;

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765575/Apprenticeships_by_Provider_framework_standard_201415_to_201718.xlsx.

Data from the above links regarding the proportion of level 2 and 3 apprenticeships achieved by further education (FE) colleges and independent providers is shown in the table below.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
General FE and Tertiary College, level 2	33%	33%	34%	35%	34%
General FE and Tertiary	33%	32%	32%	31%	34%

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
College, level 3					
Private Sector	58%	57%	56%	55%	52%
Public Funded, level 2					
Private Sector	59%	62%	61%	61%	57%
Public Funded, level 3					

Notes

- 1) The data source is the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).
- 2) Completions of apprenticeships are published as 'Achievements'.
- 3) Numbers are a count of the number of achievements at any point during the academic year. Learners achieving more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once.
- 4) Apprenticeship achievements include all funded and unfunded learners reported on the ILR.
- 5) Level 2 apprenticeships are published as 'Intermediate Apprenticeship', whilst level 3 apprenticeships are published as 'Advanced Apprenticeship'.
- 6) Apprenticeship achievements statistics should not be used to measure percentage progress within a year. They are independent performance metrics. Typically, apprenticeships can take 2 years to complete.
- 7) Independent providers are published as 'Private Sector Public Funded'. FE colleges are published as 'General FE and Tertiary College'.
- 8) In order to be counted as a successful achievement, all elements of the framework must have been achieved.
- 9) 2019/20 full year provider level data will be published in November 2020.

■ Apprentices: Greater London

Helen Hayes:

[\[97652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a London Apprenticeship Service.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships is a national programme which gives employers access to high quality skills provision throughout England to meet their current and future skills needs.

Individual employers already have direct control over their apprenticeships, and levy payers are able to use their funds as they choose, either to fund apprenticeships in their own business or in smaller businesses in their supply chain or local area. As my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister set out on 29 September, we will work with employers to improve the transfers process, making it easier for them to find smaller employers to receive transfer and make full use of their levy funds. In doing so we will build on successful regional pilot schemes, such as that in West Midlands Combined Authority.

■ Children: Bereavement Counselling

Margaret Greenwood: [\[96934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school pupils who have suffered a family bereavement since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[96935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school pupils who have suffered a family bereavement in each local authority area since the start of the covid-19 outbreak .

Vicky Ford:

The government does not collect information from schools or local authorities on the number of primary and secondary school pupils who have suffered a family bereavement since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak. There are no official estimates of the number of children who are affected by family bereavement, neither usually nor since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government remains committed to promoting and supporting the mental health of children and young people. Access to mental health support, including bereavement support, is more important than ever during the COVID-19 outbreak and the department has taken action to ensure schools and colleges are equipped to support children and young people.

We have worked hard to ensure that all pupils and learners were able to return to a full high-quality education programme in September. Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, with £650 million shared across schools over the 2020-21 academic year, is supporting education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place.

Staff need to be equipped to understand that some pupils may have experienced bereavement. Our guidance for the full opening of schools signposts to further support and resources, and is available here:

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

This includes the MindEd website which has specific material on bereavement and dealing with death and loss, and their website is available here:

<https://www.minded.org.uk/>.

This is in addition to the department's remote learning guidance and the National Children's Bureau's (NCB) self-review tool, 'Preparing for recovery: Self-review and signposting tool', which signposts online support from the Childhood Bereavement Network and Child Bereavement UK. More details on the NCB's self-review tool is available here: <https://www.ncb.org.uk/resources-publications/mental-health-and-wellbeing-primary-schools-preparing-recovery>.

The website for the Childhood Bereavement Network is available here:

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>.

The website for Child Bereavement UK is available here;

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>.

These materials were supported by webinars over the summer which reached thousands of school and college staff.

We are also investing £8 million in the Wellbeing for Education Return Programme, which will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The programme is funding expert advisers in every area of England to train and support schools and colleges during the autumn and spring terms. The training includes specific examples of supporting bereaved children.

School and college staff are not mental health professionals, and it is important that more specialist support is available for children and their families. All NHS mental health trusts have ensured that there are 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages. We have also provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities, including charities such as Young Minds, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

In addition, Public Health England and Health Education England have developed advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes a specific section on dealing with grief and bereavement. The resources are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Kerry McCarthy:

[96804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on prioritising covid-19 testing for children without covid-19 symptoms who are asked to remain at home as a result of a positive covid-19 case being confirmed in their school bubble.

Nick Gibb:

It is vital that children and school staff only get a test if they develop symptoms of COVID-19, with the exception of those who have specifically been asked to do so by a clinician. The test is most effective for those who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. The latest clinical advice is that testing of individuals without symptoms should be used where clinically appropriate, predominantly for outbreak investigation and infection control. This risk based approach is essential to ensure testing is targeted where it is most effective.

Testing capacity is the highest it has ever been, but there is currently a significant demand for tests. The NHS Test and Trace system must stay focused on testing those with true symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone who is self isolating as a result of being a close contact of a confirmed case but does not have symptoms should not request a test. This includes if that case was identified in a school or college. All children who are attending an education or childcare setting have access to a test if they display symptoms of COVID-19 and are encouraged to get tested.

Children: Day Care**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[97657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to continue funding early entitlements for free childcare at the rate of occupancy before the covid-19 outbreak after January 2021.

Vicky Ford:

On 20 July, we announced we will continue paying local authorities for the childcare places they usually fund for the autumn term. This will give nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of whether fewer children are attending.

At the same time, we set out our intention to return to the normal early years funding process from the start of 2021. This would mean using the January 2021 census to drive funding allocations for local authorities for the 2021 spring term, and that local authorities' funding to childcare providers would return to 'funding following the child' from 1 January 2021.

We also made clear in that announcement that we would review the funding approach for the spring term given the uncertain times ahead with the COVID-19 outbreak. We are doing so and will announce our approach in due course.

Education: Disadvantaged**Nadia Whittome:**[\[95260\]](#)

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

Nick Gibb:

Although no full assessment has been made regarding the effect that school closures have had on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, the Department has 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 across the system. 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 made it 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 think 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, which aims to reduce the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils.

Free School Meals: Disadvantaged**Gill Furniss:**[\[96976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that all disadvantaged children are able to access a free school breakfast.

Vicky Ford:

The department is investing up to £35 million into the National School Breakfast Programme. This includes our extension of the programme by a further year until March 2021, with up to £11.8 million being invested during this current financial year. Overall, this money will kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas, making them sustainable in the long run. The focus of these clubs has been to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country – including the department's Opportunity Areas – to help make sure every child gets the best start in life. Any further investment in school breakfast clubs beyond March 2021 is subject to the upcoming Spending Review.

Further Education: Expenditure**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[97537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money from the public purse has been spent on capital improvements to further education colleges in each year since 2000.

Gillian Keegan:

Since 2001, the following table outlines funding provided to support capital improvements in further education (FE) colleges.[1]

YEAR	£ MILLION
2001-02	140
2002-03	233
2003-04	291
2004-05	360
2005-06	326
2006-07	367
2007-08	436
2008-09	582
2009-10	899
2010-11	76
2011-12	121
2012-13	198
2013-14	379
2014-15	122
2015-16	61

From 2015-16 until 2020-21, £980 million was devolved through the Local Growth Fund to Local Enterprise Partnerships to allocate against local skills and growth projects, including supporting skills capital projects.

The government is committed to upgrading FE colleges over the coming 5 years so they are great places to learn, by investing £1.5 billion to transform the FE college estate. That transformation has begun with an allocation of £200 million this year to FE colleges and designated institutions to tackle immediate remedial condition improvement projects. This adds to the investment already made in Institutes of Technology and T levels capital.

We will invest up to £290 million of capital funding to establish 20 employer-led Institutes of Technology, with the aim of achieving nationwide coverage across all regions. We have so far invested £21.4 million in 2019-20 and £18.9 million in 2020-21.[2]

Since November 2019, £11.1 million has been invested in delivering industry standard facilities in FE colleges to support the roll out of the new T levels qualification. This is supported with an investment of £5.4 million to support the purchase of specialist equipment for T levels.

[1] For 2001-02 to 2009-10 funding was through the Learning and Skills Council for 2010-11 to 2015-16 it was through the Skills Funding Agency.

[2] Funding for IOTs is mainly directed at FE Colleges, as they are delivering the bulk of provision, but some funding goes to Universities.

■ **Hindi: GCE A-level and GCSE**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[94998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people took a (a) GCSE and (b) A-Level qualification in the Hindi language in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

Hindi has not been offered at GCSE or A level in the last five years.

■ **National Tutoring Programme: Roma and Travellers**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[95259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities are reached as part of the National Tutoring Programme for children; and if he will ring-fence funding from that programme for those 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 pupil premium pupils who have been hardest hit by the disruption to their education. Schools are also 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.

■ Nurseries: Coronavirus**Abena Oppong-Asare:****[97052]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that safety measures introduced to nurseries re-opening as covid-19 lockdown restrictions were eased are (a) monitored and (b) maintained.

Vicky Ford:

The department has published the 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak' guidance, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

This guidance is for local authorities and all early years providers in England. For reception, schools should, in the most part, refer to the guidance for schools during the COVID-19 outbreak, although some of the information in the early years guidance is relevant as well. The guidance for schools is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Settings should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment and draw up plans as part of their wider opening. Settings should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are effective, working as planned, and updated appropriately, for example when any issues are identified, or when there are changes in public health advice.

Abena Oppong-Asare:**[97053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of covid-19 risk posed to nursery workers who have returned to work since 1 June 2020.

Vicky Ford:

Keeping children and staff safe is the government's utmost priority.

Settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. Public Health England is clear that the risk of transmission and infection is substantially reduced if nurseries and childminders implement the protective measures as set out in the 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak' guidance. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

Adults should minimise contact with each other while at work. However, in situations where social distancing between adults in settings is not possible (for example when moving around in corridors and communal areas), settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, both staff and visitors.

We continue to keep this guidance under review as we learn more about COVID-19.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Kerry McCarthy:

[96805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether an early years provider can require a child to self-isolate for 14 days before attending its premises after they visit an area in the UK affected by a local lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

In the event that a parent or guardian insisted on a child being at a childcare provider, providers can take the decision to refuse the child if in their reasonable judgement it is necessary to protect their children and staff from infection with COVID-19. Any decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and the public health advice. Children and staff should not attend the setting if they have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive in the last 10 days.

Tulip Siddiq:

[96973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 91681 on pre-school education: coronavirus, if he will request that HM Chief Inspector publish information about the number of covid-19 outbreaks that have been reported in early years settings online on a weekly basis.

Vicky Ford:

Ofsted is currently considering what information could be published and by when. I have asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, to write to the hon. Member, if and when this data is published, and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[97054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that covid-19 home testing kits are readily available in early years settings.

Vicky Ford:

All education and childcare workers currently have prioritised access to testing alongside other essential workers.

Ensuring access to tests for all education and childcare staff is a key priority for our department and we are currently considering how we can improve all early years settings' access to testing.

Further guidance on testing can be found in the 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

■ Remote Education: Coronavirus**Dr Dan Poulter:****[95057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make support available for children who are unable to study effectively at home outside of ordinary school hours during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to the continuation of high quality education for all pupils during this difficult time.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to offer them access to remote education immediately. The Department has asked schools to monitor engagement with this activity, which should align as closely as possible with in-school provision. The Department expects all schools to have had remote education contingency plans in place since the end of September at the latest. On 2 July, the Department published guidance for the opening of schools, including what is expected from schools for their remote education provision. This guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-3-curriculum-behaviour-and-pastoral-support>.

The Department has provided a range of resources to support schools in delivering remote education. This includes examples of teaching practice during COVID-19, which provides an opportunity for schools to learn from each other's approaches to remote education. More information is available at:

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

The Department has also worked with sector led initiatives such as Oak National Academy. The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20 and then for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide free and optional video lessons for reception up to year 11. It provides lessons across a broad range of subjects and includes specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Jim Shannon:**[95635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in place to (a) contact, (b) encourage parents who have not sent their children back to school to do so and (c) provide home school support for children whose health precludes them from school re-entry.

Nick Gibb:

Whilst over 7 million pupils are back in the classroom, we recognise that some parents will still have concerns. In such cases we recommend schools discuss with parents their concerns, and provide reassurance of the measures in place to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their school.

In the guidance for full opening, we asked schools and local authorities to communicate clear and consistent expectations around attendance to families, and to use the additional catch up funding settings will receive. In addition, schools should make full use of existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff, and pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to return to school. Relevant guidance can be found here:

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

Schools and local authorities have also been asked to work closely with other professionals, as appropriate, to support pupils' return to school, including continuing to notify a child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

As is usually the case, schools should follow up whenever a pupil is absent to ascertain the reason and ensure any appropriate safeguarding action is taken. Schools have a duty to inform the local authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who has had a continuous period of unauthorised absence of ten school days or more.

On the 1 October, the Department announced a package of remote education support designed to help schools and colleges build on and deliver their existing plans in the event that individual or groups of pupils are unable to attend school because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Schools can access a new central support hub, where resources and information on remote education will be housed. This support has been co-designed with schools and includes a range of school-led webinars and resources intended to share good practice. We are also investing £1.5 million of additional funding to expand the EdTech Demonstrator programme, which provides peer-to-peer support for schools and colleges.

This adds to existing support including the resources available from Oak National Academy. The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20 and the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons for reception up to year 11. It provides lessons across a broad range of subjects and includes specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Oak National Academy will remain a free optional resource for 2020-21.

The support package can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The Department is committed to the continuation of high-quality education for all pupils during this difficult time. We also want to make clear that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children who are unable to attend school due to the COVID-19 outbreak in line with guidance and the law. We have, therefore, published a Direction which provides an express legal duty on schools to provide remote education in these circumstances. The purpose of this

direction is to provide greater certainty for all involved in the education sector, including parents, teachers and schools themselves.

■ Skills Toolkit

Anneliese Dodds: [\[97710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people have (a) started and (b) completed courses available in The Skills Toolkit online learning platform since it was launched on 28 April 2020.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[97711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of The Skills Toolkit and (b) effect of that toolkit on improving learners' (i) employability, (ii) digital skills and (iii) maths skills.

Gillian Keegan:

The platform was launched on 28 April and as of 30 September 2020 we had 97,615 course starts, 16,219 course completions and 1,100,260 page views. The department continues to review the data and outcomes from the platform in partnership with the providers – such as Google and Microsoft – who host the courses that feature on the platform.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon: [\[95632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in place to ensure that the assessment of children who may require special needs support is not additionally delayed as a result of new covid-19 social distancing and other restrictions.

Vicky Ford:

We understand the need for effective and timely assessment of children who require special needs support. The department's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Improvement and Intervention Unit, alongside NHS England, will be engaging with all local areas to discuss progress on recovery from the disruption caused by the outbreak of COVID-19, and the return to school for children with SEND. This will include representatives from local authorities, health and the parent carer forum for the area, and will be led by the department's professional SEND advisers, Department for Education case leads and an NHS England SEND adviser.

One section focuses on statutory processes, education, health and care (EHC) plans and annual reviews. SEND advisers will probe local areas on the timeliness and quality of plans, any barriers to progress, such as capacity to reduce EHC plan backlogs, and actions proposed by local areas to address weaknesses identified. The local authority engagement will also aim to ascertain if the areas have improvement needs that can be addressed by the department's funded delivery support programme.

We are increasing high needs funding for local authorities by £780 million this year and a further £730 million next year, which means high needs budgets will have grown by nearly a quarter in just 2 years. In addition, local authorities have been allocated a further £3.7 billion to help their communities through the COVID-19 outbreak. 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 support to children's services.

■ **Swimming: Children**

Ian Lavery:

[\[95640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of ensuring that swimming lessons are free of charge for children whose families are in receipt of universal credit.

Nick Gibb:

Swimming is a vital life skill and pupils should be taught to swim and about water safety at primary school as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

The PE national curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 sets out the expectation that pupils should be taught to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres, use a range of strokes effectively and perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

In addition to their core curriculum provision, schools can choose to use the primary PE and sport premium to provide additional top-up swimming lessons to pupils who have not been able to meet the national curriculum requirements.

It is for local authorities and private providers to decide on the amount they charge for swimming lessons and whether to make them free to people on low incomes.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Air Pollution**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[97045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to align the UK's target for PM2.5 with the World Health Organisation's guideline amount.

Rebecca Pow:

In July 2019, the Government published a report assessing the progress that will be made towards World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines under a range of scenarios. The report concluded that while significant progress would be made by achieving existing 2030 emissions ceilings, additional action would be required in large urban areas such as London to achieve the current WHO guideline level. The analysis did not outline a pathway to achieve the WHO guideline level for fine

particulate matter (PM2.5) across the country and did not take into account full economic viability and practical deliverability.

The Environment Bill, which will be introduced shortly, will establish a legally binding duty to set a target for PM2.5, demonstrating our commitment to action on the air pollutant that has the most significant impact on human health. We are committed to setting ambitious targets and following an evidence-based process, seeking advice from a range of experts, in addition to giving consideration to the WHO's air quality guidelines. We are already working with independent experts and engaging with stakeholders on how we will approach setting these targets.

■ Animal Experiments: Chemicals

Patrick Grady:

[\[97615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure there is no duplication of chemical tests performed on animals from UK organisations which had previously supplied the relevant registration data to the European Chemicals Agency under the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006, after the end of the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

Under UK REACH, we will recognise the validity of any animal tests on products that have already been undertaken and so avoid the need for further testing

The grandfathering of all existing UK-held REACH registrations into the UK system will further avoid the need to duplicate animal testing associated with re-registration.

We are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a chemical that has already been registered, unless it is subject to further evaluation that shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. This is known as the "last-resort principle", which we will retain and enshrine in legislation through our landmark Environment Bill.

■ Animals: Exports

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[96841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what timetable he has set for the new online system to process Animal Export Health Certificates to be completed.

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[96842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what forecast he has made of the number of applications the new animal health export certificates online system to process per (a) week, (b) month and (c) year.

Victoria Prentis:

The Export Health Certificates (EHC) Online service has been available for trade with third countries since June 2020. It replaces the current manual process for applying for EHCs.

The 150 most frequently used third country EHCs (representing 80% of current throughput) are available via the EHC Online service. There will be further releases of third country EHCs on the online service before the end of 2020.

APHA plan to make EHCs for EU trade available via EHC Online from mid-October. This will offer traders visibility of the documentation they will be required to use at the end of the transition period.

The EHC Online service has been developed with the capability to meet future demand in export trade. Defra estimate that up to an additional 300,000 Export Health Certificates may be required annually to facilitate EU trade. The EHC Online system has been designed and stress tested to process transactions in excess of this.

Jonathan Edwards:[\[96843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number additional veterinary professionals who will be required to process animal health export certificates prior to consignment after the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

We estimate around 200 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Official Vets (OVs) are required to certify export of products of animal origin from Great Britain after the end of the Transition Period. In practice, many qualified vets operating in the private certification market certify health certificates alongside other more traditional veterinary activities. We have increased the number of those holding the relevant qualification to certify exports of products of animal origin from circa 600 in February 2019 to more than 1200 today, with further funded training announced on 1 October 2020.

■ Environment Protection: Crime**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[95622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to make ecocide a crime.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government is committed to improving the environment in the UK and internationally. Environmental laws and other safeguards are in place and monitored by effective regulators and tiers of Government.

The Environment Bill will create a new, independent statutory body (the Office for Environmental Protection) with the principal objective of contributing to environmental protection and the improvement of the natural environment.

The Government is also consulting on a new law designed to prevent forests and other important natural areas from being converted illegally into agricultural land. If approved, this will require a relatively small number of larger businesses to ensure that the 'forest risk' commodities they use – commodities that can cause wide-scale deforestation – have been produced legally.

■ Fisheries: Norway

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [\[97515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which species of fish are mentioned in the UK-Norway Fisheries Framework Agreement of 30 September 2020; and what changes that agreement makes to quotas.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK-Norway fisheries framework agreement does not refer to any species of fish or quotas of fish stocks, nor does it provide for any access to UK waters. The framework agreement sets out that these issues will be the subject of annual negotiations between the parties.

Certain stocks in the North Sea that are jointly managed between the UK, Norway and the EU will be subject to trilateral discussions between the parties.

■ Flood Control: Finance

Stephanie Peacock: [\[96984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimates the Environment Agency has made of the funding required for flood risk mitigation projects in each year since 2010.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency's (EA) Long Term Investment Scenarios (LTIS) for England sets out the total national level of investment required for FCERM. The Environment Agency produced LTIS 2009, 2014 and LTIS 2019. LTIS is used as evidence for government and others considering future policy and investment choices.

The latest LTIS was published in 2019 and shows that the EA's best estimate of the overall economic optimum level of investment has a long-term annual average of over £1 billion. The 2020 Budget announcement for capital funding is consistent with the 'optimal' spend suggested by LTIS. Overall funding is expected to at least meet the LTIS recommendation, allowing for faster progress towards long term adaptation.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[96985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding the Environment Agency has been allocated for flood risk mitigation projects in each year since 2010.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra provides the majority of its funding for flood and coastal erosion risk management to the Environment Agency (EA) as Grant-in-Aid, which is the

mechanism for financing Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the EA. The EA spends this funding directly on managing flood risk, but it also passes some of this funding on as capital grants for flood or coastal erosion defence improvements to local authorities or Internal Drainage Boards – local public authorities established in areas of special drainage need which manage water levels within their respective drainage districts.

The capital funding allocated to the EA for flood and coastal erosion risk management in present and future financial years 2019/20 to 2021/22 can be found in table 1 (page 4) of the document available at the following link:

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

Expenditure on flood and coastal erosion risk management by the EA, Defra and Lead Local Flood Authorities for 2010/11 – 2018/19 can be found in table 2 (page 5) of the same document. Figures for 2019/20 spend are still in the process of being audited and will be available in an updated document on GOV.UK soon.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[96918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the stockpiling of food and other essentials in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly-resilient food supply chain and a food industry which is experienced in dealing with disruptions to food supply. The expertise, capability and levers to plan for, and respond to, food supply disruption lie predominantly with the industry, but the Government has a supportive role.

This includes extensive and ongoing engagement to support industry in preparedness for, and response to, potential food supply chain disruptions, as well coordinating a joined-up approach to communications and messaging with industry leads based on learnings from the response earlier in the year. The Government response can include relaxation of key regulations to support food supply on driver hours, delivery times, advice on food labelling and on competition law for key sectors.

Whilst we saw an increase in consumer demand at the outset of the pandemic, things have largely stabilised. We remain in regular contact with the supermarkets and industry representatives, who report no overall supply issues.

■ Food: Imports

Caroline Lucas:

[95615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what analysis his Department has commissioned on the effect on the UK farming sector of importing food with lower (a) animal welfare (b) environmental or (c) safety standards.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[95616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which (a) external organisations and (b) agencies have provided his Department with analysis on the effect on the UK farming sector of importing food with lower (i) animal welfare (ii) environmental or (iii) safety standards.

Victoria Prentis:

We have a very clear manifesto commitment that in all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental, animal welfare and food standards. In all trade agreements we negotiate, we will stand up for British farming and aim to secure new opportunities for the industry. We will always ensure that UK free trade agreements (FTAs) are fair and reciprocal, and that any 'opening up' does not cause an unwanted downturn for domestic producers.

We've been undertaking an extensive range of research and analysis to support our negotiations in all areas. There has been no specific assessment commissioned on the effect on the UK farming sector of importing food with lower animal welfare, environmental or safety standards. Defra is considering the interests of all farmers, producers and consumers in its future FTAs. The Government has undertaken engagement with individuals and businesses across the UK when designing its future trade policy, including public consultations on the UK Global Tariff and on future FTAs. Respondents included businesses, civil society and the general public.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 retains our standards on environmental protections, animal welfare, animal and plant health and food safety at the end of the transition period. This provides a firm basis for maintaining the same high level of protection for both domestic and imported products.

In July the Government established the Trade and Agriculture Commission, which brings together stakeholders across the industry, and the four UK nations, using their expertise to advise on how best the UK can seize new export opportunities, while ensuring animal welfare, food safety, and environmental standards in food production are not undermined.

■ Food: Labelling

Carla Lockhart:

[\[97061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to issue guidance on labelling requirements for products after the transition period ends to agri-food firms in Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

Ministers meet regularly with food manufacturers, and representatives of other parts of the supply chain from across the UK, to discuss preparations for the end of the transition period including for food labelling. The GOV.UK website provides cross-UK guidance on these matters and is kept under review and updated as appropriate. The EU has set out its position on how food and drink should be labelled where EU rules apply. We will provide a period of adjustment for labelling changes required at the

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

■ Food: Waste

Colleen Fletcher:

[96919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the amount of food wasted by (a) consumers, (b) supermarkets and (c) restaurants.

Rebecca Pow:

In December 2018, the Government launched its Resources and Waste Strategy which sets out our approach to address food waste from farm to fork.

Through Government grant funding of over £3 million this year, the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) aims to reduce food waste across the supply chain and in the home.

We are also fully committed to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 target, which seeks to halve global food waste at consumer and retail levels by 2030.

Consumer campaign initiatives including the lovefoodhatewaste programme and campaign moments such as *Crushing it* aim to help consumers tackle waste in the home. This is supported by the Courtauld 2025 Commitment, a collaboration across the supply chain which aims to reduce UK food waste by 20% per capita by 2025 through for example supply chain efficiency initiatives and consumer behaviour change prompts such as storage advice. We also work closely with WRAP on its work with the hospitality industry and the provision of resources such as 'Guardians of Grub: Becoming a Champion' (<http://www.guardiansofgrub.com/becoming-a-champion>) and 'Target Measure Act' (<https://www.wrap.org.uk/content/target-measure-act-case-studies-hospitality-and-food-service>), embedding food waste management at the center of business operations.

Through the £15 million Food Waste Fund we are also making grants available to prevent food waste, including helping food surplus redistributors to get more surplus from the supply chain to those who have a need.

■ Food: Waste Management

Alan Brown:

[95132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how his Department plans to fund universal food waste collections; and what steps he is taking to ensure that those collections are effectively rolled out by 2023.

Alan Brown:

[\[95133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ensure that food waste is diverted to anaerobic digestion technologies; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

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

Following support at consultation, we are legislating through the Environment Bill to introduce a statutory duty for waste collection authorities in England to arrange for at least weekly separate collection of food waste from households. Businesses and other organisations generating food waste will also be required to arrange for the separate collection of food waste. This must be collected for recycling or composting, including Anaerobic Digestion (AD). AD represents the best waste treatment method for unavoidable food waste due to the generation of biofuel and digestate and local authorities would be free to decide on the recycling route as a result of locally available infrastructure. We are preparing to consult on further details on this policy early in 2021.

The Government has committed to covering the costs of any additional burdens that local authorities face as a result of new statutory duties requiring them to collect food waste separately for recycling. This is in keeping with the New Burdens Doctrine which requires new burdens on local authorities to be properly assessed and fully funded, so that there will be no increase in council tax as a result of the policy.

■ Marine Protected Areas

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[95678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what is the total sea area around the UK designated as a marine protected area; and how many areas designated as protected areas are in adjacent waters to (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

36% of the UK's waters are now designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). There are 136 MPAs in Scottish waters, 177 in English waters, 29 in Welsh waters and 25 in Northern Irish waters.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Devolution

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[95677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how he plans to involve devolved administrations in the regulation and enforcement of marine protected areas after the end of the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

Marine management is a devolved matter. The devolved administrations will be responsible for the regulation and enforcement of Marine Protected Areas within their waters at the end of the transition period, as they are currently. We will continue to work with them to ensure a coherent approach to marine management in UK waters.

Meat Products: Exports**Patricia Gibson:**[\[97619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that the new online system for Export Health Certificates for meat products dispatched from the UK is able to meet demand; and what steps his Department has taken to ensure that that system is operational by the end of 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The Export Health Certificates (EHC) Online service has been available for trade with third countries since June 2020. It replaces the current manual process for applying for EHCs.

The 150 most frequently used third country EHCs (representing 80% of current throughput) are available via the EHC Online service. There will be further releases of third country EHCs on the online service before the end of 2020.

APHA plan to make EHCs for EU trade available via EHC Online from mid-October. This will offer traders visibility of the documentation they will be required to use at the end of the transition period.

The EHC Online service has been developed with the capability to meet future demand in export trade. Defra estimate that up to an additional 300,000 Export Health Certificates may be required annually to facilitate EU trade. The EHC Online system has been designed and stress tested to process transactions in excess of this.

Patricia Gibson:[\[97620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that there will be sufficient numbers of qualified vets to inspect and sign off consignments of meat to be dispatched from the UK so that they can be issued an export health certificate after the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has increased the number of Official Veterinarians (OVs) holding the relevant qualification to certify exports of products of animal origin, including meat products, in Great Britain from approximately 600 in February 2019 to more than 1200 today. On 1 October 2020, we launched a new £200,000 funded training scheme to enhance OV capacity further. In parallel, we launched a £100,000 scheme to train Certification Support Officers (CSOs). CSOs can handle several preliminary and administrative tasks to prepare consignments for certification. This reduces the

burden on OV's and Local Authority Certifying Officers. More than 100 CSOs have been authorised in GB to date.

■ Meat Products: Labelling

Patricia Gibson:

[\[97622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that the Government's new health mark scheme allows groupage of exports from the UK to the EU; and when he plans to inform businesses who sell fresh and frozen meat to EU countries of the details of that scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

To help traders prepare for changes to export arrangements for animals and products of animal origin (POAO) from 1 January 2021, we are hosting a series of webinars from mid-October. Specimen Export Health Certificates and accompanying guidance notes for trade between Great Britain and the EU have been made available on the GOV.UK website, to enable exporters and certifiers to familiarise themselves with the detailed requirements.

A Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme was developed in consultation with industry to help facilitate the export of certain commodities with complex but stable supply chains, including composite products, meat products and meat preparations, for use from 1 January 2021.

The Food Standards Agency is finalising its new guidance to the food industry covering which health and identification marks should be used on POAO after the end of the Transition Period. We anticipate that this will be published shortly.

■ Meat: Exports

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[96845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish guidance to UK meat exporters wishing to export fresh and frozen groupage products to retail and non retail customers on the requirements for such export after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

To help traders prepare for changes to export arrangements for animals and products of animal origin from 1 January 2021, we are hosting a series of webinars from mid-October. Specimen Export Health Certificates (EHCs) and accompanying guidance notes for trade between Great Britain and the EU have been made available on gov.uk, to enable exporters and certifiers to familiarise themselves with the detailed requirements. A Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme (GEFS) was developed in consultation with industry to help facilitate the export of certain commodities with complex but stable supply chains, including composite products, meat products and meat preparations, for use from 1 January 2021.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[97511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 11 August 2020 on flood pumps and the effects of flooding in West Lancashire.

Rebecca Pow:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. It has also been necessary to consult the Environment Agency to provide as accurate and helpful a response as possible, which has taken time. I understand the hon. Member has also separately written to the Environment Agency on some of the points raised in these letters and the Environment Agency has responded.

A reply to the hon. Member has been prepared and will be issued very shortly.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[97512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond the letters of 11 August 2020, 28 August 2020 and 7 September 2020 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on flooding on Crabtree Lane in Burscough and responsibility for flood management.

Rebecca Pow:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. It has also been necessary to consult the Environment Agency to provide as accurate and helpful a response as possible, which has taken time. I understand the hon. Member has also separately written to the Environment Agency on some of the points raised in these letters and the Environment Agency has responded.

The replies will be with the hon. Member as soon as possible.

■ Peat

Olivia Blake:

[\[97063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has set a date for publication of the England Peat Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:

In the 25 Year Environment Plan, we committed to publishing an England Peat Strategy to create and deliver a new ambitious framework for peat restoration in England. We intend to publish the strategy later this year.

■ Sanitary Products: Plastics

Luke Pollard: [\[95216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with manufacturers of sanitary products on reducing the plastic content of those products.

Luke Pollard: [\[95217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the contribution of sanitary products to plastic pollution in UK waters.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK collects data on the quantity and type of marine litter in our waters, including data on seafloor litter, floating litter and beach litter, following methods agreed through the OSPAR Convention's monitoring and assessment programmes. This includes data on sanitary products. Data are available through the Marine Online Assessment Tool: <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/>

Cotton buds are recorded as a sanitary product and feature as a top ten item recorded on some UK beaches. Since 1 October this year there has been a ban on the supply of plastic straws, cotton buds and stirrers in England, with exemptions in place to ensure disabled people and those with medical conditions that require straws can continue to access them.

We are seeking new powers in our landmark Environment Bill to drive the market towards more sustainable products, including powers to introduce ecodesign requirements and to require retailers to charge for single-use plastic items.

Plastic does, however, have an important role to play in many products due to its strength and sterility. We must therefore think carefully about how we solve the problems arising from plastic waste in order to avoid unintended consequences. We regularly meet with producers, including of sanitary products, to discuss the overall sustainability of their products, and will continue to do so.

■ Trees: Disease Control

Charlotte Nichols: [\[95757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had on tackling the *Phytophthora austrocedri* pathogen outbreaks that threaten the UK's juniper crop; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

Phytophthora austrocedri was confirmed in England in 2011 and is an air and water borne pathogen of Juniper. We continue to monitor closely the spread of the pathogen and take measures to minimise its introduction, including statutory inspections and action on any findings in the plant trade, for example at nurseries. The Plant Health Service work closely with conservation organisations and other stakeholders to minimise the risk of spread in the wider environment by promoting good biosecurity practices and providing management guidance.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Abortion: Gender Selection****Carla Lockhart:**[\[96228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the practice of sex-selective abortion internationally.

Wendy Morton:

The UK strongly opposes sex-selective abortion, a practice resulting from deep-rooted discrimination against women and girls. The UK supports partner governments' efforts to prevent this discrimination through our programmes and international leadership on gender equality. This includes, for example, ensuring clear policies and effective training are in place.

Ending sex-selective abortion also requires promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Through our Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, we are working to ensure every girl has access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, is protected from violence, receives 12 years of quality education and is supported to be economically and politically empowered.

■ China: Muslims**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[97527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on the detention of Uighur and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, China in the last six months.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: As I [Minister Adams] set out during an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on 9 September, we are seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We regularly raise our serious concerns about the extra-judicial detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, both directly with the Chinese authorities and publicly, including at the UN. On 25 September, at the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad raised serious concerns about the human rights situations in Xinjiang, and called for China to release all those who are arbitrarily detained. On 28 July, the Foreign Secretary raised human rights violations in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi.

■ Developing Countries: Drugs**Gareth Thomas:**[\[96746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase access to medicines in developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

Improving access to medicines is a critical part of our contribution in developing countries. The FCDO works with partners across the value chain to make products more affordable, and improve country level procurement and distribution. We are a leading donor to Unitaids Medicines Patent Pool, which promotes patent sharing and licensing. We also fund the Access to Medicine Index, which monitors company performance on providing greater access to medicines.

The UK is one of the largest government contributors to global efforts to develop COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and diagnostics. This includes up to £500 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment which is supporting 92 developing countries to gain access to a COVID-19 vaccine, when one becomes available.

■ Developing Countries: Maternal Mortality**Mrs Pauline Latham:****[97553]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much the UK has (a) spent and (b) committed to be spent with the intention of helping achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal target of reducing maternal mortality by a further two-thirds by 2030.

Wendy Morton:

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) review of maternal health results in 2018 made five recommendations, including adopting a long-term approach to maternal health planning, linking strongly to health system strengthening work and increasing the focus on quality of care. We welcomed all recommendations and the 2020 follow up review acknowledged our swift progress, finding that the UK had 'enhanced its emphasis on the need for good quality, respectful care for women and their babies and increased focus on adolescents and poorer women within its new family planning programmes'. ICAI also recognised the UK Government's commitment to Ending the Preventable Deaths of Mothers, Newborns and Children by 2030 and to international advocacy for comprehensive sexual reproductive health and rights.

Using internationally accepted methods, we estimate that the UK Government has spent an average of approximately £1 billion per year on Maternal Newborn and Child Health between 2013/14 - 2017/18, on a range of bilateral and multilateral programmes. Maternal health remains a key priority throughout our health work, with recently announced investments including £600 million to the Reproductive Health Supplies programme to buy family planning supplies for millions more women and girls in the world's poorest countries each year.

The UK commitment to ending preventable deaths has created further momentum to ensure the right balance in the FCDO portfolio across family planning, health services and other essential interventions for maternal and newborn health and wellbeing.

This holistic approach is essential if we are to maximise the impact of our money and policy, and more important than ever before given the challenges that the COVID-19

pandemic is creating for health services across the world. In responding to the ICAI recommendations, we are reviewing our approach to maternal health results to include more context based country data and to increase our focus on long-term, sustainable change.

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

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[95720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference page 5 of the Sixth Special Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Merging success: Bringing together the FCO and DFID: Government Response to Committee's Second Report, published on 24 September 2020, HC 809, page 5 printed on the 22 September, whether his Department plans to make voluntary redundancies due to the merger of his Department with the Department for International Development.

Nigel Adams:

As with all departments, workforce plans will be considered through the Spending Review.

■ **Iraq: Kurds**

Jack Lopresti:

[\[95065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what meetings Ministers of his Department had with representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq in (a) 2018 and (b) 2019; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to have a close relationship with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, and our ministers and diplomatic representatives maintained regular contact with representatives of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq in 2018 and 2019. Current and former Foreign Secretaries and Ministers for the Middle East and North Africa have spoken with the KRG leadership including President Nechirvan Barzani. Most recently, I spoke to Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Masrour Barzani on 23rd September. The UK looks forward to continued close engagement with the KRG as a critical and valued partner in the region.

■ **Maternal Mortality: Overseas Aid**

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[97554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what changes have been made to UK Aid spending on reducing maternal deaths which satisfactorily address the amber/red ratings for impact, effectiveness, sustainability and value for money given by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact in 2018.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[97555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact entitled Assessing

DFID's Results in Improving Maternal Health, published in October 2018, what methodology he is using to measure progress against the finding that DFID's portfolio was not well balanced across family planning, health services and other interventions, so as to maximise medium-to-long-term-impact.

Wendy Morton:

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) review of maternal health results in 2018 made five recommendations, including adopting a long-term approach to maternal health planning, linking strongly to health system strengthening work and increasing the focus on quality of care. We welcomed all recommendations and the 2020 follow up review acknowledged our swift progress, finding that the UK had 'enhanced its emphasis on the need for good quality, respectful care for women and their babies and increased focus on adolescents and poorer women within its new family planning programmes'. ICAI also recognised the UK Government's commitment to Ending the Preventable Deaths of Mothers, Newborns and Children by 2030 and to international advocacy for comprehensive sexual reproductive health and rights.

Using internationally accepted methods, we estimate that the UK Government has spent an average of approximately £1 billion per year on Maternal Newborn and Child Health between 2013/14 - 2017/18, on a range of bilateral and multilateral programmes. Maternal health remains a key priority throughout our health work, with recently announced investments including £600 million to the Reproductive Health Supplies programme to buy family planning supplies for millions more women and girls in the world's poorest countries each year.

The UK commitment to ending preventable deaths has created further momentum to ensure the right balance in the FCDO portfolio across family planning, health services and other essential interventions for maternal and newborn health and wellbeing. This holistic approach is essential if we are to maximise the impact of our money and policy, and more important than ever before given the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic is creating for health services across the world. In responding to the ICAI recommendations, we are reviewing our approach to maternal health results to include more context based country data and to increase our focus on long-term, sustainable change.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[96232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is deeply concerned by the recent military escalation along the Line of Contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and the resulting humanitarian situation. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh with Turkish President Erdoğan

on 28 September. The Foreign Secretary and Canadian Foreign Minister delivered a joint statement calling for urgent de-escalation and a return to dialogue on 28 September.

I spoke to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September. I raised UK concerns over civilian casualties and fatalities, urged immediate de-escalation and reinforced the importance of engagement with the OSCE Minsk Group. On 29 September the UK delivered statements at both the OSCE Permanent Council and the UN Security Council calling for an immediate de-escalation and resumption of dialogue. We will continue to engage on this with key partners.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[96233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is deeply concerned by the recent military escalation along the Line of Contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and the resulting humanitarian situation. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh with Turkish President Erdoğan on 28 September. The Foreign Secretary and Canadian Foreign Minister delivered a joint statement calling for urgent de-escalation and a return to dialogue on 28 September.

I spoke to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September. I raised UK concerns over civilian casualties and fatalities, urged immediate de-escalation and reinforced the importance of engagement with the OSCE Minsk Group. On 29 September the UK delivered statements at both the OSCE Permanent Council and the UN Security Council calling for an immediate de-escalation and resumption of dialogue. We will continue to engage on this with key partners.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[96234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh does not become a front in a struggle between larger regional powers.

Wendy Morton:

I spoke to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September. I raised UK concerns over civilian casualties and fatalities, urged immediate de-escalation and reinforced the importance of returning to negotiations within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The UK continues to engage actively with international partners in support of these objectives. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in Nagorno Karabakh with President Erdogan on 28 September. Following a request from the UK and its European partners, the issue was also discussed at the UN Security Council on 29 September.

■ Nagorno-karabakh: Armed Conflict**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[96960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help de-escalate tensions in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Wendy Morton:

I spoke to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 28 September. I raised UK concerns over civilian casualties and fatalities, urged immediate de-escalation and reinforced the importance of returning to negotiations within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The UK continues to engage actively with international partners in support of these objectives. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in Nagorno Karabakh with President Erdogan on 28 September. And, following a request from the UK and its European partners, the issue was discussed at the UN Security Council on 29 September.

■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[97663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what attempts his Department has made to assert the UK's right to consular access in the case of Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in the last 60 days.

James Cleverly:

We have consistently requested consular access to Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. However, Iran does not recognise dual nationality nor grant consular access to dual-nationals; even while on furlough, the authorities continue to treat her as an Iranian national only. We continue to raise Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case at the highest levels, and discuss this at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. Our Ambassador in Tehran consistently raises all of our detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office remains in regular contact with both Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her family, and we continue to provide support.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[97665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to assert the UK's diplomatic protection of Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe to Iran in response to the Iranian judiciary's move to reopen a second court case against her.

James Cleverly:

Iran bringing these new charges against Mrs Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is indefensible and unacceptable. We have been consistently clear that she must not be returned to prison. Exercising diplomatic protection in Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case has formally raised it to a state-to-state issue. We continually review what further steps are

available to us to help secure the release of Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and will take action in line with what we judge is in her best interests.

■ Overseas Aid

Rachael Maskell:

[\[92820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his announcement on 22 July 2020 of a £2.9 billion reduction in the aid budget, which international aid projects his Department intends to end.

James Cleverly:

Like other countries, we are experiencing a severe economic downturn due to Covid-19. Given the likely decrease in Gross National Income (GNI), we have identified savings to make sure we meet, but do not exceed, our commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of our GNI on Official Development Assistance.

The savings identified protect UK priorities in responding to the impacts and most pressing challenges of Covid-19 and will help the Government deliver on our manifesto commitments. Those UK policy priorities include poverty reduction for the 'bottom billion'; tackling climate change and reversing biodiversity loss; championing girls' education; UK leadership in the global response to Covid-19; and campaigning on issues such as media freedom and freedom of religious belief, thereby ensuring that the UK is a global force for good. We have also sought to protect the UK's science and research and development base.

Reductions have been delivered by pushing back payments where possible; reducing the size of low-priority programmes; ending under-performing or low-priority programmes; and slowing the start of new programmes.

■ Overseas Aid: Standards

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[95721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to ensure that all UK aid spending Government departments achieve a (a) good or (b) very good at the next assessment by the the Aid Transparency Index.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO will use the recommendations made in the UK Aid Transparency Review, carried out by the Aid Transparency Index in 2020, to work with other Government departments to make progress on UK Government transparency in our next assessment. This will take place through the HMG Transparency Community of Practice which has championed aid transparency and supported government departments to publish to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard.

The UK is globally recognised for its expertise and transparency in aid spending and continues to be committed to improving transparency of aid globally, maintaining our own high standards for overseas spending. The Foreign, Commonwealth and

Development Office will use this expert knowledge to work with aid spending Government departments to ensure good aid transparency.

■ Poverty

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[95723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 91694, what criteria his Department used to determine the bottom billion poorest people.

James Cleverly:

There is no internationally recognised definition of the "bottom billion" in the way that there are for other poverty measures, such as the World Bank's International Poverty Line which considers all people living on under \$1.90 a day. The term was originally coined by Professor Sir Paul Collier who defined it as the countries least able to escape poverty, but it is also sometimes defined as the world's billion poorest citizens. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) analysis suggests that over time, these definitions converge. The FCDO takes into account a wide variety of factors when considering whom are the most vulnerable countries and individuals.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[95724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 91694 on overseas aid: poverty, in which countries the bottom billion poorest people live.

James Cleverly:

There is no internationally recognised definition of the "bottom billion", and as such identifying countries least able to escape poverty is an inexact science. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) analysis finds that today, about 62 per cent of the poorest billion people live in Africa, by 2045 it will have risen to around 85 per cent with the rest distributed around Middle East and North Africa, and Central America. DRC, Nigeria, Niger, Mozambique, Uganda, Madagascar and Sudan alone are expected to account for 50 per cent of the world's poorest billion. Similarly, the poorest billion people are projected to increasingly live in the current set of fragile countries owing to their weak growth and economic transformation. FCDO analysis looking at the bottom billion suggests it includes 55 countries with a combined population of 1.2 billion in 2019.

■ Rwanda: Females

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[96153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 91695 on Rwanda: Females, on what dates the process and principles were discussed with the Prime Minister.

James Duddridge:

The First Secretary of State supported by the International Development Secretary and ministers from ODA spending departments, led a cross government process to identify reductions in this year's ODA budget in order that we meet the 0.7% commitment.

This looked at all strands of the ODA budget, evaluating the impacts of spend and making sure the UK can maintain operational capacity. This process also has made sure there is continued support for five ODA priorities; bottom billion poverty reduction, climate change, girls' education, COVID-19 and Britain as a force for good.

The drop in GNI caused by the economic impact of COVID-19, and meeting the new demands for action that this pandemic has created, meant that a tough decision was made not to go ahead with the life-skills programme, Investing in Adolescent Girls Rwanda, which had not yet started.

We have protected schools and education spending both in Rwanda and across the world. This is expected to total over £500 million globally this financial year, and approximately £13.6 million in Rwanda.

After a final review session with the First Secretary, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Development Secretary, recommendations were presented to the Prime Minister for final agreement.

■ Syria: Armed Conflict**Jim Shannon:**[\[95633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Turkish counterpart on recent military activity against Kurds in Syria which has reportedly included murder, torture and rape.

James Cleverly:

We are deeply concerned by the findings of the recent UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and human rights violations are still being committed against the Syrian people by all parties to the Syrian conflict. Officials have raised the allegations made against the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army with the Government of Turkey. The UK continues to call on all parties to the conflict in Syria to respect international law.

■ USA: Elections**Stella Creasy:**[\[96881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has in place to respond to the results of US presidential elections in the event that they are contested.

Wendy Morton:

We will not speculate on the outcome of the US election, which is a matter for the US people.

■ Yemen: Military Intervention**Gill Furniss:**[\[97682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Saudi Arabian counterpart on the airstrikes in Washah in Yemen; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

We are deeply concerned by reports of civilian deaths in Washah. Whenever the UK receives reports of alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), we routinely seek information from all credible sources, including from Non-Governmental Organisations and international organisations. We use every opportunity to raise the importance of complying with IHL with the Saudi Arabian Government and other members of the Coalition, including requesting investigations into alleged incidents of concern. The UK continues to call on all parties to the conflict in Yemen to exercise restraint, comply fully with IHL and engage constructively with the peace process led by the UN Special Envoy, which is the only way to end the cycle of violence.

■ Zimbabwe: Political Prisoners**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[96783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Zimbabwean counterpart on the (a) arrest and (b) alleged abuse of opposition politicians Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned by the arrest of Joana Mamombe, Cecilia Chimhiri and Netsai Marova including the recent return of Ms Mamombe to prison. Our Ambassador in Harare tweeted on 28 September to express her concern at the unfair treatment of Ms Mamombe and called for the rights of all those detained to be upheld. When I wrote to Foreign Minister Moyo on 12 August, following a telephone call with him on 8 June, I raised specific human rights violations, including the treatment of Ms Mamombe, Ms Chimhiri, and Ms Marowa. I made it clear that the UK has yet to see meaningful progress on human rights. Until this changes, UK and international support for Zimbabwe would not be possible. Our Ambassador in Harare reinforced these messages when she met Foreign Minister Moyo in Harare on 14 August.

The British Embassy in Harare will continue to monitor developments on the case of Ms Mamombe, Ms Chimhiri, and Ms Marowa closely. We will continue call on the Government to uphold the rule of law. This includes respecting the Zimbabwean

Constitution which clearly prohibits enforced disappearances, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment.

■ **Zimbabwe: Politics And Government**

Jim Shannon:

[\[95634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Zimbabwe on the process of taking farmland from white citizens of that country.

James Duddridge:

I regularly engage with the Government of Zimbabwe. I last spoke with the Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Moyo on 8 June and raised my serious concerns about the situation in Zimbabwe.

The UK Government is clear that the responsibility for compensating those that lost their farms during Robert Mugabe's fast track land reform programme lies wholly with the Government of Zimbabwe. I am concerned that the recent compensation deal signed between the Government of Zimbabwe and representatives of farmers seeking compensation is unlikely to be deliverable given the chronic economic situation in Zimbabwe. The British Ambassador to Harare most recently raised these concerns with Zimbabwean Finance Minister Mthuli on 28 September.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Asylum: British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[97687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the equity of processing applicants for asylum on (a) UK Crown Dependencies and (b) British Overseas Territories.

Chris Philp:

The UK has a long and proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations. Tens of thousands of people have rebuilt their lives in the UK and we will continue to provide safe and legal routes in the future.

We have seen unprecedented numbers of small boat arrivals in the UK during 2020 – and we are determined to make this route unviable. We have been looking at what other countries do in response to similar situations – but that doesn't mean we will do those things; and no decisions have been taken by Ministers.

■ **Asylum: Interviews**

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[96930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what processes she used to identify third party suppliers to conduct asylum interviews and gather evidence on asylum

cases; and which such suppliers she has selected to deliver her Departments pilot of the use of those suppliers.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[96931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training he plans to provide to proposed external suppliers of asylum interviews; and who he plans will deliver that training.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[96932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what governance and accountability mechanisms his Department plans to put in place for the oversight of outsourced asylum interviews.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[96933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his policy is on the recourse available to claimants participating in the pilot of outsourced asylum interviews if there is evidence of poor interview practice; and if he will make it his policy to re-start consideration of all asylum cases in which such evidence is established.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office have been exploring many options to reduce the number of outstanding asylums claims and interviews. As a short-term measure, the department have consulted with Commercial colleagues to explore with third-party suppliers to test the viability of whether they can deliver the support required.

An existing supplier has offered to support the proof of concept to test viability over a short period. Any plans to make more long-term use of the private sector for interviews will be reviewed and subject to a procurement process. A key success factor is to ensure interviews conducted are of a good standard and equal to existing approaches.

To ensure external suppliers are suitably equipped to carry out the role, a bespoke training package has been developed and will be delivered by the department.

To guarantee governance and accountability, mechanisms are in place for the oversight of third-party interviews, the department has a quality assurance process which assesses the quality of decisions, interviews and the application of Home Office policy.

■ Asylum: Newcastle Upon Tyne

Chi Onwurah: [\[95630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 89697 on Asylum: Newcastle Upon Tyne, how many of the people resettled in Newcastle Upon Tyne in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019 and (e) 2020 were accommodated in hotels.

Chris Philp:

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

This includes the number of those in temporary accommodation.

Data is published on a quarterly basis from 31st March 2014 with the latest information covering until 31st June 2020. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in November 2020

It is Home Office policy to move people into suitable Dispersed Accommodation (DA) once their claim for support has been assessed.

The current global pandemic has presented significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation. This has included the need to source sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

A comprehensive cessation plan has been established with input from Local Authorities, Other Government Departments and Stakeholders to reduce the number of people in hotels.

Work to explore further options to accommodate asylum seekers has included work with the Ministry of Defence to identify and to utilise MOD sites at short notice.

This accommodation is contingency accommodation, whilst pressures in the system are addressed and will be discontinued as soon as the Home Office is able to do so.

Our accommodation providers are working to maximise their procurement plans throughout the UK, but they can only do so with Local Authority agreement. It is our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable DA as soon as reasonably practical.

■ Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill**Mr Andrew Mitchell:****[96779]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether officials of her Department engaged with their US counterparts on the FBI's policy expressly limiting the crimes which its covert human intelligence sources may commit when preparing the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill.

James Brokenshire:

A covert human intelligence source (CHIS) will never be given authority to commit any and all crime. All authorisations must be necessary and proportionate to the criminality they are seeking to prevent and the Authorising Officer must ensure that the level of criminality authorised must be at the lowest level of intrusion possible to achieve the aims of the operation.

There are limits to the activity that can be authorised under this Bill and these are contained in the Human Rights Act. This includes the right to life, and prohibition of torture or subjecting someone to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Bill does not list specific crimes which may be authorised, or prohibited, as to do so would place into the hands of criminals, terrorists and hostile states a means of creating a checklist for suspected CHIS to be tested against. This would threaten the future of the CHIS capability, and result in an increased threat to the public.

With regards to international comparisons, different countries have different legal systems, threat pictures and operational practices which means that simply comparing respective legislation gives only a very partial picture. In the course of developing this Bill, officials have engaged with a variety of stakeholders, including US counterparts.

■ Crimes of Violence: Females

Marsha De Cordova: [\[95746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with women's organisations on the forthcoming renewal of the cross-departmental violence against women and girls strategy.

Victoria Atkins:

Addressing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains a key priority of this Government. We are committed to fighting VAWG crimes and we welcome the views of people across civil society on how best to address these crimes.

We meet regularly with organisations that support survivors to discuss the VAWG Strategy and will continue to engage with women's, girls' and victims' organisations on this important work.

■ Crimes of Violence: Firearms and Knives

Colleen Fletcher: [\[95653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of violent crimes that involved the use of a (i) firearm and (ii) knife in (A) Coventry, (B) the West Midlands and (C) England in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects data on the number of offences recorded by the police involving the use of firearms and knives or sharp instruments in England and Wales at the Police Force Area level only. The requested information is given in the attached table for West Midlands and England.

■ Criminal Investigation: Children

Peter Kyle: [\[97647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children have been released under investigation in (a) Sussex police force area, and (b) England and Wales since 23 March 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold information on people, including children, who have been released under investigation by the police.

Decisions on whether to use pre-charge bail or release suspects pending further enquiries are operational matters for individual police forces and will be assessed on a case by case basis.

The government completed its public consultation on the pre-charge bail system, including release under investigation, on 29 May 2020. The Government's response to the consultation will be published in due course.

■ Environment Protection**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[96770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to recommendation seven of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review, published in March 2020, what plans she has to review her Department's compliant environment policy.

Priti Patel:

I accepted the Windrush Lessons Learned review's important findings in July and on 30 September I published the Comprehensive Improvement plan in response to the review. This includes our response to recommendation 7.

I am clear that the public expects us to enforce immigration laws approved by Parliament as a matter of fairness to those who abide by the rules and to protect taxpayer funded services, by ensuring that only those who are entitled to use publicly funded services can access them and that those who are here legitimately do not suffer negative consequences.

We do not intend to deviate from these key principles, but I have tasked my officials to undertake a full evaluation of the compliant environment policy and measures, individually and cumulatively, to make sure that the crucial balance is right. If we find evidence, they are not achieving our objectives, we will review and adapt our policies.

■ Firearms: Licensing**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[97533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of firearm license applications were refused following medical assessment in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Kit Malthouse:

Firearms licensing is an operational matter for police forces and they are not required to provide data to the Home Office about the reasons why individual applications are refused, including on medical grounds.

The police carry out a number of checks to ensure that those in possession of firearms do not pose a danger to public safety, including in relation to medical suitability based on information provided by the applicant's GP.

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[98204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment his Department has made of the proportionality of the level of fees for GP medical assessments for firearm licenses.

Kit Malthouse:

GPs are asked to provide medical information when a person applies to their local police force for a firearm or shotgun certificate, as police must be satisfied that those in possession of firearms do not pose a danger to public safety. Fees charged by GPs to provide medical information for firearms licensing applications are a matter between the applicant and their GP.

The Government is continuing to engage with police, medical and shooting representatives to ensure that the system for medical checks operates as effectively as possible.

■ Food Standards Agency

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[96778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy that Food Standards agents will receive training if they are authorised to participate in criminal activity in the course of their duties under Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill.

James Brokenshire:

All authorisations are granted by an experienced and highly trained authorising officer who will ensure that the authorisation has strict parameters and that this is communicated to the 'agent' or CHIS. Authorising Officers receive robust training to ensure they understand necessity, proportionality and risk considerations.

Public authorities each have in place their own training processes for their authorising officers to reflect the specialist remit in which they operate.

The authorisation of CHIS participation in criminal conduct is, and will continue to be, subject to robust and independent oversight by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner.

The Commissioner has wide-ranging statutory responsibilities for the oversight of investigatory powers, including this power, which are set out in Part 8 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. The Bill sets out particular requirements in relation to participation in criminal conduct. It amends the Investigatory Powers Act to provide a requirement for the Investigatory Powers Commissioner to pay particular attention to public authorities' use of the power to grant criminal conduct authorisations under new section 29B. It also requires the Investigatory Powers Commissioner to include information about public authorities' use of criminal conduct authorisations in his annual report. This will include information such as statistics on relevant public authorities' of the power, the operation of safeguards in relation to authorisations, and errors.

As part of this, we anticipate that the IPC and his office will identify if any public body is failing to train and assess their officers to a sufficiently high standard.

■ Food: Standards

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[96777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill, in what circumstances her Department envisages that undercover Food Standards agents will need authorisation to participate in criminal activity in the course of their duties.

James Brokenshire:

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act lists a range of public authorities who use Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) for general investigative purposes. The CHIS (Criminal Conduct) Bill restricts the number of public authorities able to authorise participation in criminal conduct to only those public authorities who have demonstrated a clear operational need for the tactic. Authorisations will be subject to a robust set of safeguards and an authorisation can only be granted where it is necessary and proportionate to the criminality it is seeking to prevent.

The Food Standards Agency is tasked with protecting consumers and the food industry from crime within food supply chains. Examples of such criminality include the use of stolen food in the supply chain, unlawful slaughter, diversion of unsafe food, adulteration, substitution or misrepresentation of food and document fraud.

An example of where they might need to authorise participation in criminal conduct is where an individual working within a food business, contacts handlers to pass on intelligence. This relates to the ongoing misrepresentation of meat as being of premium quality and the extension of meat durability dates, leading to out of date meat being consumed.

The continuing presence of the individual within the workplace necessitates them actively participating in presenting, packaging and re-labelling produce in order to misrepresent its quality and fitness for consumption, which are criminal offences. This provides opportunities for the evidential seizure of unfit produce and to identify those complicit in, and responsible for, directing fraudulent activity. As a result, evidence is available to support a successful prosecution.

■ Hate Crime: Coronavirus

Paula Barker:

[\[97742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the change in the number of hate crime incidents since the onset of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales on an annual basis.

The next scheduled release of such data is on 13 October and this will include an analysis of changes in levels of hate crime since the onset of the covid-19 outbreak.

■ Home Office: Written Questions

Stephen Farry: [\[93722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Answers of 8 September 2020 to Questions 83978, 83979, 83980 and 83981, if she will provide bespoke Answers to each of those Questions rather than copying the text of the grouped Questions as an Answer.

Kevin Foster:

An error occurred when uploading the grouped answer to PQs 83978, 83979, 83980 and 83981; this has now been corrected and the correct text is now showing.

I would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused.

■ Immigrants: Domestic Abuse

Jess Phillips: [\[96910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applicants for a change of conditions to no recourse to public funds in each quarter since the third quarter of 2017 identified themselves as victims of domestic abuse.

Jess Phillips: [\[96915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on 28 June 2016, Official Report, WH47, for what reason the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians has not yet been rolled out throughout England and Wales.

Victoria Atkins:

There has been a phased approach to the national roll out of the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) service, with evaluations informing the development of the programme.

This approach will ensure the most appropriate model is rolled out for child victims with the support provided reflecting the changing profile of victims, for example recognising the needs of those who are exploited through 'county lines'.

The next phase will target the geographical areas with the highest level need that are not already covered by the programme. We are currently in the process of preparing for and running a competed grants process for these additional sites.

■ Members: Correspondence

Dave Doogan: [\[96188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Angus of 7 August 2020 on biometric assessments.

Kevin Foster:

A response was sent to the Hon. Member on 28 September 2020.

Alison Thewliss:[\[97614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans provide a substantive response to the correspondence of hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 15 July 2020 regarding constituent Mr Azizi.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member's correspondence. A reply was sent on 1 October 2020.

The hon. Member for Glasgow Central wrote on 15 July 2020 on behalf of her constituent, Mr Nihaz Azizi (known to UKVI as Mr Nihat Azizi), who claimed asylum in the UK on 3 April 2019. The hon. Member requested a progress update on the asylum claim.

Routine fingerprint checks indicated that Mr Azizi had previously claimed asylum in Germany in January 2016, and consideration was therefore given to returning him to Germany in accordance with the Dublin Regulations. However, it was subsequently decided to process his asylum claim in the UK.

UKVI cannot give an indication as to when Mr Azizi's asylum claim is likely to be concluded as this will depend on the nature and extent of any enquiries that may need to be carried out before it can make a decision.

UKVI will contact Mr Azizi in writing via his legal representatives, Latta & Co Solicitors, once a decision is made on his asylum claim or if any further information or evidence is required.

■ Mining: Industrial Disputes**Jon Trickett:**[\[97459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of commissioning an independent review of criminal convictions during the English and Welsh miners strikes of 1984-85, similar to the review commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2018.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to undertake an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent review of criminal convictions during the English and Welsh miners strikes of 1984-85, similar to the review commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2018.

■ Overseas Students: Assessments**Stephen Timms:**[\[96744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral statement of 19 March 2020, Official Report, column 1168, on Windrush Lessons

Learned Review, what progress she has made on looking into the treatment of the overseas students falsely accused of cheating in English language tests; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Shortly after the oral statement in March I met with the Rt Hon member and subsequently met with some of his constituents affected by this this issue.

During our meeting I explained the position we were taking on this subject.

I have recently asked my officials for further advice on the specific issue he raised around what leave is granted to those who are found not to have practiced deception, but who do not otherwise qualify for leave as a result of their Article 8 rights.

I will write to the Rt Hon member with a further update in due course.

■ **Refugees**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[95710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the (a) vulnerable person resettlement scheme to date; and what plans she has for future resettlement schemes after the UK leaves EU.

Chris Philp:

Through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), we have worked closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to identify and resettle refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict who are in need of protection. Since the VPRS was expanded in September 2015, more than 19,750 refugees have found protection in the UK through this route and we are now close to meeting our full commitment. The Home Office continuously reviews the operation of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and uses feedback from delivery partners, stakeholders and refugees to better understand the outcomes of the refugees we resettle and to drive improvement to our processes.

In June 2019, the Government reaffirmed the UK's commitment to refugee resettlement by announcing a new, global UK Resettlement Scheme. While we hoped to have both met our commitment to resettle 20,000 vulnerable refugees through the VPRS, and started the new scheme earlier this year, the unprecedented restrictions and pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has meant this has not yet been possible. We are evaluating how to respond to these ongoing restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity when safe.

■ **Refugees: Chimney House Hotel**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[96847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people her Department is housing in the Chimney House Hotel, Sandbach; and for how long those people have been so housed.

Chris Philp:

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

This includes the numbers of those accommodated under Section 98, Section 95 and Section 4. The length of stay varies, with the average length of stay not available in a reportable format. To provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

It is Home Office policy to move people into suitable Dispersed Accommodation (DA) once their claim for support has been assessed. The current global pandemic has presented significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation. This has included the need to source sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

A comprehensive cessation plan has been established with input from Local Authorities, Other Government Departments and Stakeholders to reduce the number of people in hotels. Work to explore further options to accommodate asylum seekers have included work with the Ministry of Defence to identify and to utilise MOD sites at short notice.

This accommodation is contingency accommodation, whilst pressures in the system are addressed and will be discontinued as soon as the Home Office is able to do so. Our accommodation providers are working to maximise their procurement plans throughout the UK, but they can only do so with Local Authority agreement. It is our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable DA as soon as reasonably practical.

■ Undocumented Migrants**Imran Ahmad Khan:****[95763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that adequate due diligence is taking place to ascertain the difference between economic migrants who have been working in the grey economy and those migrants with genuine claims of asylum.

Chris Philp:

All asylum decision-makers receive a five-week intensive training programme on considering asylum claims and must follow published Home Office policy guidance on assessing an individual's credibility. Asylum Operations has an assurance process, which assesses the quality of decisions, interviews and the application of Home Office policy.

We ensure claimants are given every opportunity to disclose information relevant to their claim before a decision is taken, even where that information may be sensitive or difficult to disclose.

Protection is normally granted when a claimant establishes a well-founded fear of persecution under the 1951 Refugee Convention, for race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group or their particular circumstances engage our obligations under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which may result in an individual being granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Dudley**

Marco Longhi: [\[95755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegal immigrants have been housed in Dudley borough in the last six months.

Chris Philp:

We do not provide accommodation to illegal immigrants. Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute are provided with free, fully furnished accommodation while applications are considered.

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

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Temporary Accommodation**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[95764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of people in temporary accommodation facilities who are (a) not British citizens and (b) do not have a permanent legal right to reside in the UK.

Chris Philp:

The United Kingdom has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation, transportation and cash/subsistence support whilst their application for asylum is being considered.

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

This information includes temporary accommodation.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[95762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is putting in place plans to reduce the number of migrants being placed in hotels within Wakefield constituency.

Chris Philp:

The current global pandemic has presented significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation. This has included the need to source sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

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

The Home Office has started cessations of support in a phased way which will reduce demand on the asylum system while prioritising the safety of those within the asylum system.

A comprehensive cessation plan has been established with input from Local Authorities, Other Government Departments and Stakeholders to reduce the number of people in hotels.

Work to explore further options to accommodate asylum seekers has included work with the Ministry of Defence to identify and to utilise MOD sites at short notice.

This accommodation is contingency accommodation, whilst pressures in the system are addressed and will be discontinued as soon as the Home Office is able to do so.

Our accommodation providers are working to maximise their procurement plans throughout the UK, but they can only do so with Local Authority agreement. It is our intention to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable DA as soon as reasonably practical.

■ Visas: Applications**Paul Blomfield:**[\[97563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when expedited services will resume for visa and settlement applications.

Kevin Foster:

Priority services have resumed in some locations.

The resumption of priority services in specific locations remains under review and services will be reintroduced on a phased basis where they can be delivered. This is dependent on various factors including the easing of local restrictions relating to Covid-19 and courier delivery services.

UKVI continues to keep this position under review and will publicise any changes to services.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review**Gill Furniss:** [\[96975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 September 2020 to Question 93656, for what reason she has not been able to update the House sooner on the Windrush Lessons Learned review's findings.

Priti Patel:

On 30 September, I published a Comprehensive Improvement Plan in response to the Windrush Lessons Learned Review.

This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-lessons-learned-review-response-comprehensive-improvement-plan>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Harriett Baldwin:** [\[907026\]](#)

What steps he is taking to promote house building.

Christopher Pincher:

We have set out an ambitious package of measures to ensure we build the right homes in the right places; levelling up opportunities across the country. This includes, at £12 billion, the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in a decade; and once in a generation reform to the planning system. This builds on the 240,000 new homes delivered last year; the highest in over 30 years.

Chris Bryant: [\[907028\]](#)

How the Government allocates resources between local authorities.

Luke Hall:

In England, the Government generally allocates funding to local authorities in line with their relative need. For example, since the start of the pandemic, we have allocated an additional £3.7 billion un-ringfenced funding to local authorities in England, and have taken into account population, deprivation and how service delivery costs vary across the country in distributing this money.

Local authority allocations in Wales are a fully devolved matter.

Kate Osborne: [\[907030\]](#)

What recent assessment his Department has made of the financial effect on local authorities of additional local restrictions as a result of an increase in covid-19 infections.

Luke Hall:

We have provided over £4.8 billion in additional funding to support councils throughout the pandemic, including £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced funding.

We are extremely grateful to councils for their continued collaboration through our COVID-19 data collection and monitoring exercises, and continue to have discussions with councils about the pressures they are facing.

Andrew Griffith:

[\[907031\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to discourage developers from building in areas at risk of flooding.

Christopher Pincher:

There are already strong protections in the National Planning Policy Framework, and we are reviewing this to ensure that future development will be safe from floods. The review will assess whether current protections in national planning policy are enough and consider options for further reform.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[907032\]](#)

What recent discussions has he had with his counterpart in the Scottish Government on cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

My Department is in regular contact with the devolved administrations on the subject of Building Safety. The devolved administrations are routinely invited to and regularly attend meetings of the Building Regulation Advisory Committee where matters relating to the Building Regulations in England and the United Kingdom are discussed.

■ Affordable Housing: Construction

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[97644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the 80:20 funding formula used by Homes England to ensure an equitable distribution of funding; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

This government is committed to unlocking potential right across the country, and whilst some funds have been primarily targeted towards those places where homes are too expensive or in too short supply, they have been utilised in all regions. It is important in some respects to direct funding to areas where there is the greatest affordability challenge, but any government that wants to level up must also direct infrastructure investment for housing to other parts of the country as well, and we will be bearing this in mind going forward.

As we respond to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, I agree we need to take a fresh look at how all corners of the country can prosper and benefit from the funding they need, building on the action we've already taken through the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, £400 million Brownfield Fund, and £900 million Getting Building Fund.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Helen Hayes:

[\[97649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to ensure councils are adequately resourced to manage (a) the consequences of the covid-19 outbreak and (b) social distancing in future years.

Luke Hall:

Councils across the country are supporting communities, protecting the most vulnerable and helping the NHS in our efforts to combat Covid-19.

We are providing local councils with an unprecedented package of support, including over £4.8 billion of support for spending pressures, comprising of £3.7 billion of un-ringfenced grants and over £1.1 billion for the Infection Control Fund. In total, over £28 billion has been committed to local areas to support councils, businesses and communities across government. This comprehensive package of support includes direct financial support and cashflow measures for councils, bus and tram services, support for the homeless and both grants and rates reliefs for businesses, as well as several other grants.

We have also introduced measures to address lost income, including:

- A co-payment scheme to cover irrecoverable Sales, Fees and Charges income in 20/21 with the Government covering 75% of losses beyond 5% of planned income
- Phased repayment of Collection Fund deficits over the next 3 years
- A commitment to support the sector through an apportionment of irrecoverable Council Tax and Business Rates losses, to be agreed at the Spending Review.

The funding will support the pressures councils have reported and the crucial role they play in helping the country tackle this crisis, such as their work re-opening the country including working with businesses and shops to enforce social distancing.

In addition, on 22 September the Government announced that £60 million of further funding would be provided to the police and local authorities to support a range of additional enforcement and compliance activity. Further information and guidance on funding will be set out in due course.

The 2020 Spending Review will be an opportunity to look at pressures facing the sector and provide them with the certainty they need to aid financial planning.

■ Floods: Expenditure

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[96981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much additional Government funding has been allocated to local authorities to manage the effects of flooding since November 2019.

Luke Hall:

Following the activation of the Flood Recovery Framework in November 2019 and February 2020, MHCLG has provided additional financial support to a number of local authorities under the Community Recovery Grant to assist those communities impacted to recover. Further support will be paid out via council tax discounts and business rates relief.

Stephanie Peacock:[\[96982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many claims were (a) made and (b) approved under the Bellwin scheme in respect to flooding incidents in England in each of the last 12 months.

Luke Hall:

The Department has approved 7 claims in the last 12 months and is working with a number of other local authorities to finalise their applications under the Bellwin scheme.

■ Homelessness**Daisy Cooper:**[\[97043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor on increasing funding for homelessness services in the 2020 spending review.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Decisions on Government spending beyond 2020-21 will be taken as part of the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

■ Housing: Construction**Jim Shannon:**[\[95631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has in place to encourage the (a) safe and (b) consistent development of new build housing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government and the construction industry have previously published detailed safe working guidance, advising on how to work while maintaining social distancing requirements. This guidance has been accompanied by a joint housebuilding industry and Government developed Charter of good practice, whereby housebuilders commit to the published guidance on safe working. These interventions underpinned a safe return to work on construction sites in the Spring and would continue to apply going forward. Whilst we recognise the constraints developers have on-site, we expect quality to be at the heart of the new homes they deliver.

■ Housing: Standards

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[97616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 July 2020 to Question 72766, when the Government plans to respond to the Future Homes Standard consultation.

Christopher Pincher:

In October 2019, we launched the first stage of a two-part consultation on Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations. We proposed an ambitious uplift in the energy efficiency of new homes through the introduction of a Future Homes Standard. In the Planning for the Future White Paper of August 2020 we stated that we will respond to the Future Homes Standard consultation in full in the autumn.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[97617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to respond to the Law Commission report on leasehold reform, published in July 2020.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government asked the Law Commission to make recommendations on a range of leasehold reforms, including reviewing current enfranchisement arrangements to make them easier, faster, fairer and cheaper, as well as reinvigorate commonhold and make it easier for homeowners to take control of the management of their block of flats or an estate. The Law Commission reports on the enfranchisement process, commonhold and Right to Manage were published in July, following their January report on valuation. We are considering these in detail and will set out our preferred way forward in due course.

■ Local Government Finance

Stephen McPartland: [\[97572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 93582 on Local Government Finance, for what reason he did not state in that Answer how many local authority accountable officers have indicated to his Department that they may have to consider issuing Section 114 notices in the financial year 2020-21.

Luke Hall:

As noted in the answer to Question 93582 on 30 September, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic the department has encouraged local authorities with concerns about unmanageable financial pressures to approach MHCLG in the first instance for discussion. The department has also taken the decision to proactively approach councils at an early stage to understand the challenges they are facing as a result of the pandemic.

The complex nature of many local authorities' financial positions, particularly at this time, means that in each case there are many different financial scenarios leading to different outcomes. In advance of a decision from the relevant Section 151 officer on whether to issue a Section 114 notice, the department would treat any such discussions as confidential in nature.

■ **Marriage: Coronavirus**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[96886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason (a) humanist wedding ceremonies and (b) religious marriages are treated differently under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2020.

Luke Hall:

One is not a ceremony that has legal force; the other does have legal force. Humanist weddings can take place with 15 people present under these Regulations, as is the case for religious ceremonies and civil ceremonies.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[96887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if the Government will allow people to gather in groups of up to 15 when attending a humanist wedding ceremony during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

Humanist wedding ceremonies can take place at this time with 15 people present.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[97514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 12 August 2020 on permitted development rights.

Christopher Pincher:

The response was sent on Thursday 1 October.

■ **Planning Permission: Local Press**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the importance of advertising planning notices in local newspapers to (a) local residents and (b) local media organisations.

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities are required to publicise certain types of planning applications in local newspapers as set out in Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. In response to coronavirus restrictions, temporary regulations have been introduced to

supplement the existing statutory publicity arrangements for planning applications. Local planning authorities now have the flexibility to take other reasonable steps to publicise applications if they cannot discharge the specific requirement for, for instance, newspaper publicity, if the local newspaper is not now in circulation. These steps can include the use of social media and other electronic communications, such as local online news portals, and must be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development. However, if a local planning authority is required to publicise a planning application in a local newspaper, and that paper is still in circulation, then they must continue to do so.

■ **Property Development: York**

Rachael Maskell: [\[97642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the £77.1 million allocated to the York Central Development includes the provision whereby in the event Network Rail and Homes England achieve a return of 20 per cent on their allowable costs from that scheme City of York council will receive a return of up to £77.1 million in the form of housing grant funding for reinvestment in the city.

Christopher Pincher:

Whilst the £77.1 million funding for York Central does not include such provision, Homes England will continue to work closely with the City of York Council to successfully deliver the scheme over the coming years, which will unlock significant housing within the city. In addition to this, Homes England and the Council will also be seeking to identify opportunities for potential further investment in infrastructure and housing to meet local needs.

■ **Refuges: Closures**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[97593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of women's refuges that have closed since 2010.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Government does not hold this data centrally. Local authorities make local commissioning decisions based on their specific local needs.

Government recognises the support that refuges provide for victims of domestic abuse and their children. During 2020/21 we have funded 166 organisations, providing almost 1900 bed spaces for victims and their children, through our £10 million domestic abuse COVID-19 emergency funding.

■ **Tenants: Loans**

Grahame Morris: [\[97550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to question 95062, if he will consult local

government and industry experts on the potential merits of a Tenant Loan Scheme in England.

Christopher Pincher:

We regularly engage with a range of stakeholders on different issues relating to the private rented sector, including on financial pressures. This Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to protect renters whose income has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has offered support for business to pay staff salaries, and the Chancellor's recent announcement of the Government's Winter Economy Plan now sets out further measures to support jobs and businesses. Finally, for those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year, which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

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

■ **Towns Fund**

Katherine Fletcher:

[\[907036\]](#)

What progress he has made on the Towns Fund.

Luke Hall:

Our £3.6 billion Towns Fund will play a vital role in supporting our country's economic recovery, investing in housing, skills, technology, culture and town centres, as we move beyond the immediate covid-19 response. We have recently provided accelerated funding to help towns respond to the immediate challenges of COVID-19, including £750,000 to Leyland.

We will be announcing the first cohort of Town Deals this Autumn, and hope to agree all deals by next Spring.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Andrew Bowie:

[\[907037\]](#)

What progress the Government has made on the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will operate across the Union to make sure each of the four nations prosper. Decisions the design of the fund will need to be taken after a cross-Government Spending Review. In the meantime, we will continue to work closely with interested parties whilst developing the fund.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[97583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to open applications to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

Now we have left the European Union, we will create the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the domestic successor to EU structural funds. Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Government can cut out bureaucracy and create a fund which invests in UK priorities and is easier for local areas to access. The Government recognises the importance of this funding for communities across the United Kingdom and we want to ensure there is a smooth transition as we replace EU structural funds with their domestic successor. Final decisions on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be taken after the upcoming Spending Review. Further details on the fund will be announced in due course.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[97584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the annual value of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be.

Luke Hall:

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to creating a UK Shared Prosperity Fund that tackles inequality and deprivation in each of our four nations, whilst at a minimum matching the size of European structural funds in each nation. The Government has been working closely with interested parties across the UK whilst developing the fund. Final decisions on the quantum of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be made at the cross-government Spending Review.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[97585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which bodies he plans to use to distribute funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The 2019 Conservative manifesto commits to creating the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, a programme of investment to bind together the whole of the United Kingdom, tackling inequality and deprivation in each of our four nations. Government officials have held engagement events with external stakeholders from a variety of sectors across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We are also working to ensure that there is a seamless transition from current EU structural funding arrangements to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as EU Structural Fund investment tails off over the coming years. Final decisions about the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be taken after a cross-government Spending Review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Apprentices

Robert Halfon:

[91618]

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

Greg Hands:

As of 31 March 2020, the Civil Service in England has achieved an average of 2.1% of its total workforce as apprenticeship-starts through the qualifying period against the legislative target to achieve an average of 2.3% across the financial years 2017/18 to 2020/21. According to Cabinet Office statistics, the Department for International Trade, including UK Export Finance, has achieved 3.5% of its total workforce in England as apprenticeship-starts in 2019/20, up from 1.1% in 2018/19.

We have plans in place to achieve our legislative target by the end of March 2021. DIT offers a range of apprenticeships across different disciplines to build both individual and departmental professional capability. The department continues to include apprenticeships as part of its workforce planning to ensure it maintains performance against the 2.3% target. The data for 2018/19 can be found [here](#) and the data for 2019/20 is [here](#).

■ EU External Trade

Stephen Farry:

[95765]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made representations to the EU on enabling Northern Ireland-origin goods which can freely circulate within the EU single market to access EU trade agreements with third countries.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Northern Ireland is and remains British, so will be part of the United Kingdom's customs territory. As our recent business guidance makes clear, it will be HM Government - not the EU - that will negotiate and deliver trade deals on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. As a result, all British exporters will enjoy the same preferential access we secure with trading partners around the world, whether they are based in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

■ Hydrogen: Exports

Andrew Griffith:

[96236]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has had with UK businesses looking to export hydrogen technology internationally.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer given to the Hon. Gentleman, the Member for Ceredigion (Ben Lake) on 9 September (UIN 85097).

■ Institute of Economic Affairs**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether Government business was discussed at (a) her dinner with the Institute of Economic Affairs on 14 January 2020 and (b) meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs on (i) 10 February 2020 and (ii) 17 March 2020.

Emily Thornberry: [\[84986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what meetings she had with her Officials in her Department on the content of her discussions at (a) her dinner with the Institute of Economic Affairs on 14 January 2020 and (b) meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs on (i) 10 February 2020 and (ii) 17 March 2020.

Greg Hands:

The Government does not routinely release detailed information about ministerial engagements.

■ Shipping: Trade**Drew Hendry:** [\[95685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to support UK maritime trade links.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade's (DIT) five-year plan for the United Kingdom's maritime sector, developed in partnership with industry, promotes our world-class global maritime offer and focuses on UK strengths in many of the key technologies that will drive the future of maritime – such as digital shipping, smart ports and autonomous vessel technologies.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia and Canada**Sarah Atherton:** [\[97060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to ensure that potential future trade agreements with (a) Canada and (b) Australia make provision for British nationals living in those Commonwealth countries to have their state pensions uprated in line with inflation.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

There have been no discussions between the Secretary of State for International Trade and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on this point, as state pensions are not in scope for our trade agreement negotiations with Australia and Canada.

JUSTICE■ **Coroners****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[96211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many inquests there have been where (a) Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998 has been engaged, (b) Article 2 of that Act was engaged in relation to gambling-related harm and (c) gambling-related harm was a relevant factor in each year since 2005.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice publishes annual data on coroners including, amongst other things, the number of inquests they have held and the types of conclusion they have recorded. These statistics, however, are not further sub-categorised and therefore we are not in a position to provide accurate information on the number of inquests where Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998 was engaged or on whether gambling-related harm was a relevant factor.

■ **Courts: Coronavirus****Ellie Reeves:**[\[96171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement of 21 September 2020 entitled Eight more Nightingale Courts to deliver justice, how many of those nightingale courts can hold criminal court cases; and how many criminal court trials have been held at nightingale courts since March 2020.

Chris Philp:

Five of the additional eight Nightingale courts announced on the 21 September 2020 will hear criminal court cases. All Nightingale courts help free up more room in existing courts to hear other cases, including custodial jury trials, which require cells and secure dock facilities to keep the public, victims and witnesses safe.

Information requested on criminal court trials is a subset of data that will be used to produce future National Statistics publications. Statistics on criminal court trials from the period Nightingale courts were operational (Q3 2020 Jul-Sept) are scheduled to be published on 17 December 2020 and I am therefore unable to provide these figures at this time.

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

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Coronavirus

Catherine West: [\[97672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) suspected and (b) confirmed cases of covid-19 have been reported among civil servants working in HM Courts and Tribunal Service in each month since June 2020.

Catherine West: [\[97673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in which courts (a) suspected and (b) confirmed cases of covid-19 have been reported among civil servants in each month since June 2020.

Catherine West: [\[97674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) suspected and (b) confirmed cases of covid-19 have been reported among staff working on the Organised Crime Division contract in HM Courts and Tribunal Service in each month since June 2020.

Catherine West: [\[97675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in which courts have (a) suspected and (b) confirmed cases of covid-19 been reported among staff working on the Organised Crime Division contract in each month since June 2020.

Chris Philp:

The requested data is only available from 18 August, as HMCTS monitored COVID-19 incidents locally prior to that date.

The table below shows the number of (a) suspected incidents and (b) confirmed positive cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) among HMCTS staff from 18 August 2020 to 30 September 2020.

18 – 31 AUGUST 2020			1 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2020		
Suspected incidents	Confirmed cases	Total cases	Suspected incidents	Confirmed cases	Total cases
20	1	21	222	17	239

It is estimated that in terms of HMCTS staff incidents, HMCTS are currently experiencing 43.3 positive cases per 100,000 (for 21-27 September 2020 weekly period). This compares to the position in England of 53 positive cases per 100,000.

The attached Annex A lists the court buildings which have reported (a) suspected incidents and (b) confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 among HMCTS staff from 18 August 2020 to 30 September 2020.

All data is internal and not subject to the same level of checks as official published statistics. Although care has been taken when processing and analysing this, the details may be subject to revisions inherent in any large-scale manual system. The dates suspected incidents and/or confirmed cases were reported centrally to the

HMCTS COVID-19 Response Team may not reflect the exact date the incidents occurred.

There is no Organised Crime Division Contract operated by HMCTS.

■ Marriage

Alex Cunningham:

[\[96889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to enable legal recognition of humanist marriages through section 14 of the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 as an interim step before further reform.

Alex Chalk:

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.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Council of Europe

John Howell:

[\[96832\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, if he will make time for an annual debate in Government time on the role of the Council of Europe.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

My Hon Friend will appreciate that there are a number of competing demands for time in the House of Commons chamber. This includes ensuring adequate time for scrutiny of the government's legislative programme and meeting the standing order requirements to provide opposition and backbench time. While I am not in a position to commit to an annual debate on the Council of Europe, this is the type of subject matter for debate that my Hon Friend may wish to take up with the Backbench Business Committee.

■ Members: Correspondence and Written Questions

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[97523\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the time taken to respond to (a) written questions and (b) letters from hon. Members.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

The Government attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence and written questions. Some departments are seeing a significant increase in correspondence during the pandemic but it is vital that members are able to ask questions of departments on behalf of constituents with confidence that they will receive a timely and useful response. I have written to all members of Cabinet to remind them of the importance of this.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ UK Government-Northern Ireland Executive Joint Board****Carla Lockhart:**[\[97062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many times the joint board established in the New Decade, New Approach Agreement has met.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Joint Board, which has oversight for transformation in health, education and justice, where these draw on funding provided under the New Decade, New Approach agreement, has met once on the 22 July. A further meeting is scheduled for this Autumn.

TRANSPORT**■ Acceleration Unit****Lilian Greenwood:**[\[97558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 91626, if he will publish a list of projects and programmes he has tasked the Acceleration Unit with speeding up the delivery of.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Director of the Acceleration Unit Darren Shirley takes his post in October 2020. The programme of work and list of projects will not be determined until after Darren Shirley is established.

■ Bus Services: Coronavirus**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[96001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what tailored support is available to the coaches industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has announced several measures available to UK businesses, including the coach sector, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

On 8 August, the Government also announced a funding package of over £40 million for Local Transport Authorities to procure additional, dedicated home to education transport services, including the provision of additional coach services for the first autumn half term.

The Department for Transport has also provided a further exemption from Public Service Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) until 31 July 2021. Whilst many coach operators are PSVAR-compliant, and we remain committed to ensuring that all vehicles meet the standards set out in PSVAR, we understand the COVID-19 outbreak may have constrained some operators' ability to invest in PSVAR-compliant vehicles. This further exemption enables operators to redirect their revenue streams to those areas most needed for the immediate future.

■ Driving Instruction: Coronavirus

Catherine West: [\[97680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) suspected and (b) confirmed cases of covid-19 have been reported among driving examiners in each month since June 2020.

Catherine West: [\[97681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in which driving test centres have (a) suspected and (b) confirmed cases of covid-19 been reported among driving examiners in each month since June 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The attached table sets out both the number of suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported among driving examiners and the driving test centres in which they have been reported in each month since June 2020.

Attachments:

1. tables showing covid cases in driving test centres [97680 and 97681 - Covid-19 test centres and examiners.xlsx]

■ Driving Tests: Standards

Justin Madders: [\[96941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average waiting time for a driving test date in (a) England and (b) Ellesmere Port and Neston in the latest period for which information is available.

Rachel Maclean:

In March 2020, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) suspended most of its services in line with Government guidance, whilst maintaining access for critical workers to support the national emergency response.

The DVSA is restoring its testing services with new procedures in place to keep people safe and help stop the spread of coronavirus.

As the DVSA has been unable to provide its normal level of service for the past six months, demand for practical driving tests are higher than usual.

Currently, the average waiting time for a practical car driving test in England is 10 weeks.

The nearest test centres to Ellesmere Port and Neston are:

- Widnes – 9 weeks
- Upton – 11 weeks
- Chester – 16 weeks

■ **Licensing of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill**

Neil Coyle: [\[96909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to publish the Taxi and Private Hire Bill.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government will continue to engage with the sector on our plans for reforming the regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles, including options to introduce new legislation. The Department is supporting licensing authorities to make use of their extensive existing powers through the recently issued Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards. The Department will consult on updated best practice guidance on other matters later this year.

■ **Motorways: Safety**

Stuart Anderson: [\[96189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance his Department has published on using motorway lanes safely.

Rachel Maclean:

Highway code rules for Motorways (253 to 273) include rules for signals, joining the motorway, driving on the motorway, lane discipline, overtaking, stopping and leaving the motorway. The relevant advice on using motorway lanes safely is covered in the Highway code rules 264 to 266.

Highways England provides information and helpful guidance on using motorways safely on its website page 'Safer Driving On Motorways' which can be found at:

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/road-safety/>

■ **Network Rail: Staff**

Lilian Greenwood: [\[97556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of staff (a) employed by or (b) under contract to Network Rail to undertake rail electrification construction work from October to December 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department does not hold this information.

■ **Railways****Lilian Greenwood:**[\[97557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans publish a white paper on the future of UK railways.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed to reforms that deliver a railway that is focused on passengers, with reliable, safe services on a network built around them. We have now ended the franchising system, paving the way for the wider reforms which will be set out in the Williams Review White Paper. We will publish this as soon as the course of the Covid-19 pandemic allows.

■ **Railways: Coronavirus****Emma Hardy:**[\[97006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what dates Ministers and officials have met representatives of the open-access rail operators Hull Trains and Grand Central to discuss support for the sector since the outbreak of covid-19; and what the outcomes have been of each discussion.

Emma Hardy:[\[97007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to maintain (a) dialogue with open-access rail operators, (b) support for those operators and (c) protection of the jobs and conditions for staff employed by those operators as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Department for Transport officials have maintained an extensive and regular dialogue with the management teams of Hull Trains and Grand Central, as well as their parent companies First Group and Arriva Trains, throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. For example In my capacity as Rail Minister, I met with representatives of First Group and with MPs from Yorkshire and the Humber on 1 July to discuss Hull Trains. The outcomes of those discussions included highlighting the significant, general support measures Government has made available across the economy.

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). However, during the COVID-19 outbreak, Open Access Operators have drawn upon business support measures such as 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. We will continue to engage closely with Open Access

Operators as they respond to the current situation, including highlighting the support available through the recently announced Job Support Scheme.

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Sarah Olney: [\[97683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with rail operators on plans to make (a) three-day (b) other part-time season tickets available to rail passengers across England.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Government recognises that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a fundamental change in working patterns and that this could have long-term effects on commuter behaviours.

In response, the Department for Transport has proactively worked with the rail industry, and is currently considering proposals received from train operators, to try to ensure better value and convenience for part-time and flexible commuters.

These are unprecedented times and our immediate focus is on ensuring that we keep the railway available and safe for those who rely upon it.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Drew Hendry: [\[95687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the role decarbonising the maritime industry can play in reaching net zero by 2050.

Robert Courts:

The domestic maritime sector falls under the UK's national net zero target, and in common with the wider economy will need to be decarbonised by 2050 in order to achieve net zero.

The Department has undertaken research into the decarbonisation of the sector as part of the Clean Maritime Plan, which has been published on Gov.UK, and meets regularly with Industry and Civil Society groups to discuss both domestic Net Zero and the international work to address GHG emissions being undertaken at the International Maritime Organization.

Drew Hendry: [\[95688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the level of funding that would be required to decarbonise the maritime industry.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport has undertaken extensive research in support of its Clean Maritime Plan to consider the level of investment required for the UK's domestic maritime sector to achieve net zero by 2050. This research comprises a range of scenarios assessing different policy options, including both costs and benefits, and has been published on Gov.UK

For the global shipping industry, research carried out by UMAS, part of UCL, and published in January 2020, suggests that the total cost to achieve global maritime decarbonisation may be in the region of £1.5 trillion, invested over the next thirty years, with the majority of that investment occurring in the production and supply of alternative fuels.

Drew Hendry: [\[95689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to the maritime industry to support the decarbonisation of that industry.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport is working actively with the maritime sector to support decarbonisation at both international and domestic level.

Internationally we are working with other high ambition states at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the sector to develop and adopt pragmatic, effective, short and medium term measures that will peak and reduce emissions from the sector.

Domestically we have published research exploring the opportunities and challenges arising from decarbonisation, to provide the sector with greater clarity on what is required to achieve decarbonisation, and in support of this the Department has provided £1.5m of grants through Maritime Research and Innovation UK, supporting clean maritime innovation in the UK

■ Shipping: Finance

Emma Hardy: [\[96177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, ahead of COP26, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a green shipping fund.

Robert Courts:

The Department has undertaken extensive research in support of its Clean Maritime Plan into the options to decarbonise the shipping industry and promote green shipping, which has included consideration of the use of financial measures including funding mechanisms, and has published this research on Gov.UK.

Internationally the UK is committed to working with fellow member States at the International Maritime Organization to drive a reduction of emissions, and we welcome the initiative of some industry partners in developing initial proposals for a possible marine fuel levy to fund research into maritime decarbonisation. We look forward to engaging more fully with this proposal when the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee meets in November.

■ Shipping: Investment

Drew Hendry: [\[95683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support private investment in the UK maritime industry.

Robert Courts:

The maritime sector plays a key role in the UK economy, responsible for up to 95% of our imports and exports. As much of the UK maritime sector is privately owned, our world-leading companies are well placed to seek investment opportunities through commercial means.

Nevertheless, the Department, along with our colleagues across government, work closely with all parts of the UK maritime sector to identify the support they need to support their success and growth. In particular, the Department for International Trade works closely with the industry to promote the UK as an inward investment destination for the global maritime community.

Shipping: Technology**Emma Hardy:**[\[96178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the technologies required to deliver a green UK shipping industry.

Robert Courts:

The Department has undertaken extensive research in support of its Clean Maritime Plan to consider the technologies required for the decarbonisation of both the domestic and international shipping sectors, and the opportunities they present.

This research comprises a range of scenarios assessing different policy options, with a focus on zero carbon alternative fuels such as renewably produced hydrogen, ammonia as well as battery electric systems, and explores both the costs and benefits of such systems as well as any barriers to deployment. This research has been published on Gov.UK

TREASURY**Business: Coronavirus****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[97003\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2020 to Question 88386 on Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Night-time Economy and his statement that it may be the case that there are more effective ways to help those businesses who are still unable to reopen, what options for more effective ways to help those businesses that are legally prevented from reopening his Department is considering.

Kemi Badenoch:

It is Government's objective to return to our way of life as soon as possible, and we are continuously reviewing our guidance, considering both the risks to public health and to the economy. However, some activities continue to present a risk to public health and certain venues must remain closed to the public.

Businesses unable to re-open can access support through government-backed loan schemes, the application window for these schemes has been extended to the 30 November. Additionally, businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors will now benefit from the extended VAT reduction, and are able to use more generous terms for repayment of deferred taxes and government-backed loans.

Since March, the government has prioritised a flexible and adaptable approach to economic support in response to the pandemic, because people and businesses have needed support and they've needed it quickly and at the right time. The support will be kept under review.

■ Customs

Rachel Reeves:

[\[97559\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) applications have been made and (b) how much funding has been issued to customs intermediaries by HMRC.

Jesse Norman:

In total, the Government has now made £84 million available to support the customs intermediary sector to deal with EU trade after 2020.

The initial £34 million has been fully allocated with over 4,000 grant offers for the recruitment and training of agents, improved software and hardware capability for businesses and supporting the establishment of the customs academy. The Government opened an additional £50 million of funding on 29 July and since then it has received over 1,300 applications totalling £18.4m.

Businesses are applying enthusiastically, and funding is still available. The Government encourages industry to take advantage of this support to expand.

Rachel Reeves:

[\[97560\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many customs intermediaries (a) there are as at 30 September 2020 and (b) will be needed from 1 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The UK has a well-established customs intermediaries sector which serves British businesses trading outside the EU. The sector is varied and consists of a number of different business models, including specific customs agents, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators; all of which will require differing numbers of staff.

The sector is responding to the increased demand from traders. Government support of up to £84m has been designed to meet the needs of the sector to build capacity flexibly by covering training and IT, as well as recruitment.

The Government continues to monitor progress carefully and keeps support under review.

Rachel Reeves: [\[97562\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of state aid rules on the ability of customs intermediaries to scale up ahead of the end of the transition period.

Jesse Norman:

Total grants claimed across the customs grant scheme and any similar schemes must be under €200,000 (the maximum amount of state aid available).

The Government continues to consider how the grant scheme can be improved, including how it best operates within subsidy rules.

■ Job Support Scheme

Anneliese Dodds: [\[97712\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the (a) Job Support Scheme in (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021i22, and b) take-up of that scheme in terms of number of employments.

Jesse Norman:

The Job Support Scheme is designed to protect jobs in businesses that are facing lower demand over the winter months due to COVID-19, to help their employees remain attached to the workforce. The total cost of the Job Support Scheme will depend on take-up; based on equivalent earnings to the average CJRS claim, the Government estimates the scheme would cost up to £1.8 billion for every million employments under the scheme for six months.

■ Public Expenditure: Wales

Jonathan Edwards: [\[96839\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will outline the Barnett consequential for the Welsh Government resulting from the £546m England only adult winter social care plan announced by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Steve Barclay:

To help the Welsh Government manage their Covid-19 response, the UK Government made an unprecedented upfront funding guarantee on 24 July 2020. This guarantees the Welsh Government will receive at least £4bn in additional resource funding this year on top of the funding set out at the Spring Budget.

It is for the Welsh Government to decide how to allocate this funding across their devolved responsibilities.

■ Revenue and Customs Digital Technology Services: Agency Workers

Sir Mike Penning: [\[97486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost is to RCDTS of staff engaged by suppliers (a) Crown Commercial Services Frameworks and (b) Experis Ltd, alongside and in addition to any other known suppliers; and if he will publish details of the engagement

contracts of those other suppliers for each year since July 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

In accordance with departmental retention policy, and in preparation to ensure compliance with the 2017 reforms to the off-payroll working rules, HMRC only hold a complete central record of departmental engagements from 2016 to the present.

From HMRC records (2017 to date), RCDTS' total spend on contingent staff is £31.7m.

The accuracy of this data is dependent on the correct categorisation of the spend and does not take into account any supplier duplication. It also does not take into account changes that may have taken place within this sector and supplier marketplace.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[97488\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the (a) number and (b) proportion of total staff engaged by RCDTS via an umbrella company or similar in either an (i) individual or (ii) limited company capacity in each year since July 2015 to date.

Jesse Norman:

In accordance with retention policy and in preparation to ensure compliance with the 2017 reforms to the off-payroll working rules, RCDTS only holds a complete central record of engagements from 2016 to present.

With contingent staff there is always at least one agency between RCDTS and the individual contractor, although in practice this contract may be further sub-contracted, so that there are multiple agencies between RCDTS and the contractor.

Umbrella companies are known to be used by off-payroll workers engaged via an intermediary and records show this to be the case for 102 or 43% of total engagements for which records are held.

RCDTS would hold a contractual relationship with either the recruitment agency or service provider rather than any umbrella company and is not involved in the payment arrangements of individual contractors.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Agency Workers**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[97487\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the (a) number and (b) proportion of total staff engaged by HMRC via an umbrella company or similar in an (i) individual and (ii) limited company capacity for each year since December 2010 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

In accordance with departmental retention policy, and in preparation to ensure compliance with the 2017 reforms to the off-payroll working rules, HMRC only hold a complete central record of departmental engagements from 2016 to present.

With contingent staff there is always at least one agency between HMRC and the individual contractor, although in practice this contract may be further sub-contracted, so that there are multiple agencies between the department and the contractor themselves.

Umbrella companies are known to be used by off-payroll workers engaged via an intermediary and records show this to be the case for 317 or 17% of total engagements for which records are held.

HMRC would hold a contractual relationship with either the recruitment agency or service provider rather than any umbrella company and are not involved in the payment arrangements of individual contractors.

■ Service Industries: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher: [\[96917\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) events, (b) hospitality and (c) exhibition sectors.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like events, hospitality and exhibition sectors.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 across all key areas of the economy.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including events, hospitality and exhibition sectors, as we respond to this pandemic.

■ Students: Loans

Stella Creasy: [\[97570\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people who made student loan repayments were receiving maternity pay in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Tax Allowances

Dan Carden: [\[97697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2020 to Question 95206 on Tax allowances, how much additional funding will be allocated to HMRC for the monitoring and evaluation of tax reliefs.

Jesse Norman:

The amount of additional funding allocated to HM Revenue & Customs for the monitoring and evaluation of tax reliefs will be determined through the outcome of the funding settlement agreed between HM Treasury and HM Revenue & Customs, as part of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review 2020.

■ Treasury: Agency Workers**Sir Mike Penning:**[\[97484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff were engaged by suppliers (a) Crown Commercial Services Frameworks and (b) Experis Ltd in addition to any other known suppliers; and if he will publish details of the engagement contracts of those other suppliers in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The number of contingent labour engagements since July 2015 for RCDTS is 233, of which 84 are current at the time this request was received.

HMRC's central record of engagements, created in 2016, provides 1,815 contracts of which 248 are still current. This is excluding the figures provided in relation to RCDTS.

This data has been extracted from HMRC's system under the Crown Commercial Services Framework agreement, known as Public Sector Resourcing (PSR).

WALES**■ Shipping: Wales****Drew Hendry:**[\[95686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps his Department is taking to support the decarbonisation of the maritime industry in Wales.

Simon Hart:

The UK Government is working with the maritime sector to support decarbonisation at both international and domestic level.

Internationally, the UK has been playing a significant role at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the development of short-and medium-term measures alongside other high ambition states and the maritime sector. This work is intended to address emissions and begin decarbonising the sector. The UK is also active in work at IMO on energy efficiency for new ships, and in the development of long-term measures to address emissions.

Domestically, the UK Government has published research exploring the opportunities and challenges arising from decarbonisation, to provide the sector with greater clarity on what is required to achieve decarbonisation. In support of this the Department for Transport has provided £1.5m of grants through Maritime Research and Innovation UK. This grant aims to support clean maritime innovation in the UK with over

£240,000 awarded to a Welsh consortium looking into sustainable aquaculture and marine opportunities.

Officials from my department regularly engage with officials in the Department for Transport and the Welsh Government on how we can work together to support the decarbonisation of all sectors in Wales, including the maritime sector.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[96961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, further to the High Court judgment in the case of Connor v SSWP, how many people have had employment and support allowance payments withheld while awaiting a mandatory reconsideration of her Department's decision to refuse that benefit since 2013.

Justin Tomlinson:

In law there is no entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance during the Mandatory Reconsideration period, therefore benefit is not being withheld.

■ National Insurance: Coronavirus

Catherine West: [\[96140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 September to Question 86679 on National Insurance, what progress the Government has made on implementing a digital solution to the process of issuing National Insurance numbers.

Mims Davies:

DWP is continuing with the development of a digital solution to support the process of issuing National Insurance Numbers.

A minimum viable product will be entering the Private Beta stage by mid-October and will initially be available to a limited number of applicants each day.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[97602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many personal independence payment applications are awaiting in-person assessments; and when she plans to enable in-person assessments to recommence.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not available.

From 17 March, we suspended face to face assessments for Personal Independence Payments (PIP). All assessments are currently being progressed on the basis of the

paper based evidence alone or that evidence together with a telephone assessment to ensure decisions on PIP can be made without delay.

The health and safety of our claimants and our staff are our key priority. Face to face assessments for health and disability benefits remain suspended at present; this is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance. Any re-introduction of face to face assessments would involve additional safety measures to comply with public health guidance.

■ Social Security Benefits

Simon Hoare:

[97646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 85078, if she will disregard compensation payments for Historical Institutional Abuse in Northern Ireland for the purposes of establishing eligibility for (a) housing benefit, (b) universal credit and (c) pension credit in Great Britain.

Will Quince:

Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Treasury government officials are working together on how payments from the scheme should be treated in Northern Ireland. Once that situation is clarified, then treatment of the payments in Great Britain can be decided upon.

■ Social Security Benefits: Stockton North

Alex Cunningham:

[97574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children are affected by the benefit cap in Stockton North constituency.

Ruth Jones:

[97722]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families with children are affected by the benefit cap in Newport West constituency.

Mims Davies:

The available information on the number of households, receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who are subject to the Benefit Cap, by Family Type and Parliamentary Constituency, is published and can be found at:

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

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

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

■ Unemployment: Sutton Coldfield

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[93527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional skills support and training her Department offers to unemployed people in Royal Sutton Coldfield who are aged (a) over 50 years and (b) under 25 years.

Mims Davies:

Our Plan for Jobs is a Cross-Government initiative that will promote employment opportunities to people of all ages.

Our local jobcentres are now fully reopened and we will provide additional support to claimants by doubling the number of Work Coaches in this financial year. We are expanding our sector-based work academy programme (SWAP), which supports claimants aged 18+ into a wide range of current vacancies through a short period of training and work experience linked to a guaranteed job interview.

We have launched our ambitious Kickstart scheme, which will provide a vital first step on the jobs ladder for many young people. Funding for 6-month Kickstart placements covers the relevant National Minimum Wage rate for 25 hours a week, the associated employer National Insurance contributions, and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions, as well as £1500 of employability support.

Nine Small and Medium Employers in Sutton Coldfield are interested in taking part in the Kickstart Scheme. Each have under 30 vacancies to offer and we are waiting for intermediaries to be appointed, who will then make applications on their behalf via Gov.uk.

Jobcentre Plus Older Claimants Champions work with Work Coaches to deliver Jobcentre Plus' commitment to support older people to find work and stay in work. Champions liaise with employers and providers to promote and raise the profile and benefits of employing older workers.

■ Universal Credit**Ms Karen Buck:****[96761]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Information Commissioner's decision requiring the publication of the 2017 Universal Credit Programme Board papers, if she will place in the Library copies of the Universal Credit Programme Board papers for (a) 2018 and (b) 2019.

Will Quince:

In line with the Universal Credit Programme Board publication strategy deposited in the House of Commons library on 1 November 2018 ([http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1083/Letter - Future Publication.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1083/Letter_-_Future_Publication.pdf)), Universal Credit Programme Board papers are deposited in the House of Commons library after two years, twice yearly and in 6 monthly batches.

The next batch of papers will be deposited in October 2020 and will cover the period March 2018 – September 2018. The following scheduled deposit will be in April 2021 and will cover the period October 2018 – March 2019

Ms Karen Buck:**[96762]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what analysis she has undertaken on the effectiveness of the new functionality outlined in the Universal Credit Programme

Board minutes from the meeting held on 18 May 2017, that focused on early identification of universal credit claimants who may have complex needs.

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[96764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made in ensuring that universal credit claimants can make and maintain claims in a number of ways regardless of circumstance as outlined as a priority in the Universal Credit Programme Board paper 5 (UCPB180517).

Will Quince:

The application process for Universal Credit is designed to be as quick and easy as possible so that claimants receive money at the earliest opportunity. It is a predominantly digital service, ensuring we make best use of technology to deliver a modern and effective working-age welfare system, allowing our staff to concentrate on those people who require additional support. But the Department recognises and continuously evaluates the need to support vulnerable claimants. The Universal Credit system provides for complex needs to be recorded in a way which supports staff working on that claim to the particular circumstances of the individual.

The Department offers comprehensive support for claimants to use our digital service, but for those unable to make or maintain their claim online, telephone support is available. In these instances, information normally available through a claimant's online account will be communicated through the most suitable alternative format.

Work Coaches receive training to support claimants with complex needs, including those with special needs or disabilities, and have access to guidance and locally-tailored specialist support for those whom they are helping move into, or stay in work.

In addition, the Department funds Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland to deliver 'Help to Claim' which provides tailored, practical support to claimants making a Universal Credit claim and is available across Great Britain. Claimants can access this support through self-referral, or may be directed towards or referred to the service by DWP or other support agencies.

We work closely with a range of partner organisations to ensure 'wrap around support' for people on Universal Credit. Some have 'trusted partner' status, for example social landlords, and others are learning and support organisations that provide products and services for people on Universal Credit.

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[96763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on improving the universal credit service to customers without bank accounts, as outlined as a priority in the Universal Credit Programme Board paper 5 (UCPB180517).

Will Quince:

Since May 2017 Universal Credit has improved the support it offers to claimants without bank accounts including, where appropriate, providing support to complete the process of setting up a bank account.

Many high street banks provide support for claimants who can manage a basic bank account, to set one up and will advise them. Advice is also available from various advisory services, including the Money and Pension Service.

Work Coaches will assess claimants' financial needs at their first interview and can refer them to more specialist support for personal budgeting, money guidance and debt advice as appropriate, including through the Money and Pensions Service.

Measures are in place to make payments through other methods where someone does not have a bank account. Universal Credit can, in certain circumstances, can be paid via the HMG Payment Exception Service, which allows claimants to access payments through Paypoint outlets.

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[96765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on the new agent-led process for both personal and corporate appointees, as outlined as a priority in the Universal Credit Programme Board paper 5 (UCPB180517).

Will Quince:

The process to establish a new appointee or to validate an existing appointee for another benefit has been rolled out across all Jobcentres. The process determines whether an appointee is necessary and the best course of action. In making the decision, the Department must be satisfied that the claimant is not able to manage their own affairs because of a mental incapacity or severe physical disability.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 October 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Caroline Dinéage **Nigel Huddleston:**

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.

Since 1999 rates of problem gambling have been measured through the three British Gambling Prevalence Surveys and subsequently in the Health Surveys for Scotland and England and the Gambling Commission's survey of gambling behaviour in Wales. The proportion of the adult population of Great Britain who are considered to be problem gamblers has remained stable at below 1% since the first survey in 1999. The government has committed to review the Gambling Act 2005 to make sure it is fit for the digital age and more details will be announced in due course.

As set out in answer to Question 82541, there has been no assessment of the longer term trends in rates of gambling related suicide. Determining factors related to individual deaths by suicide is difficult and complicated, but we know that there may be wider lifestyle factors associated with problem gambling that may link to poor mental health, and that problem gambling can create a cycle of debt that can also have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing. In extreme cases it may lead to thoughts of suicide.

The Government committed to addressing suicide risk and gambling in the latest progress report to the National Suicide Prevention Strategy and the Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan, which were published in January 2019.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 October 2020. The correct answer should have been:

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 **across England** 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, **including Leicestershire**, 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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU: update**

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS487\]](#)

The Government has made a commitment to update Parliament on the progress of our future relationship negotiations with the EU. This statement provides an update on the ninth round of negotiations.

Led by the UK's Chief Negotiator, David Frost, negotiators from the UK and the EU held discussions in Brussels on 29 September - 2 October 2020. There were substantive discussions on almost all issues.

Discussions covered all work streams including:

- Trade in goods: Core areas of the goods elements of the FTA, including market access, customs and regulatory issues.
- Trade in services, investment and other FTA issues: Including mode 4, procurement, digital and intellectual property (including geographical indications).
- Fisheries: Quota-sharing and governance.
- "Level playing field": Covering subsidies, tax, competition, labour, environment, sustainable development and governance.
- Energy: Including civil nuclear cooperation and electricity and gas trading.
- Transport: Road transport, aviation safety and air services.
- Law Enforcement: Covering a number of capabilities including Prum, Mutual Legal Assistance, extradition and our future arrangements with EU Agencies.
- Mobility and Social Security Coordination: Social security coordination arrangements.
- Participation in Union programmes: Covering the general terms for UK participation and Peace+.
- Thematic cooperation: Including future health security and Security of Information arrangements.
- Governance: Including appropriate institutional architecture.

There were positive discussions in the core areas of a trade and economic agreement, notably trade in goods and services, transport, energy, social security, and participation in EU programmes. This has however been true for some time. Progress has also been possible on a law enforcement agreement. In other areas, however, significant and familiar differences remain, notably on the level playing field, and on fisheries where the gap between us remains very large.

The Prime Minister spoke to President von der Leyen on 3 October to review the progress of negotiations. They agreed on the importance of finding an agreement, if at all possible, and instructed the chief negotiators to work intensively to try to do so, given how short time now is before the European Council on 15 October.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Domestic Abuse Announcement

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for rough sleeping and housing (Kelly Tolhurst): [\[HCWS485\]](#)

Through the Domestic Abuse Bill, this Government is placing a new Statutory Duty on Tier One local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation in England. Subject to the bill receiving Royal Assent, this new duty will commence in April 2021.

To help local authorities plan and prepare for the implementation of the new duty, I am pleased to announce today a £6 million Domestic Abuse Capacity Building Fund.

I recognise the invaluable work that local authorities do each and every day to help residents in their local areas, including the most vulnerable in our society. This new funding will help ensure that local authorities are resourced to prepare for implementation of the new duty. It will promote more effective delivery on commencement, meaning local authorities will be more quickly able to commission much needed support for those victims of domestic abuse and their children who are currently turned away from refuges and other safe accommodation because their needs cannot be met.

This fund will be allocated equally to Tier one local authorities (unitary and metropolitan authorities, county councils, the Greater London Association for London boroughs and the Council of the Isles of Scilly), who will be the accountable body under the new duty. It will be allocated as an unringfenced grant in recognition that local authorities will know best how to prepare locally. I encourage Tier one authorities to use it to engage with their local domestic abuse services, including specialist services for victims from diverse groups.

To further help local authorities with their preparation work, I am also publishing guidance setting out the purpose and suggested outcomes of this fund, and my officials are holding workshops to support local authorities.

Today I am also launching a consultation to seek views on the methodology proposed for allocating funding to meet the new burdens associated with the new duty once it comes into force. The level of funding is of course a matter for the Spending Review.

I encourage all local authorities to use this range of support to ensure they are ready for implementation in April 2021.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Programme**

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): [\[HCWS483\]](#)

The Prime Minister has today made fifteen new appointments to his Trade Envoy programme.

These new appointments will extend the total number of Trade Envoys to 31 parliamentarians covering 69 markets. The Prime Minister's trade envoy programme is an unpaid and voluntary cross-party network, which supports the UK's ambitious trade and investment agenda in global markets. The new appointments are:

The Baroness Hooper CMG (Gloria Hooper) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama,

The Baroness Meyer CBE (Catherine Meyer) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ukraine,

The Hon. Member for Broxtowe (Darren Henry) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to the Caribbean (with focus on 12 Commonwealth Countries),

The Hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to the Western Balkans (covering Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia),

The Hon. Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Helen Grant) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Nigeria,

The Hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Mongolia,

The Hon. Member for South Derbyshire (Heather Wheeler) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam,

The Hon. Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Mozambique,

The Hon. Member for Southport (Damien Moore) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Tunisia and Libya,

The Hon. Member for Stafford (Theo Clarke) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Kenya,

The Hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mark Garnier) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Brunei, Myanmar and Thailand,

The Lord Austin of Dudley (Ian Austin) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Israel,

The Lord Davies of Abersoch CBE (Evan Mervyn Davies) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Sri Lanka,

The Rt Hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr. Andrew Murrison) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Morocco, and

The Rt Hon. the Lord Bates (Michael Bates) has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ethiopia.

They join the following list of Trade Envoys:

The Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury (Jane Bonham-Carter), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Mexico,

The Baroness Morris of Bolton OBE (Patricia Morris), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Jordan, Kuwait and the Palestinian Territories,

The Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Emma Harriet), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan,

The Hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Bangladesh,

The Hon. Member for Fylde (Mark Menzies), Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Peru,

The Hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines,

The Hon. Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Tanzania,

The Hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to South Africa,

The Hon. Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ghana and Guinea,

The Lord Faulkner of Worcester (Richard Faulkner), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Taiwan,

The Lord Popat (Dolar Popat), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo,

The Lord Risby (Richard Spring), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Algeria and Lebanon,

The Rt Hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey Donaldson), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Egypt,

The Rt Hon. the Lord Astor of Hever DL (John Jacob Astor), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Oman,

The Rt Hon. the Lord Janvrin GCB GCVO QSO (Robin Janvrin), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Turkey and

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Lamont of Lerwick (Norman Lamont), the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Iran.

PRIME MINISTER**■ Publication of the Intelligence and Security Committee's Report on Northern-Ireland Related Terrorism****Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):**[\[HCWS488\]](#)

The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament has today laid before Parliament a report of the former Committee on Northern Ireland-Related Terrorism, looking at the key challenges faced by MI5 and others in tackling the threat posed by Dissident Republican (DR) groups in Northern Ireland.

The current security situation in Northern Ireland (NI) is in no way comparable to 'The Troubles'. However, DR and loyalist paramilitary groups continue to be a feature of life and the threat in NI from DR groups remains unchanged at SEVERE, meaning an attack is highly likely. DRs reject the 1998 Belfast Agreement and consider the use of violence a legitimate tool. Despite significant pressure from the police and security forces, demonstrated by the recent arrests targeting the New IRA, the terrorist threat they pose is enduring, and there remains a minority who aim to destabilise the peace process, harming communities across NI.

The DR threat is, however, just one part of the wider security picture in NI. The lines are often blurred between those involved in terrorist activity, paramilitary activity, and organised crime. In one way or another, these groups exert control over and exploit those communities for their own criminal ends. To achieve lasting peace in NI these threats cannot be dealt with in isolation.

The Government welcomes the Committee's conclusions on the importance of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) and in particular the strong endorsement that it is sometimes necessary to authorise CHIS to participate in criminal conduct. This is a longstanding tactic which is vital for national security and the prevention and detection of crime. The CHIS (Criminal Conduct) Bill introduced to Parliament on 24 September, and which has its Second Reading in the House of Commons today, provides an express power for the authorisation of criminal conduct, providing certainty to public authorities using this critical tool. The Bill makes clear that a criminal conduct authorisation can only be authorised where strictly necessary and proportionate to do so, and is subject to robust oversight including by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner.

I welcome this report and thank the Committee for the work that has gone into it. The Government will consider the report in full and respond formally in due course.

TRANSPORT**■ Union Connectivity Review****Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**[\[HCWS484\]](#)

On 30th June the Prime Minister announced a review would be undertaken into Union Connectivity, exploring ways to improve connectivity between our four nations and bring forward funding to accelerate infrastructure projects.

I have now published the Terms of Reference for this independent review. Chaired by Sir Peter Hendy CBE, the review will make recommendations on how the UK Government can level up transport infrastructure and improve connectivity between Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England, boosting access to opportunities and improving people's everyday connections.

Working closely with the Devolved Administrations, Sir Peter will look at road, rail, air and sea links, and how they could be improved to fuel the UK's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Sir Peter brings extensive experience and knowledge to the role with over 45 years working in the transport sector – including as Chair of Network Rail and successfully running London's transport network during the Olympics.

The review will look at how the quality and availability of transport infrastructure between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can support quality of life in communities across the UK while also aiding economic recovery. This will in turn lead to recommendations on whether and how best to improve connections, and whether that includes the need to invest in additional infrastructure by the UK Government. Among other things, Sir Peter will look at the feasibility and conduct a detailed initial assessment of options for improved road and rail connections between England and Scotland, and England and Wales, as well as improved air links across the UK.

The review will also look to the future – considering the role of future technologies and assess environmental impacts of current and future infrastructure. Sir Peter will be expected to publish his final recommendations in Summer 2021.

This announcement follows a recent pledge by the UK Government to bring forward funding to accelerate infrastructure projects in the devolved nations – working with the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the UK Government will identify opportunities for 'spades in the ground' ready projects to help build up communities and create jobs quicker for people across the United Kingdom.

TREASURY**■ Bilateral loan to Ireland****The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):**[\[HCWS486\]](#)

I would like to update Parliament on the loan to Ireland.

In December 2010, the UK agreed to provide a bilateral loan of £3.2 billion as part of a €67.5 billion international assistance package for Ireland. The loan was disbursed in 8

tranches, and the final tranche was drawn down on 26 September 2013. Ireland has made interest payments on the loan every six months since the first disbursement.

On 7 September, in line with the agreed repayment schedule, HM Treasury received a total payment of £405,490,687.38 from Ireland. This comprises the repayment of £403,370,000 in principal and £2,120,687.38 in accrued interest.

HM Treasury has today provided a further Report to Parliament in relation to the loan as required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010. The Report relates to the period from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020. It reports fully on the two principal repayments received by HM Treasury during this period, and sets out details of future payments up to the final repayment on 26 March 2021. The Government continues to expect the loan to be repaid in full and on time.

A written ministerial statement on the previous statutory report regarding the loan to Ireland was issued to Parliament on 29 April 2020, Official Report, column 26WS.