

Daily Report

Tuesday, 20 October 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 October 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:45 P.M., 20 October 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Aircraft: Waste Disposal**

Jack Lopresti:

[\[102038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to the UK economy of introducing an aircraft scrappage scheme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government remains in dialogue with industry and overseas governments about the potential benefits, practicalities, and implications of an aircraft scrappage scheme.

■ **Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Fraud**

Wes Streeting:

[\[102128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the amount of money fraudulently obtained from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme to date.

Paul Scully:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 1 October 2020, to Question [96132](#).

■ **Climate Change: International Cooperation**

Alan Brown:

[\[102113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which foreign Governments he has met with to discuss their nationally determined contribution ahead of COP26; and on which dates those meetings took place.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Ensuring that all countries come forward with ambitious 2030 climate plans (NDCs) and long-term strategies to reach zero carbon emissions as soon as possible is a top priority ahead of COP 26. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has discussed NDCs in all of his direct engagements with over 30 countries, and all of his multilateral engagements. Ministers and senior officials across government have directly engaged with over 100 governments, and all countries have been engaged with through our FCO network and UN Missions.

■ **Common Travel Area: Republic of Ireland**

Stephen Farry:

[\[102212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications between the UK and Ireland to

enable British and Irish citizens to exercise their rights and privileges under the Common Travel Area.

Paul Scully:

If no immediately effective arrangements relating to professional qualifications are agreed with the EU this year, on 1 January 2021 the Government will put in place a temporary system of recognition that allows holders of EU qualifications, including Irish qualifications, to seek recognition of their qualifications in the UK. This will ensure that the UK meets its commitments under the Common Travel Area.

The Government published a Call for Evidence on the recognition of professional qualifications and regulation of professions in August 2020. As it takes forward this work, the Government will ensure that individuals with Irish professional qualifications continue to have a means of applying for recognition in the UK.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[102798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding from the public purse has been allocated to dementia research in 2020.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is implementing the Challenge on Dementia 2020 published in February 2015 to make sure that dementia care, support, awareness and research are transformed by 2020. The Challenge is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prime-ministers-challenge-on-dementia-2020>

We are updating the strategy and will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in due course.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Health and Social Care have spent £341 million between 2015 and by March 2019, funding for 2020 is unavailable.

■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[102869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households have applied for grants under the Green Homes Grant scheme to date.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As of 15:00 on 14 October 2020, the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme had received 17,218 grant applications.

■ Horizon Europe: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[102796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding he plans to allocate to alternative schemes in the event that the UK does not participate in the Horizon Europe scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is committed to keeping the UK at the forefront of globally collaborative research and innovation. If we do not associate to Horizon Europe, we will implement alternatives as quickly as possible from January 2021 and address the funding gap. The Government has committed to raising public investment in R&D to £22 billion per year by 2024/25. This will include funding for any continued participation in EU science programmes or EU replacement schemes.

■ Hydrogen: Technology

Ruth Edwards:

[\[102194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the Government's strategy on hydrogen technology.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to the development of hydrogen as a strategic decarbonised energy carrier for the UK. Development of a hydrogen strategy is well under way and we have committed to publishing a UK hydrogen strategy in early 2021.

■ Iron and Steel: EU Grants and Loans

Chi Onwurah:

[\[102795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason UK applicants have been excluded from submitting to the EU Research Fund for Coal and Steel during the transition period.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises the importance of research and development (R&D) in helping to transform the steel sector so that it can play a vital role within our modern Industrial Strategy.

Agreement has been reached that UK participants engaged in ongoing Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) projects will continue to be funded until completion. However, the Commission has informed UK participants in consortia that are bidding for funding this year, that they will not be eligible to receive RFCS funding. This is because the resulting grant contracts are due to be signed in April to June 2021, after the end of the transition period established in the Withdrawal Agreement.

Leaving the EU provides us with the opportunity to focus our investment on our own priorities. This includes the Government's commitment to invest £22 billion in R&D by 2024/2025, which is a record increase in R&D spending. We have also announced a

£250 million investment towards a Clean Steel Fund, complemented by a £100 million Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund, to support decarbonisation and make the most of the clean growth opportunities in steel.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Marion Fellows:

[\[104121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is empowered to turn the inquiry into Post Office Horizon cases into a statutory inquiry.

Paul Scully:

The Inquiries Act 2005 sets out the legal framework for setting up and running a statutory Inquiry. The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry is being led by an Independent Chair who can raise any issues with its Terms of Reference or legal footing with Government.

■ Rented Housing: Energy

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[102864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the incentives to improve the energy efficiency of (a) private rented accommodation and (b)(i) council-owned and (ii) housing association-owned socially rented accommodation.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The latest tranches of Energy Company Obligation (ECO2 and ECO3) are currently being evaluated, with an evaluation report expected to be published in due course. We will also be reviewing in due course the effectiveness of our recently launched incentives of the Green Homes Grant and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator.

■ Spirits: Renewable Fuels

Rachael Maskell:

[\[102873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much of the £10 million Green Distilleries Competition funding has been allocated.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The BEIS Energy Innovation Team recently launched the first phase of the Green Distilleries competition. The application window closed very recently, and applications are currently being assessed. This feasibility phase will award a total of £500,000 for engineering studies, with the most promising projects going on to receive further funding next year to develop their technologies as part of phase 2. The competition will help the distillery sector innovate for a Net Zero future and has received a large amount of interest from the industry.

Universities: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:**[\[102797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding he plans to make available in grants during the second stage of the university covid-19 research support package that was announced in June 2020.

Amanda Solloway:

The amount of grant funding provided under the Sustaining University Research Excellence (SURE) fund will depend on income losses which at this point remain unclear - each university's allocation is the lower of 80% of losses in international student income or the value of non-public research funding.

Vaccination: Research**Chi Onwurah:**[\[102807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of whether there are any supply chain problems in vaccine development programmes at UK research institutions.

Amanda Solloway:

The Vaccines Taskforce, in collaboration with the Department for Health & Social Care and Public Health England, are working to ensure supply chain resilience for the manufacture and delivery of all potential COVID-19 vaccine candidates, including those where UK research institutions are involved.

CABINET OFFICE**Civil Servants: Location****Rachel Reeves:**[\[102054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that relocation of civil servants outside of London helps to facilitate regional representation in decision-making.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to my answer to [PQ72996](#) on 21 July 2020.

Imran Ahmad Khan:[\[102199\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to increase the proportion of civil service jobs in (a) Wakefield, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) the rest of the UK outside London.

Julia Lopez:

Further to my answer to [PQ72996](#) on 21 July 2020, we are working to increase civil service presence throughout the regions and nations of the UK. We want to ensure our geography of locations covers as large and representative an area of the UK as possible, including West Yorkshire.

■ Civil Servants: Southampton**Royston Smith:** [\[102116\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil service jobs there have been in Southampton in each of the last 10 years.

Julia Lopez:

Civil Service Statistics presents detailed information on the UK Civil Service workforce as at 31 March 2020, including on pay, diversity and location and is available [here](#).

■ Civil Service: Sustainable Development**Paula Barker:** [\[99768\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2020 to Question 95244 on Civil Service: Sustainable Development, how many requests for a meeting of the Sustainability Forum his Department received from the National Trade Union Committee in the last two years.

Julia Lopez:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Electoral Register: Young People**Ruth Jones:** [\[102160\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve electoral registration levels among young voters.

Ruth Jones: [\[102161\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the May 2021 elections can be carried out safely in the event that the covid-19 outbreak is ongoing.

Ruth Jones: [\[102162\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve voting levels among Black, Asian and minority ethnic voters.

Chloe Smith:

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have statutory responsibility for maintaining complete and accurate registers for their areas. The Government is committed to encouraging democratic engagement amongst all electors, including young people and BAME individuals.

Since 2013/14, the Government has provided more than £27m to fund activities to promote electoral registration and democratic engagement more widely.

The Government is working with the electoral sector, including the Scottish and Welsh Governments, and Public Health England, to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections, including ensuring polling stations are safe and COVID-secure places to vote.

■ Public Sector: Artificial Intelligence

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [102173]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his policy is on transparency on Government algorithms.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to [PQ83803](#) on 10 September 2020.

■ Small Businesses

Rachel Reeves: [102051]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to encourage the use of dynamic purchasing systems to support SME's access to procurement contracts.

Rachel Reeves: [102052]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to ensure systematic feedback is provided for unsuccessful bidders to Government tenders.

Rachel Reeves: [102053]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to remove barriers to SMEs bidding for Government tender.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by [Amanda Milling MP on 16 July 2020](#).

Information about the Crown Commercial Service Dynamic Purchasing System is available online. <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/help-and-support/frameworks/dynamic-purchasing-system/>

Regarding feedback, I refer the hon. Member to the guidance on 'Bid Evaluation' available on GOV.UK as part of the Outsourcing Playbook.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Barbara Keeley: [102731]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the effect of the state aid provisions of the UK-Japan Free Trade Agreement on UK compliance with EU state aid laws.

Barbara Keeley:

[102732]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK and EU not agreeing a deal on their future relationship by the end of the transition period on scientific collaboration between institutions and researchers in the UK and EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government has a clear ambition for the UK to be a global science superpower and this is reaffirmed in the [UK Research and Development Roadmap](#). The UK is open to participation in certain EU programmes provided we can reach a fair and balanced deal, and negotiations are ongoing.

The UK reached a substantive agreement on the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership on 11 September 2020. This contains subsidy commitments which are appropriate for an FTA and have a bearing on UK subsidies only insofar as they may have an effect on trade with Japan.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry:

[102218]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Border Operating Model for the Great Britain and Northern Ireland interface be released.

Stephen Farry:

[102219]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what contingency plans the Government is making to manage trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the event that a trade deal is not agreed with the EU by 31 December 2020.

Stephen Farry:

[102220]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what checks will be in place to ensure that only goods from Northern Ireland receive unfettered access to the UK internal market.

Stephen Farry:

[103662]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps are being taken to accommodate intermediate processing of goods in Northern Ireland without those goods being deemed at risk.

Stephen Farry:

[104215]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the planned timescale is for a system of rebates to be (a) designed and (b) implemented for goods that remain in Northern Ireland from Great Britain that do not enter the Republic of Ireland.

Stephen Farry:

[\[104216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to enable the Trader Support Service to support businesses moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland via the Holyhead to Dublin route.

Stephen Farry:

[\[104217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the labelling requirements will be for businesses that move goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Stephen Farry:

[\[104218\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on ensuring the continued supply of medicines from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in the event that a UK-EU mutual recognition agreement is not reached before the end of the transition period.

Stephen Farry:

[\[104219\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the potential merits are of an Australia-style future relationship with the EU.

Stephen Farry:

[\[104220\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to facilitate inward processing relief for goods at risk of moving into the EU on Great Britain to Northern Ireland trade routes.

Stephen Farry:

[\[104223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2020 to Question 99785, how the (a) membership and (b) rules of procedure will be determined for the Joint Consultative Working Group in relation to the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the [statement by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 19 October](#), the approach outlined in the [Command Paper in May](#), and the [guidance published on 7 August](#) regarding the operation of the Northern Ireland protocol, the UK Government has been unequivocal in its commitment to delivering unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods to the rest of the UK market. This is a clear commitment of the Withdrawal Agreement, and the UK will guarantee it in legislation before the end of the year.

The Definition of Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 sets out the goods that will benefit from unfettered access in the first instance. This initial approach will be replaced by a longer-lasting regime during 2021 that will be developed alongside Northern Ireland businesses, and the Northern Ireland Executive. Further details will be set out in due course but our approach will ensure that, at all stages, Northern Ireland businesses will continue to enjoy unfettered access to the whole of the UK market from 1 January 2021.

The Protocol applies whether or not the UK and EU reach agreement on a free trade agreement.

The Government has no plans to publish a Border Operating Model for goods' movement between Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the simple reason that - as the Withdrawal Agreement makes clear - there is no border within the UK, and the UK as a whole will be leaving the EU's customs territory at the end of the transition period. The Government has however committed to publishing further detailed information and guidance as soon as possible when relevant details are resolved, including where matters depend on discussions in the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee. This is the case on the question of goods 'at risk', as well as further detail on labelling requirements for agrifood goods.

Further to Article 15 (2) of the Protocol and my answer to [PQ 99785](#), the membership of the Joint Consultative Working Group will be composed of representatives of the UK, including the Northern Ireland Executive, and the EU. The Group will meet shortly.

Regarding the supply of medicines, discussions in the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee are ongoing.

DEFENCE

■ Army: Vocational Education

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[104139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many junior soldiers at the Army Foundation College on the (a) short and (b) long course have enrolled on a Level 3 BTEC course while at that college.

James Heappey:

Between September 2019 - September 2020, a total of 330 Junior Soldiers have enrolled on the Level 3 BTEC Course whilst at AFC Harrogate. By Course:

Short courses (2 intakes) – 142

Long Course (1 intake) – 188

■ Radioactive Waste: Dalgety Bay

Neale Hanvey:

[\[104193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2020 to Question 101319, how hon. Members should contact the MOD Prime Contractor for the remediation works at Dalgety Bay in order to seek clarification and updates on the progress of the licence application and subsequent stages of the project.

Jeremy Quin:

I will be happy to update the hon. Member directly regarding who to contact within the Ministry of Defence for updates on the progress of the licence application and the

remediation works at Dalgety Bay, or indeed do so myself, and will be in contact with the hon. Member.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ 5G

Chi Onwurah:

[\[102809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to increase (a) investment in OpenRAN technology and (b) vendor diversification in the UK's 5G network.

Matt Warman:

The Government wants to make Open RAN - technology that prioritises open-source and interoperable approaches - widely available across the sector so that operators can have the flexibility to use multiple suppliers throughout their network, rather than being over-reliant on one or two. This will increase choice, grow the market and build resilience. Open RAN is still in an early stage of development, however we are prioritising the testing of Open RAN through the existing 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme.

The Government will publish its targeted 5G supply chain diversification strategy focused on rebalancing the telecommunications supply chain in the coming weeks alongside the Telecoms Security Bill. The strategy will focus on measures to protect incumbents, attract new suppliers, and accelerate open-interface solutions, whilst building UK capability.

The Government has established a Diversification Taskforce - chaired by Lord Livingston of Parkhead - which will provide independent and expert advice to the Government, supporting the development of the strategy and ensuring that our measures are ambitious and effective.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[104081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of (a) households and (b) land area have 5G coverage.

Matt Warman:

All four Mobile Network Operators have now launched 5G networks, with 5G services now available in over 100 towns and cities across the UK.

Ofcom, as the UK's telecommunications regulator, collects mobile coverage data for its Connected Nations reports. Ofcom does not currently report on 5G coverage figures but we will be working with them to agree how best to report 5G coverage data as it becomes more widespread.

Broadband**Chi Onwurah:** [\[102811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government is on target to meet its 2025 gigabit capable broadband rollout target.

Matt Warman:

The Government is committed to delivering nationwide coverage of gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible. According to ThinkBroadband, full fibre coverage now stands at 17%, up from 9% a year ago, with gigabit coverage at 27%. This means that over 1 in 4 premises can now access gigabit-capable connections.

We will continue to take action to remove barriers to meeting the target, to hasten network rollout and to ensure that those in the hardest to reach areas are not left behind. This is why we allocated £5 billion in the last budget to invest in gigabit rollout in the hardest to reach areas of the country.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[104082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many households do not have access to high speed internet; and what his Department's definition is of high speed internet.

Matt Warman:

The department does not use the term “high speed internet”, but uses the term “superfast” to denote speeds capable of 24Mbps and more. There are c.30 million households across the UK, and the superfast coverage against the 24Mbps definition is 96.8%. Against the EU definition, which is 30Mbps and above, coverage across the UK is 96.5%.

In regard to households that do not have access to high speed internet, Ofcom have defined a “decent broadband” connection as being able to access 10Mbps download speed and 1Mbps upload. According to Thinkbroadband as of 16 October, 1.4% of UK premises have speeds of less than 10Mbps.

Cultural Heritage: Wakefield**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [\[104207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help preserve historic sites in Wakefield constituency.

Nigel Huddleston:

Heritage policy ensures that the historic environment across all parts of England are protected and conserved for the benefit of present and future generations. Through statutory functions (for example, making listing and scheduling decisions to protect our most special buildings and ancient monuments) and also through the bodies it funds such as Historic England, DCMS seeks to promote understanding of and access to the historic environment.

Within the Wakefield constituency, Wakefield Upper Westgate is a High Street Heritage Action Zone under the Government funded High Street Heritage Action Zone £92million scheme. A Historic England grant of £1,899,994 with match funding of just under £2.4m will see the repair and conversion of around 20 priority historic buildings along Westgate.

In addition to this, as of the end of the financial year 2019/20 the National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded a total of 91 projects worth £26m in the Wakefield constituency. This includes two awards totalling £5m to The Hepworth, 10 awards totalling £10.1m to the National Coal Mining Museum, 6 awards totalling £3.8m to Wakefield Cathedral and £2.8m to Pontefract Market Place.

■ Culture: Finance

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[104108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make it his policy to increase funding for arts and culture in England over the next five years.

Caroline Dinenage:

DCMS is committed to supporting work in arts and culture across the country. Culture and heritage are at the heart of communities, enriching the lives of millions, and the recent £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund is a testament to the role this sector plays in our lives. We are saving nearly 1400 cultural organisations with £257 million from our unprecedented support package.

Future funding decisions will be set out as part of the CSR. This government is aware of the significant contribution arts and culture makes to the country, both financially and socially and we continue to work with the sector to put forward a robust case for its support.

■ Data Protection: Public Sector

Chi Onwurah:

[\[103508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what privacy, data sharing and data safeguarding obligations, in addition to GDPR, there are on private data firms providing services to Government Departments who require access to public sector data.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) regulate the obtaining, holding, use and disclosure of personal data. All organisations must comply with the requirements of the GDPR and the DPA which provide numerous safeguards and limitations on the how data is used and held by both controllers and processors. The DPA also sets out the Information Commissioner's powers of investigation and enforcement.

Where a private company is acting as a processor of data on behalf of the government, contracts will be in place that set out the obligations that the organisation will have to data protection which will be governed by the GDPR and

DPA. If a private company is acting as a controller then they will be governed by the general principles of the GDPR.

Outside of the GDPR, the Data Ethics Framework provides guidance for public sector organisations on how to use data appropriately and responsibly when planning, implementing, and evaluating a new policy or service, which would need to be taken into consideration when working with private organisations. More information on the framework can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-ethics-framework>.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Private Finance Initiative**

Alan Brown: [99029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what live PFI contracts his Department has; and for each of those contracts (a) what service is provided, (b) when the contract became live, (c) what the remaining term of the contract is and (d) what the annual repayments are.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Department has no live PFI contracts.

■ **Football**

Chi Onwurah: [102806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the timetable is for the delivery of the fan-led review of football governance.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs are the bedrock of our local communities and it is vital they are protected.

The Government is committed to undertaking a fan led review of football governance at an appropriate time and is currently deciding on the scope and structure of the review. We will continue to liaise closely with the football authorities as we develop this.

■ **Football: Coronavirus**

Dr Luke Evans: [102939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Premier League, (b) EFL and (c) National League on a timeframe for assessing the merits of supporters returning to stadiums to watch football.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are committed to getting spectators back into stadiums as soon as it is safe to do so.

We will continue to work closely with a whole range of sporting bodies, including the football authorities, to understand the latest thinking that might allow spectators to return. This includes the creation of a new Sports Technology Innovation Working

Group of sporting bodies and health experts to analyse new technologies which might support this.

■ **Hotels: Coronavirus**

Alex Sobel:

[103619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether accommodation businesses in areas where the local covid-19 alert level is (a) medium and (b) high are required to (i) cancel and (ii) refuse bookings from people resident in areas where the local covid-19 alert level is high.

Nigel Huddleston:

Accommodation businesses in areas where the Local COVID Alert Level is medium or high are not required to cancel or refuse bookings from people in areas where the Local COVID Alert Level is high.

People can continue to travel within high alert level areas, can make overnight stays, and can leave high alert level areas to go on holiday, but should only do so with members of their own household/support bubble. People living in high alert areas should however look to reduce the number of journeys they make where possible.

We are asking people resident in areas where the Local COVID Alert Level is 'very high' to avoid overnight stays in other regions, except for those who need to for work, education or caring responsibilities.

We encourage all accommodation providers to consider their approach towards guests from inside very-high alert level areas. Accommodation providers should communicate to all customers, including those with existing bookings, to not travel outside of the area unless it is essential (such as for essential work purposes or attending a funeral). For existing bookings, accommodation providers should give guests a chance to cancel their bookings if they intend on no longer travelling and staying at the accommodation.

Accommodation providers outside of an area with restrictions may refuse a booking or cancel a booking from guests from inside a very-high alert level area. The decision to refuse service is at the discretion of the business owner, and the terms of the booking contract may allow for discretionary cancellations. Any decision to refuse service should be done with sufficient notice to the guest, and we would expect any funds already paid by the consumer to be repaid.

■ **Huawei: 5G**

Chi Onwurah:

[103501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of removing Huawei from the 5G network; and how he plans to fund that removal.

Matt Warman:

The Government's advice has been clear that operators need to plan to remove all Huawei 5G equipment by 2027. It will be for individual operators to determine how to achieve that, and therefore the exact nature of any costs and delays will be a commercial decision for each operator to make.

■ Performing Arts: Coronavirus**Angela Crawley:**[\[103567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a freelance performers support scheme during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

We recognise the crucial role that individuals play in making our arts and creative industries world-leading. As a result of the £1.57 billion Culture Renewal Fund, organisations will be more able to resume cultural activity, albeit in a socially distanced way, which will increase employment opportunities for freelancers.

Each organisation that receives money will know what best they can do to support their workforce, including their freelance workforce.

To complement Government Funding, ACE have made over £115m of funding available for individuals, including freelancers, to apply to. That includes:

- £17.1m through the Emergency Response Fund for individuals;
- £18m through their Developing Your Creative Practice fund;
- £75m through National Lottery Project Grants (available to both individuals and orgs); and
- £6m distributed by a series of Benevolent Funds focused on the self employed.

Tracy Brabin:[\[104146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of Tier 2 covid-19 restrictions on (a) choirs, (b) singing groups, (c) acting groups and (d) other amateur creative organisations.

Tracy Brabin:[\[104147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions on (a) choirs, (b) singing groups, (c) acting groups and (d) other amateur creative organisations.

Caroline Dinenage:

In Medium Local Covid Alert Level areas (Tier 1) it is against the law to gather in groups of more than 6, unless everyone is from the same household and support bubble. In High (Tier 2) and Very High (Tier 3) areas, it is against the law to gather indoors in groups which do not consist only of the same household and support bubble. A number of exemptions apply. For example, some activities - such as those

organised for under-18s including education or training supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities - are exempt.

In addition, in a COVID-secure venue or public outdoor place, non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between separate and distinct groups of no more than 6 (In Medium areas and outdoors) or individual households (in High and Very High areas) at any time (depending on Local Covid Alert Level restrictions). If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups (depending on Local Covid Alert Level restrictions) - including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising - then such non-professional activity should not take place. Local Covid Alert Level guidance (Medium, High, Very High) provides details on group size.

■ Remembrance Day: Coronavirus

Alberto Costa:

[103560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Royal British Legion on enabling the safe attendance of Remembrance Sunday events during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has provided advice for those planning to hold local services for Remembrance Sunday across the country.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-preparations-for-remembrance-sunday/local-authority-preparations-for-remembrance-sunday>

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport continues to work closely with The Royal British Legion to prepare safe plans for this year's National Remembrance Sunday Service, delivered on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen at the Cenotaph on Whitehall, London.

■ Sports Competitors: Coronavirus

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[104169]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the need to prioritise elite athletes to receive the covid-19 vaccine in the context of (a) the Olympic Games and (b) other world wide sporting events in 2021.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[104170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect a covid-19 vaccine will have on the (a) performance elite athletes and (b) their preparations for International competitions in 2021.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[104171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the roll out of a covid-19 vaccine to elite athletes.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government's vaccines portfolio ensures we have the best chance of accessing a safe and effective vaccine for people in the UK as soon as one becomes available. We are also working on deployment plans in the event that a safe, effective vaccine is discovered.

We are vigorously pursuing efforts on vaccines, therapeutics and mass testing to return conditions to normal as soon as possible. In terms of a vaccine, there are several encouraging trials but it is likely to be well into 2021 until one can be widely deployed. Our strategy will continue to be shaped by the work of our brilliant scientists.

We know this is a challenging period for all sports and the Government remains committed to supporting our elite athletes. Olympic and Paralympic sport is not immune from the impact of Covid-19 and we will continue to work with UK Sport and other sports bodies in ensuring that our elite athletes are well supported in this difficult period to ensure that Team GB and ParalympicsGB are ready for the Tokyo Games and other world wide sporting events when they do take place in 2021.

The English Institute of Sport's world-class support for our athletes has been maintained during the current epidemic. Team GB's historic medal haul in Rio was an amazing achievement and our athletes made the country incredibly proud. I am confident that this success will continue through to Tokyo next summer.

■ Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[102682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what criteria need to be met for the resumption of pilot events with 1,000 spectators in sports stadiums.

Jon Trickett:

[\[102683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what criteria need to be met for the phased return of spectators to sporting stadiums to be resumed.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government fully understands the decision not to reopen stadia on October 1 is frustrating for sports fans. But in the face of rising infections and further restrictions it would not have been possible. The decision was taken on advice from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and the Chief Scientific Officer (CSA) and takes into account travelling to and from games held in stadia, where there may be further social interaction and the risk of virus spread. The safety and security of players and spectators remains of paramount importance.

I am grateful to those clubs who have piloted the return of spectators so far. Work continues at pace to find solutions that will allow crowds safely back into stadia as soon as possible. The Government will continue to work closely with the Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA) and a whole range of sports to understand the latest thinking that might allow spectators to return. This includes the creation of a new Sports Technology Innovation Working Group of sporting bodies and health experts to analyse new technologies which might support this. Spectators will return to stadia when it is safe to do so.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Computers

Jim Shannon:

[102075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) progress and (b) effectiveness of the scheme to provide laptops and other devices to vulnerable and disadvantaged children during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

During the summer term, as part of over £160 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, the Department delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers to children who would not otherwise have access. The programme is thought to have been the biggest and fastest deployment of laptops in the UK - at its peak, 27,000 laptops were delivered through a fleet of couriers in a single day.

The laptops and tablets were an injection of support to help local authorities and academy trusts to provide access to education and social care during the COVID-19 restriction period. Data on how many devices were delivered to local authorities and academy trusts can be viewed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Devices_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf.

The Department is now supplementing this support by making 250,000 additional laptops and tablets available in the event that face to face schooling is disrupted as a result of local COVID-19 restrictions and children become reliant on remote education.

Robert Halfon:

[103485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of children in England without a laptop or tablet.

Robert Halfon:

[103486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, by what date his Department completed distribution of all laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to eligible pupils during the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Halfon:

[103487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops, tablets and 4G routers the Government has distributed to eligible pupils during the coronavirus outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has already delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers to disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have had online access, as part of over £160 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care.

The Department is now supplementing this support by making an additional 250,000 laptops and tablets available in the event that face-to-face schooling is disrupted as a result of local COVID-19 restrictions and children become reliant on remote education. We are also working with the major telecommunications companies to improve internet connectivity for disadvantaged and vulnerable families who rely on a mobile internet connection.

The laptops and tablets are an injection of support to help local authorities and academy trusts to provide access to remote education and online social care services during the COVID-19 restriction period.

The Department arrived at an allocated number of devices by estimating how many pupils are without access to a device. The Department did this by combining data on the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals in each school, with an assumption that some pupils' needs will be met by the devices provided by the schools. The Department used the BESA ICT 2019 survey data on the average number of laptops and tablets in primary and secondary schools and assumed that these are distributed between teachers and pupils.

The Department has published data about the delivery of laptops and tablets, which can be viewed here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/laptops and tablets and 4G wireless routers progress data as of 27 August 2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/laptops_and_tablets_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf).

■ **Children: Day Care**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[102908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that key workers are able to access childcare throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 September 2020 to Question [95158](#).

■ Education: Equal Pay

Colleen Fletcher:

[102097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of gender-based pay inequality in the education sector.

Nick Gibb:

The Office for National Statistics' latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2019 provisional data shows that the median pay gap in the UK between male and female teaching and education professionals is 7.5%.

'Teaching and education professionals' includes teaching staff across early years, schools, further education and higher education.

The Department is committed to tackling inequalities across the education sector. In October 2018 we published our statement of intent which sets out the Department's commitment to promoting a diverse teaching workforce, the importance of addressing the gender pay gap and supporting women to progress in the workplace.

■ Extended Services: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[102909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the availability of wraparound childcare for the children of key workers.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and so does not routinely collect data on the number of providers in operation.

However, as of 4 July, wraparound care providers and other providers of out-of-school activities to children have been able to open, both on or away from school premises, with protective measures in place. We have published further updated guidance for providers who run before and after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school settings for children on the protective measures that should be put in place to ensure they are operating as safely as possible. This is to also ensure that with the introduction of our new local COVID-19 alert levels, that wraparound childcare is able to remain open to support parents, and in particular key workers, to continue to work. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Limitations on childcare will be a last resort, and we will ensure that priority is given to vulnerable children and young people and children of critical workers for this provision in all cases.

We also know that many schools operate their own breakfast and after school clubs, and they should be working to resume this provision, if they have not already. As part of our guidance to schools on full opening, we have provided schools with guidance

to support them in reopening this valuable provision. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#wraparound-provision-and-extra-curricular-activity>.

In addition, our Regional Education and Children's Teams, comprising education and social care staff from both the department and Ofsted, are working closely with local authorities, and will act as a valuable source of intelligence on the sufficiency of wraparound childcare places in local areas.

■ Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [104122]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to review the guidance for overnight residential trips in outdoor education centres for regions with low rates of covid-19 infections.

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [104123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to review the guidance for overnight residential trips in outdoor education centres that are covid-safe and can accommodate class bubbles.

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [104124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the ongoing closure of outdoor education centres on children's physical and mental health.

Ms Nusrat Ghani: [104125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on additional support for the outdoor education sector in (a) East Sussex and (b) Wealden.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's educational visits advice is in line with guidance from Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and will be reviewed again in November 2020. The advice can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

The Department continues to work with representatives of the tour industry, devolved administrations, trade unions and other government departments as it works towards the November review.

The Government has made available to UK businesses a number of support measures and more information on business support can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>. The Government has also recently announced the Job Support Scheme, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/job-support-scheme>.

■ Remote Education : Coronavirus

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[104083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of children without access to an internet enabled device enabling them to participate in remote education.

Nick Gibb:

It is vital that pupils have access to high quality and consistent remote education. The Government believes that through the hard work of teachers and staff, pupils will continue to receive the education they deserve, whatever the circumstances.

As part of over £160 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, the Department has already provided over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers, during the summer term, for disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have access.

These devices are owned by schools, academy trusts and local authorities who can lend these to disadvantaged children and young people who need them most. We are now supplementing this support by making an additional 250,000 laptops and tablets available this term to support disadvantaged children who may experience disruption to face-to-face education.

The Department estimated the number of disadvantaged pupils without access to a suitable device or the internet using data on pupils eligible for Free School Meals in each school, taking into consideration that some pupils would already have access to a private device or internet connection.

The Department is also working with the major telecommunications companies to improve internet connectivity for disadvantaged and vulnerable families who rely on a mobile internet connection. We are piloting an approach where mobile network operators are providing temporary access to free additional data, offering families more flexibility to access the resources that they need the most. In the pilot, schools, academy trusts, and local authorities identified children who need access to free additional data.

■ Schools: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[101966]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to incentivise schools to install air quality monitors.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[101967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of (a) primary and (b) secondary schools that have air quality monitors installed.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[101972]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to encourage (a) primary and (b) secondary schools to take part in Clean Air Day in future years.

Nick Gibb:

Local authorities are responsible for air quality in their area and must ensure that it meets the standards set in local air quality action plans. If there was concern about the air quality in a school building, it would fall to the body responsible for the school to check that and establish what measures needed to be taken to improve air quality.

In 2018, the Department for Education published Building Bulletin 101 (BB101), which is guidance for school design on ventilation, thermal comfort and indoor air quality. This guidance sets out the World Health Organisation's air quality guidelines and Air Quality Standards Regulation 2010 for indoor air quality. BB101 requires the indoor environment of new or refurbished school buildings to be monitored by recording temperature and levels of carbon dioxide.

The Department is collaborating with other government departments and a number of academic institutions on air quality projects. The findings from these projects will, in due course, inform our guidance and standards for school buildings.

The Department does not hold data on the proportion of primary or secondary schools with air quality monitors installed.

We will be considering with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether and how schools might be encouraged to take part in Clean Air Day in future years.

■ Schools: Assessments

Bill Esterson:

[103493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason schools are being asked to provide assessment data for (a) phonics screening and (b) key stage 1 and 2 statutory tests for academic year 2019-20 when those tests did not take place.

Nick Gibb:

In the light of the COVID-19 outbreak and associated school closures, the Department made the decision to cancel Key Stage 1 and 2 national curriculum assessments in the 2019/20 academic year, including the Phonics Screening Check. The Department has made a firm commitment not to hold schools to account on data based on the 2020 assessments. The Department will not be publishing or sharing institution level data from the 2020 assessments and has advised all those working with schools, such as local authorities, to use the previous year's data when assessing school performance, until new data is available.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[102109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department (a) has and (b) plans to fund the cleaning costs incurred by schools in Wealden (i) to make them covid-19 safe and (ii) regardless of whether those schools have a suspected or confirmed case of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

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

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

Getting all children and young people back into school for the new academic year has been a national priority. As set out in the Department's reopening guidance, schools should use their existing resources when planning to welcome all children back for the autumn. The guidance can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#funding>.

■ Secondary Education: Counselling

Matt Western:

[104151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of secondary schools in England have school based counselling services in place.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington to the answer I gave on 8 October 2020 to [98985](#).

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[102181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children with special educational needs unable to attend school receive the education that they are statutorily entitled to receive during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We now expect the vast majority of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to be back in their education setting and receiving the right support and provision they need.

In a circumstance where a child cannot attend school, including if they need to self-isolate, their teachers are best-placed to know how the pupil's needs can be most effectively met to ensure they continue to make progress even if they are not able to be in school. The requirement for all schools to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' SEND remains in place.

Where a pupil has provision specified within their education, health and care plan, it remains the duty of the local authority and any health bodies to secure the delivery of this in the setting that the plan names. However, in a situation where this is difficult to do so, including where a child or young person is self-isolating, the decisions on how provision can be delivered should be informed by relevant considerations. These considerations include the types of services that the pupil can access remotely, such as online teaching and remote sessions with different types of therapists. These decisions should be considered on a case by case basis, avoiding a one size fits all approach.

Additionally, the department published a temporary continuity direction on 1 October, which makes it clear that schools have a legal duty to provide remote education for all state-funded, school-aged children who are unable to attend school due to COVID-19 in line with guidance and the law. This will come into effect from 22 October and more details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-temporary-continuity-direction-explanatory-note>.

Alongside the Direction, we also published a further remote education support package which is designed to help schools and colleges build on and deliver their existing plans in the event that individuals or groups of pupils, including those with SEND, are unable to attend school because of COVID-19, in line with guidance and the law. This adds to existing support, including resources available from Oak National Academy which includes specialist content for pupils with SEND.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson:

[102703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on steps the Government is taking to limit the spread of covid-19 on university campus grounds.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has regular discussions on minimising the transmission of COVID-19 within higher education (HE) providers with his Cabinet colleagues, including with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Departmental officials and I have regular meetings and discussions with ministers and officials in the Department for Health and Social Care, and with sector representatives, on a range of measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The safety and wellbeing of staff and students in HE is always our priority. The government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to those working and studying in our HE institutions in this unprecedented situation, whilst mitigating the impact on education.

We have drawn on the expertise of the HE taskforce that we set up, and we have been providing robust public health advice and regular updates to the HE sector to help providers to plan carefully to keep students and staff as safe as possible. We issued updated guidance for providers on reopening campuses, which provides advice on teaching, accommodation and student services. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

Our system of HE tiers, as set out in guidance, intends to help universities identify the appropriate restrictions to impose on their educational provision in response to an outbreak. We have worked to ensure that all universities have outbreak plans. These plans have been shared with local Directors of Public Health and continue to be reviewed and updated based on emerging lessons and local situations.

The plans cover a range of scenarios and will ensure that HE providers are prepared to respond quickly to an outbreak in their educational setting or wider community. We are working with Public Health England to monitor those universities that have outbreaks and to make sure that universities and Directors of Public Health are working together to respond appropriately to any outbreaks.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[102867]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to students who are (a) care leavers and (b) estranged from their families during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

I wrote to universities and other higher education (HE) providers on 20 March, at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, to highlight the vulnerability of care leavers and estranged students, and asked them to prioritise these groups for additional support.

Last month, I met with a group of 12 care leavers and estranged students to formally discuss the issues that they face in both entering and succeeding in HE. Following that discussion, I asked officials to make sure that the end-of-term Christmas

guidance, which will be published shortly, pays particular attention to the needs of vulnerable students.

The government has worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to help clarify that HE providers can draw upon existing funding to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. Providers were able to use the OfS's Student Premium funding worth around £23 million per month for April to July this year and £256 million for the academic year 2020/21, starting from August, towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of mental health support.

The government also invested over £100 million to help provide laptops and devices for disadvantaged children and young people so they can access education and social care services remotely. As part of this, we have provided devices for care leavers, including those who are studying at university.

Care leavers attending HE courses are treated as independent students when their entitlement to living costs is assessed. This means that, in nearly all cases, they will qualify for the maximum loan for living costs. Care leavers undertaking HE also qualify for a £2,000 HE bursary from their local authority.

Additional bursaries are offered by some HE providers for care leavers, and students estranged from their families.

■ Teachers: Pensions

Alan Brown:

[102114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of suspending the teacher pensions abatement threshold during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

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

Our latest guidance on for schools and other educational settings is set out below:

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

Whilst education is a devolved matter, colleagues at the Scottish Public Pensions Agency have confirmed that, in line with the England and Wales scheme, they will consider the effect of abatement as part of any response to COVID-19 should a need emerge. These are rapidly developing circumstances; we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution: Monitoring**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of air quality monitors.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the cost of high standard air quality monitors in the UK.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce standardisation for air quality monitors.

Rebecca Pow:

Our national air quality monitoring network is subject to continuous review to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and delivers value for money. A number of adjustments were made in a recent review including increases in monitoring for fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. The improvement of our air quality monitoring capability is an ongoing endeavour and we are currently undertaking a strategic review of the network to inform future improvements. Any equipment used in statutory air quality monitoring networks is subject to a certification process to ensure that it meets the required standards for air pollutant measurements as set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 and therefore it is not deemed necessary to legislate further for the standardisation of air quality monitoring.

Regarding the cost of standardised air quality monitors, this is driven by the market. When procuring equipment, officials always work to ensure the best value for money in any monitors procured. Additionally, the approach taken to quantify concentrations of air pollutants across the UK combines modelling with air quality monitoring at the 271 sites across nine national monitoring networks to ensure full coverage of the whole of the UK. The monitoring networks cost the Government approximately £7.5 million each year. Defra is closely following and considering current developments in alternative technologies for the measurement of air pollutants. Based on advice from our independent Air Quality Expert Group, Defra has commissioned work comparing the use of alternative sensor technologies with standard methods, is working with industry to establish performance standards for their use and is testing their real-world application. However, these technologies are not yet mature enough to replace high quality monitors.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to enable local authorities to monitor air quality in their areas.

Rebecca Pow:

The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime requires that local authorities review and assess air quality in their area. When a local authority assesses that air quality objectives may be exceeded, they should carry out some additional air quality monitoring.

Defra provides technical and policy guidance to local authorities to assist them in meeting these LAQM responsibilities. Defra also provides technical support to local authorities via a dedicated local air quality management Helpdesk (phone, email and webpage) and calculation tools to support local authorities in their monitoring and modelling efforts to ensure a consistent approach.

■ Countryside Stewardship Scheme**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[102847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) changes he plans to make to and (b) estimate he has made of the level of participation in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme from 2022.

Victoria Prentis:

Uptake of the latest round of Countryside Stewardship (CS) has been encouraging and Defra has committed to offering a further round of CS in 2022.

CS is a proven mechanism for delivering environmental outcomes. The 2022 CS offer will remain familiar to farmers and land managers, but with improvements. This includes making it easier and simpler to apply, making modest changes to keep the scheme relevant to current environmental priorities and providing flexibility for customers to move to the new Environmental Land Management scheme, when it is rolled out. We will make more details available in due course.

■ Electronic Training Aids**Scott Mann:**[\[102125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to research published by the University of Lincoln in August 2020 that concludes reward-based training methods are more effective and carry less risk to the animal's wellbeing to electric shocks, what plans he has to bring forward proposals to ban remote controlled electronic shock collars.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government remains committed to banning the use of remote controlled hand-held electronic training collars (e-collars) for dogs and cats in England. We will introduce the necessary legislation to implement the ban as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[102844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it is his policy to launch the Environmental Land Management scheme national pilot and (a) finalised scheme guidance, (b) payment rates, (c) options/standards and (d) a defined application process and control and verification protocol in early 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

We are investing in a three-year National Pilot which will begin in 2021 and will run for three years ahead of the full scheme rollout. We are working to ensure that Phase 1 of the National Pilot will begin on the ground from late 2021.

The National Pilot will test our proposed approaches to ELM and underlying scheme mechanics, including land management options, payment rates, guidance, application and agreement process, and risk-based compliance and improvement. Building on the findings emerging from Tests and Trials, the Pilot will test how these components operate together in the context of farmers and land managers applying them in real situations. The aim is to learn with National Pilot participants in order to improve these components as the Pilot progresses to ensure that the scheme is in the best possible place ahead of the full launch in 2024.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[102846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it is his policy that (a) the Environmental Land Management scheme and (b) transitional land management schemes will fund only practices that are higher than existing regulatory and cross-compliance standards and business as usual practice.

Victoria Prentis:

All farmers and land managers are expected to comply with all relevant regulation whether or not they are participating in the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. The ELM will run alongside an effective regulatory regime to ensure legal regulatory requirements are met. This is the same for any transitional schemes.

The ELM is founded on the principle of paying “public money for public goods” to help achieve the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and will therefore not simply pay for compliance with legal regulatory standards.

We are working closely with a range of environmental and agricultural stakeholders to collaboratively design the new ELM scheme, including to determine exactly what the ELM will pay for.

■ Fireworks: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[101965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the celebrations on the 5th of November on air quality.

Rebecca Pow:

An assessment of the effect of celebrations surrounding Bonfire Night (5 November) on air quality is made annually as part of the Air Pollution in the UK report. The assessment is based on measurements from the national monitoring network which monitors concentrations of air pollutants in near real-time on the UK-AIR website. The latest report (for 2019) can be accessed at the following URL: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/annualreport/index>. In the latest report, the effects of Bonfire Night celebrations are dealt with under section 6.1.3 Localised Particulate Pollution Episodes (pages 106 – 108).

■ Flood Control: Bosworth**Dr Luke Evans:****[102187]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the robustness of flood defences in Bosworth following the 2019 floods; and what steps he is taking to prevent further flooding in advance of autumn and winter 2020-21 in Bosworth.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) is not aware of any fluvial (river) flood event that impacted Bosworth in 2019. There is a flood storage area in the district of Bosworth that requires routine low key maintenance.

Looking ahead to autumn and winter 2020-21, the Environment Agency is continuing to deliver its annual routine maintenance programme to ensure any blockages or debris that may cause an increase in flood risk are managed and Leicestershire is ready should flooding occur.

Across England, the Environment Agency works with Councils and other partners to prepare for, manage, and recover from flood incidents. The Environment Agency shares information, forecasts and advice with partners via daily telephone conferences and email communications during flood events – with all partners working together collectively under the banner of a Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to respond.

The Environment Agency provides a Flood Warning Service, to help residents prepare for potential flooding. Residents can visit www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings or call 0345 988 1188 to sign up to get Flood Alerts and Warnings by phone, email and/or text message. This is a free service. Alternatively they can contact Flood Resilience Engagement Advisors Floodresilience@environment-agency.gov.uk

Operationally, the Environment Agency is the lead authority for managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries and the sea, as well as being a coastal erosion risk management authority. County Councils act as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and have the 'lead' role in managing flood risk from surface water including from most highways and roads, groundwater and ordinary

watercourses. Furthermore, the local water company may be able to provide information on local flood risk associated with the sewage network.

■ Fly-tipping

Aaron Bell:

[102197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle the illegal dumping of waste.

Rebecca Pow:

The illegal dumping of waste, including fly-tipping, is an unacceptable blight on local communities and the environment. The government is committed to cracking down on the waste and carelessness that destroys our natural environment and kills marine life. We are also committed to increasing the penalties for fly-tipping.

Over the last five years we have strengthened and expanded the powers available to tackle the illegal dumping of waste. Local authorities have the power to issue fixed penalty notices of up to £400 to those caught fly-tipping or to householders who pass their waste to a fly-tipper. Vehicles of those suspected of committing a waste crime, including illegal dumping, can be searched and seized.

Those accused of illegal dumping can be prosecuted and, on conviction, can face a fine, up to 12 months imprisonment, or both in a Magistrates Court; or a fine, up to 5 years imprisonment, or both, in a Crown Court. Local authorities carried out a total of 2,397 prosecutions for fly-tipping offences in England in 2018/19, an increase of 7% on 2017/18. The value of total fines increased by 29% to £1,090,000 compared to 2017/18.

We have invested £60 million in the Environment Agency's waste crime enforcement work since 2014. This year's Budget committed the government to investing £7.2 million in the development of electronic waste tracking, as well as £0.5 million in 2020/21 to support innovative approaches to tackling fly-tipping.

In the Resources and Waste Strategy we committed to reforming the regulation of waste carriers, tightening up the regulation of the waste exemptions regime and improving intelligence sharing and joint working between enforcement agencies. The Joint Unit for Waste Crime, led by the Environment Agency and including the National Crime Agency, HMRC, the Police and others, was established earlier this year and has already had a number of operational successes.

The Environment Bill includes a number of measures to help tackle waste crime. It will enable Government to mandate the use of electronic waste tracking; simplify the process for enforcement authorities to enter premises under a warrant; introduce a new power to search for and seize evidence of waste crime; and reduce the cost and bureaucracy when the police seize vehicles involved in waste crime on behalf of the Environment Agency.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[103620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ban destructive industrial fishing in marine protected areas.

Victoria Prentis:

Marine protection is a devolved matter and the information below relates to England only.

Good progress has been made for Marine Protected Areas in the inshore area. Over 90 have byelaws in place to prevent activities such as trawling which could damage protected features on the seabed. The Common Fisheries Policy has inhibited our ability to protect offshore areas. At the end of the Transition Period, we will use new powers contained in the Fisheries Bill to put byelaws in place as we have done in the inshore environment. A Call for Evidence for the first sites will be launched shortly, followed by the formal consultation in early 2021.

The MMO will monitor the activity of fishing boats to ensure compliance with protection measures. Not all fishing activities within Marine Protected Areas will require management, only those likely to damage the habitats and species they were set up to protect.

When the transition period ends, the UK will be able to decide which vessels can access our waters and the new licensing framework within the Fisheries Bill will allow us to apply conditions to the activities of all vessels fishing in UK waters. Any vessels granted access to fish in our waters, regardless of nationality, will need to abide by UK rules including those on sustainability.

■ NHS: Health Hazards

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[104112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of poor air quality on the level of demand on the NHS.

Rebecca Pow:

Air pollution poses the biggest environmental threat to public health. Improving air quality remains a top priority for the government, with Defra and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) working closely together on this issue. The scientific evidence base continues to evolve, and our understanding of the range and scale of health effects associated with air pollution is constantly improving. Public Health England has assessed in a 2018 report^[1] that the cumulative costs to the health and social care service from air pollution will be £5.3 billion by 2035, and their evidence shows that a reduction of 1 µg/m³ of PM_{2.5} in England in a single year would prevent 9,000 cases of asthma, 50,000 cases of coronary heart disease, 4000 lung cancers and 15,000 strokes till 2035.

The two departments regularly engage at all levels. Earlier in the year the Chief Medical Officer and Government Chief Scientist held a roundtable on indoor air quality with various government departments, including DHSC and Defra. During this productive meeting there was acknowledgment of the evidence gaps and recognition of the need for a cross-government approach to address the issue. More recently Minister Pow attended a Health Summit organised as part of Clean Air Day, which brought together air quality experts, NHS and WHO representatives. Defra will continue to have regular and extensive discussions with DHSC, the research community and the NHS, on the relationship between air quality and health.

We are committed to tackling air pollution in order to improve public health and the environment. This is stated in Clean Air Strategy of 2019, which the WHO lauded as world leading. We are also introducing the first Environment Bill in 20 years, and in it we are committing to ambitious new air quality targets on PM_{2.5}, the pollutant of greatest harm to human health.

[1]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836720/Estimation_of_costs_to_the_NHS_and_social_care_due_to_the_health_impacts_of_air_pollution.pdf

■ Organic Food: Japan

Emily Thornberry:

[103462]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether an Organic Equivalence Arrangement will be in place with Japan before the end of the transition period.

Emily Thornberry:

[103463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress the Government is making on negotiations to secure an Organic Equivalence Arrangement with Japan.

Victoria Prentis:

Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) wrote to Defra on 19 December 2019 to confirm that Japan would continue to recognise UK organic products imported into Japan from the point at which the UK withdrew from the European Union. This recognition is effective for two years until 31 January 2022.

We have already confirmed that we will continue to recognise Japan's organic products as we do now. We plan to write to MAFF shortly to confirm the legislation that will be in place in the UK at the end of the transition period and to confirm the import processes that they will need to follow to continue to export organic products to the UK.

Japan has also requested to audit the UK organic system in 2021. Defra have suggested some dates and we will continue to engage with MAFF over the coming months.

■ Pesticides

Gareth Thomas:

[\[103419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to restrict the use of pesticides by farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

A strict system is in place in the UK for regulating pesticides to ensure that they will not harm people or pose unacceptable risks to the environment. A pesticide may only be placed on the market if the product has been authorised by our expert regulator, the Health and Safety Executive, following a thorough risk assessment. Pesticides that pose unacceptable risks are not authorised.

This strict, science-based regulation is supplemented with policies to encourage safe and minimal use. The 25 Year Environment Plan promotes reducing reliance on chemical methods of pest control over time. Our approach to this will be set out in the revised National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides which we will be consulting on later in the year. Encouraging the development and uptake of Integrated Pest Management, which is about designing farming systems to minimise the need for pesticides and to make use of alternative approaches, is central to the Plan.

■ Plastics: Recycling

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[104111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of systems for recycling plastics.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK continues to be a global leader in tackling plastic waste, and our ambition is to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. Our landmark Resources and Waste Strategy sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a more circular economy.

Following support in our 2019 consultation on 'Consistency in household and business recycling collections in England,' we will introduce legislation through the Environment Bill that will require a core set of recyclable materials, including plastics, to be collected from households and businesses by all waste collectors in England.

We will also introduce measures to encourage producers to use plastic packaging that can be recycled through reforms of Extended Producer Responsibility and the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, including plastic bottles.

We encourage the development of infrastructure for plastic reprocessing to ensure the UK meets its recycling targets as well as supporting the major waste reforms. The plastic packaging tax is expected to increase demand for secondary material plastic and increasing reprocessing infrastructure will help meet this demand. Reprocessing

infrastructure enables the value of resource use to be maximised as well as waste arisings and its impact on the environment to be minimised.

■ **Sheep: Dartmoor National Park**

Luke Pollard:

[\[102925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what consultation (a) his Department and (b) Natural England have carried out with Dartmoor commoner farmers on the decision of Natural England to remove sheep from upland areas in Dartmoor.

Victoria Prentis:

There has been no decision by any part of Government to remove sheep from upland areas on Dartmoor.

Okehampton Common is part of the North Dartmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest and Dartmoor Special Area of Conservation, and subject to an agreement for making environmental improvements. Surveys in 2018 and 2019 showed current grazing levels are impacting the special habitats. Natural England is currently working with the commoners on Okehampton Common to explore potential adjustments to grazing levels to reverse the damage and meet the environmental outcomes required by the scheme.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Africa: Offences against Children**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding he has allocated to programmes to (a) support the education of and (b) prevent violence against children in (i) Ethiopia, (ii) Ghana, (iii) Kenya, (iv) the Democratic Republic of Congo, (v) Mozambique, (vi) Nepal, (vii) Nigeria, (viii) Rwanda, (ix) Sierra Leone, (x) Tanzania, (xi) Uganda, (xii) Zambia and (xiii) Zimbabwe in the last three years.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has allocated the following funding directly to education:

UK Bilateral Education ODA Spend (excluding post-secondary)

£ millions

	2017	2018	2019
	Total UK	Total UK	Total UK
Congo, Dem. Rep.	9.2	9.9	4.8
Ethiopia	4.6	18.0	24.5

	2017	2018	2019
Ghana	7.3	5.9	7.5
Kenya	1.3	0.5	1.0
Mozambique	2.7	2.8	3.4
Nepal	1.1	1.0	0.9
Nigeria	31.1	25.6	26.3
Rwanda	8.8	18.5	10.8
Sierra Leone	12.4	10.6	9.6
Tanzania	28.1	26.6	21.2
Uganda	2.3	7.4	8.5
Zambia	1.6	0.5	0.3
Zimbabwe	13.8	15.5	5.2

Source: Final Statistics for International Development 2019 (SID)

~ is less than half the smallest unit displayed

Note 1: values exclude the OECD DAC "Post-secondary education" broad sector

Note 2: values include the OECD DAC "Education, Level Unspecified" broad sector, which may cross-cut all tiers of education

FCDO provides significant support to protect children from violence in developing countries, with child protection interventions embedded across our development and humanitarian programming. There are currently no markers within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) database that allow for the systematic identification and tracking of all spending on violence against children. FCDO will consider engaging with the OECD about how this might be tracked via Official Development Assistance Statistics in the future.

■ China: Detainees

Afzal Khan:

[\[104185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on returning the twelve Hong Kong youths detained in China to Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

We have raised our concerns about these cases with the Chinese authorities in Hong Kong. It is essential that due process is followed. The UK remains fully committed to

upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and assembly, which are guaranteed under the Joint Declaration.

■ **China: Uighurs**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he has taken to counter disinformation on the existence of detention camps in Xinjiang province in China.

Nigel Adams:

We work with our international partners to bring attention to the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the existence of detention camps throughout the region. The Foreign Secretary, and the FCDO's diplomatic network, consistently raise our concerns in detail with a wide range of countries. Most recently, on 6 October, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York expressing deep concern at the situation in Xinjiang, including the mass detention of Uyghurs in detention camps. We also fund third-party research to raise awareness of the human rights violations taking place in the region.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[103464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the spread of disinformation in international media concerning the existence of concentration camps in the Xinjiang province of the People's Republic of China.

Nigel Adams:

We work with our international partners to bring attention to the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the existence of detention camps in the region. The Foreign Secretary, and the FCDO's diplomatic network, consistently raise our concerns in detail with a wide range of countries. Most recently, on 6 October, the UK and 38 other countries joined a statement at the UN Third Committee in New York. We also fund third-party research to raise awareness of the human rights violations taking place in the region.

■ **EU External Relations: Falkland Islands**

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[102012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to develop the Falkland Islands' future relationship with the EU.

Wendy Morton:

We are in regular contact with the political leaders of the Falkland Islands to discuss the Islands' international interests, and to identify how best the UK Government can represent these with the EU and elsewhere.

■ Gulf Strategy Unit**David Linden:****[103609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the cost has been of the Gulf Strategy Integrated Delivery Team (IDT) by financial year from 2019-20; what the budget is for the IDT for the financial year 2020-21; and how many full-time and part-time military and civilian individuals are employed on that team.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: The cost of Integrated Delivery Team (IDT) in 2019/20 was £309,000. The IDT has now been disbanded and the residual costs for FY20/21 were £34,145.

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review: Children**Yasmin Qureshi:****[102019]**

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

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is committed to protecting vulnerable children and helping them to grow up free from violence. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) plays a leading global role in efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 to end the violence, abuse and exploitation of children. Tackling violence against girls in particular is central to the Prime Minister's commitment to champion 12 years of quality education for every girl.

The Integrated Review and the creation of the FCDO are evidence of the Prime Minister's commitment to a unified British foreign policy that will maximise our influence around the world, ensuring the UK is a force for good in the world. Our aim continues to be for an ambitious and bold Integrated Review that is guided by the UK's foreign policy, national security and development objectives. The Integrated Review will conclude alongside the Spending Review in the Autumn and inform the priorities of FCDO.

Yasmin Qureshi:**[102022]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy on funding for protection of vulnerable children overseas.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is committed to protecting vulnerable children and helping them to grow up free from violence. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) plays a leading global role in efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 to end the violence, abuse and exploitation of children. Tackling violence

against girls in particular is central to the Prime Minister's commitment to champion 12 years of quality education for every girl.

The Integrated Review and the creation of the FCDO are evidence of the Prime Minister's commitment to a unified British foreign policy that will maximise our influence around the world, ensuring the UK is a force for good in the world. Our aim continues to be for an ambitious and bold Integrated Review that is guided by the UK's foreign policy, national security and development objectives. The Integrated Review will conclude alongside the Spending Review in the Autumn and inform the priorities of FCDO.

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

Yasmin Qureshi:

[102021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to ensure that his Department continues to prioritise the prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse of girls after the conclusion of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a global leader in efforts to eliminate violence, exploitation and abuse of girls in all its forms and remains unwavering in our defence of women's and girls' right to live free from violence. The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the need for urgent, scaled-up action on gender-based violence (GBV). Ending child marriage will remain a key focus, including as part of our work to deliver the Prime Minister's commitment to champion 12 years of quality education for girls. FCDO's world-leading £50 million UK aid package to tackle FGM across the most-affected countries in Africa is the biggest single donor investment worldwide to date, and will run until 2025.

In September 2020, FCDO launched the tender for our new £67.5 million programme to scale up effective interventions to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) across development and humanitarian contexts, and to continue expanding the evidence base as a global public good. This is the largest investment by any donor government in programming and research to prevent VAWG globally. The UK has also taken up leadership of the new Global Action Coalition on GBV. We will take an evidence-based approach that prioritises the most marginalised and excluded women and girls, with a particular focus on adolescent girls. Safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the aid sector also remains a priority. Last month the Government published a safeguarding strategy covering all UK aid spend which builds on commitments made at the 2018 London Safeguarding Summit.

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review: Slavery**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[102020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy on the Government's policy to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking.

Nigel Adams:

The Integrated Review will cover all aspects of international and national security policy, such as defence, diplomacy, development and national resilience. The UK Government is committed to the eradication of all forms of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking worldwide by 2030 as set out in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7. Building on the 2017 Call to Action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, which has now been endorsed by 92 countries, the UK jointly launched the 'Principles to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains' with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand at the UN General Assembly in September 2018. These Principles commit governments to implementing a range of measures that help address modern slavery in global supply chains. We will continue to work alongside regional partners to drive international action and target our efforts around specific themes of the Call to Action encouraging member states who have endorsed to report on tangible action that has been taken as a result. We will also continue to look for opportunities to deliver on modern slavery objectives, and encourage political commitment and actions to make progress on SDG 8.7. Ending forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking will remain a core part of the Government's mission and remain a priority for the new FCDO.

■ John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief**Fiona Bruce:**[\[104086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the titles are of the 15 projects funded through the John Bunyan fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Fiona Bruce:[\[104087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the reporting requirements and accountability mechanisms are for projects funded from the John Bunyan fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Nigel Adams:

In August 2019, we launched the John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion or Belief. This is a designated funding stream. Last financial year we funded 15 research projects which cover the challenges faced by different communities, such as Christians, Yazidis and Humanists, as well as cross-cutting issues such as migration and the double vulnerability experienced by women from minority faith backgrounds. The research projects have provided the Government, and the wider international community, with more granular recommendations on how we might tackle the

problem of persecution as it affects particular countries or groups. The titles of the 15 projects have not been published for sensitivity reasons, but we can confirm that the FCDO supported research projects in a diverse range of geographic regions, including Asia, the Middle East and Africa. All projects have reported back in line with FCDO agreed project management processes.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[104088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the John Bunyan fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief remains unallocated.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[104089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £1 million Magna Carta fund for freedom of religion and belief projects remains unallocated.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[104090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding has been allocated to each of the 15 projects funded through the John Bunyan fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Nigel Adams:

Over the past two financial years (2018 - 19 and 2019 - 20), we allocated £1m to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) projects via the Magna Carta Fund. FoRB policy programming is now done through the John Bunyan Fund. This financial year, we have allocated less than before across human rights programmes because of delays as a result of COVID-19. This reduced amount also reflects the shorter delivery period for the remainder of this financial year. £100,000 has been allocated this financial year through the John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion or Belief. None of this funding remains unallocated. Last financial year, the 15 research projects received around £140,000 in total.

■ Lebanon: Weapons

Mr Jonathan Djanogly:

[\[102695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that Hezbollah is storing weapons in civilian areas in Beirut.

James Cleverly:

We have long been concerned by Hizballah's stockpiling of weapons within Lebanon, in contravention of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs). We regularly raise this at the UN Security Council, and we call on the Lebanese authorities to abide by provisions of the relevant UNSCRs. Hizballah's destabilising influence threatens regional stability and endangers Lebanon and its people.

■ Libya: IRA**Greg Clark:**[\[104076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has now considered the report of William Shawcross on Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and other ministers across Government need to carefully consider the internal scoping report that Mr Shawcross has produced in order to do justice to the important and sensitive issues it covers. This has been challenging while the Government's main effort has focused on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it remains a priority.

■ Malnutrition: Children**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[102188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle global child malnutrition during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

Prevention and treatment of malnutrition remains a priority for the UK as part of our commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children, particularly as malnourished people are likely to be more severely affected by COVID-19. The wider impacts of COVID-19 are also predicted to increase malnutrition across Africa and Asia in particular.

The Foreign Secretary has appointed the UK's first Special Envoy on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs to make sure malnutrition is averted in countries where food insecurity, conflict and COVID-19 have increased risk. FCDO is continuing to deliver programmes to address malnutrition in countries such as Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan and Ethiopia. We are also supporting UNICEF to maintain provision of treatment for child wasting and to adapt relevant services in light of the pandemic.

■ Musicians: Free Movement of People**Paul Blomfield:**[\[102058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what his Department's negotiating policy is on rights for UK-based musicians to tour in EU countries after the end of the transition period.

Wendy Morton:

The Government recognises the importance of touring for UK musicians. For short stays of up to 90 days in any 180 day period, the EU has legislated such that UK nationals will not need a visa when travelling to and within the Schengen Area when performing a limited range of activities (e.g. attending cultural or sports events,

business meetings, tourism). Member States have discretion to add activities to this list and UK nationals should check before travelling. For all travel involving work/long-term service provision, a visa and/or work permit may be needed.

As part of the Free Trade Agreement negotiations, we are seeking a reciprocal agreement with the EU on the type of business visitor activities both sides will commit to allowing, to provide long-term certainty for UK and EU travellers.

■ Offences against Children

Yasmin Qureshi:

[102016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to eliminate (a) violence against and (b)(i) the exploitation and (ii) abuse of children.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is committed to protecting vulnerable children through our programmes and our international leadership. The UK is a founding Board member of, and the largest donor to, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (End Violence) which is driving the international movement to deliver Sustainable Development Goal 16.2. Through FCDO's Ending Violence, Abuse and Exploitation of Children programme, we provide £10 million to End Violence, including to deliver the Safe to Learn initiative to end violence in schools, and £10 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, and exploitation of children on the move in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan. FCDO also supports a range of child protection programmes and interventions in developing countries, embedded across our development and humanitarian programming.

The UK is a global leader in efforts to eliminate Child, Early and Forced Marriage, including as part of our work to deliver the Prime Minister's commitment to champion 12 years of quality education for girls. We will continue to promote the need for progress on a wide range of issues that hold girls back from accessing a quality education and achieving their potential. This must include global efforts to end child marriage and all forms of violence against girls and women.

■ Overseas Aid: Education

Yasmin Qureshi:

[102017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of departmental funding for education in emergencies and protracted crises he allocates to ensuring that children are safe from violence and exploitation and able to attend school.

Wendy Morton:

Reaching the world's most marginalised children is critical to global progress towards SDG4, and the UK is dedicated to supporting education in emergencies and protracted crises (EiEPC). We allocate over 50% of UK aid education funds to fragile

and conflict affected states (FCAS). At a global level, the UK is the largest donor to Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the fund for education in emergencies.

All of our EiEPC funding aims to ensure that children are safe from violence and exploitation, and able to access education: we know that in emergency settings the protective element of education is as crucial as access to learning opportunities (whether inside or beyond formal schooling). Our unprecedented contribution to ECW (£90 million from 2019 to 2023), for instance, provides children safe spaces to learn and prepares teachers to provide psycho-social support in classrooms to help children recover from trauma.

■ Overseas Aid: Poverty

Jim Shannon:

[\[102078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the use of Official Development Assistance funding is (a) transparent and (b) for the primary purpose of tackling poverty.

James Cleverly:

The UK's work to reduce poverty will remain central to the new department's mission and we will continue to be guided by our responsibilities under the International Development Act.

We are committed to transparency. HM Treasury will publish revised Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations for 2020/21, and the UK's Statistics on International Development, published next year, will provide a detailed breakdown of our ODA spend in 2020.

■ Palestinians: Schools

Anna McMorrin:

[\[104173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken steps to help prevent the demolition of the Palestinian school in Ras Al Tin on the West Bank.

James Cleverly:

The UK is seriously concerned by the possible demolition of a Palestinian school in Ras Al-Tin by Israeli authorities. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised our concern with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. Officials also visited the school on 16 October. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We recognise that Palestinians face severe difficulty in securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure in East Jerusalem and Area C. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

Anna McMorris:

[\[104175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the demolition of UK aid-funded schools and other social and humanitarian service projects by Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza; and what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Israeli Government on that demolition.

James Cleverly:

The UK is concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property, including schools, by Israeli authorities. In a joint statement on 16 October, the UK, alongside France, Germany, Spain and Italy, urged Israel to halt its policy of evictions and demolitions of Palestinian structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv also raised this issue with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. We keep the case for compensation under review but the UK is focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The right to education is a basic right, and it is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities for the next generation. This is why the UK is committed to providing support to education workers in the West Bank, and UNRWA education in the West Bank and Gaza.

■ **Poverty: Overseas Aid**

Jim Shannon:

[\[102077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to ensure that Official Development Assistance spend by his Department prioritises poverty reduction.

James Cleverly:

Ministers are fully committed to prioritising poverty reduction, and its drivers. By way of reassurance, this year's necessary reduction in ODA spending protected work on 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, ensuring that the UK is a global force for good. We also sought to protect the UK's science and research and development base.

■ **West Bank: Foreign Aid**

Anna McMorris:

[\[104174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with (a) EU and (b) West Bank Protection Consortium members on (i) deducting funds from EU-Israel bilateral support and (ii) securing other compensation for demolished projects and seized aid in the West Bank.

James Cleverly:

The UK is concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian structures by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We have made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The UK is focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place through our legal aid programme, which supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The UK and international partners will continue to call bilaterally, and in international fora, for Israel to cease demolitions and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C. No funds have been deducted from EU-Israel bilateral support. We have consulted a number of EU and West Bank Protection Consortium partners on the issue of compensation. They share our concerns. We are keeping the case for compensation under review.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion: Disability****Carla Lockhart:**[\[96229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the definition of seriously handicapped in Ground E of the Statutory Grounds for Abortion.

Helen Whately:

There is no official definition of seriously handicapped. In 1990, when the grounds for abortion were amended, Parliament agreed that doctors were best placed to make these decisions with the woman and her family. It is for Parliament to decide the circumstances under which abortions should take place.

■ Alcoholism: Rehabilitation**Paul Bristow:**[\[103640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps Clinical Commissioning Groups has taken to challenge abstinence-only approaches to alcoholism by GPs.

Paul Bristow:[\[103641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Clinical Commissioning Groups are encouraging GPs to identify heavy drinkers who would potentially benefit from a prescription for nalmefene in addition to psychosocial support.

Jo Churchill:

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance describe best practice and health and care commissioners are expected to take them fully into account. Current guidelines for general practitioners and other health professionals to identify, assess

and intervene for people misusing alcohol are available and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg115/chapter/1-guidance>

Staff responsible for assessing and managing assisted alcohol withdrawal should be competent in the diagnosis and assessment of alcohol dependence and withdrawal symptoms and the use of drug regimens appropriate to the settings (for example, inpatient or community) in which the withdrawal is managed.

The Government has taken a robust approach to tackling alcohol harms. Between 2016 and 2020/21 we are investing more than £16 billion in local government public health services. In 2019/20 over £3 billion is to be used exclusively on public health including alcohol treatment services.

Paul Bristow:

[103642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NICE Implementation Collaborative report, Supporting local implementation of NICE Technology Appraisal 325 on reducing alcohol consumption in adults with alcohol dependence, what progress his Department has made on implementing guidance on (a) encouraging the prescription of nalmefene and (b) reducing complexity in the provision of alcohol-treatment services within the NHS.

Paul Bristow:

[103643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NICE Guidance CG115 will be updated to reflect studies that conclude that naltrexone is (a) effective at reducing alcohol use and heavy drinking and (b) less effective at maintaining abstinence.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England is working with the Department and the devolved administrations to develop comprehensive United Kingdom guidelines for the clinical management of harmful drinking and alcohol dependence. The guidelines are due to be published in 2021.

The aim of the guidelines is to develop a clear consensus on good practice and help services to implement interventions for alcohol use disorders that are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). More information on the development of the guidelines can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-alcohol-clinical-guidelines-development-begins>

NICE undertook a surveillance review of its guideline on alcohol-use disorders: diagnosis, assessment and management of harmful drinking (high-risk drinking) and alcohol dependence [CG115] in July 2019, and the decision was made to not update the guideline. While the review found several studies on naltrexone, NICE considered that the new evidence was unlikely to change the current guideline recommendations. Unless presented with new evidence, NICE has no immediate plans to review CG115.

■ Antenatal Care: Coronavirus**Abena Oppong-Asare:****[102948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support pregnant women facing restrictions on their partners accompanying them to antenatal appointments and scans.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Restrictions on visitors are subject to the local discretion of trusts. The Department expects Trusts to use the 'Framework to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services' and consider as a priority how access for partners, visitors and supporters of pregnant women can be reintroduced as soon as possible whilst maintaining the safety of all service users, staff and visitors.

The Chief Midwifery Officer, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (England), and the National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health wrote to all NHS Directors of Nursing and Heads of Midwifery in England on 19 September to inform those that are still working through the guidance that this must happen now so that partners are able to attend maternity units for appointments.

■ Bereavement Counselling: Coronavirus**Sarah Owen:****[98770]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September to Question 88936 on Bereavement Counselling: Coronavirus, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of support for grieving households (a) during and (b) after the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 7 October 2020]: The Government is taking a cross-Government approach to address bereavement support and help ensure that families and friends of those deceased get the support they need.

We are engaging with the National Health Service, arm's length bodies and bereavement organisations to assess the increased need for bereavement support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Bereavement Counselling: Parents**Vicky Foxcroft:****[100487]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken steps to develop quality standards and national guidance to support people planning, funding and delivering specialist psychological support services for bereaved parents.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The national bereavement care pathway for pregnancy and baby loss was launched in 2017 and seeks to increase the quality of, and reduce the inequity in, the

bereavement care provided by healthcare professionals after the loss of a baby or pregnancy at any gestation based on nine bereavement care standards which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://nbcpathway.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/Bereavement%20Care%20Standards.pdf>

A key element of this is the requirement for a key worker who acts as a single point of contact for the bereaved family, who they can turn to for information on the child death review process, and who can signpost them to sources of support such as specialist psychological support.

In December 2018, NHS England published 'When a child dies - a guide for parents and carers to support parents through the child death review process' and help them understand the support that is available.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[100489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department provides to support local services to assist with the effective assessment of the psychological support needs of bereaved parents.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government has funded Sands, the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charity to work with other baby loss charities and Royal Colleges to produce and support the roll-out of a National Bereavement Care Pathway to reduce the variation in the quality of bereavement care provided by the National Health Service. The pathway covers a range of circumstances of a baby loss including miscarriage, stillbirth, termination of pregnancy for medical reasons, neonatal death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

■ **Blood Cancer: Nurses**

Jim Shannon:

[91756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS is taking to ensure that blood cancer patients have access to a named Cancer Nurse Specialist.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service in England is continuing to grow the Cancer Nurse Specialist (CNS) workforce. The 2020/21 People Plan outlined Health Education England's commitment to provide training grants for an additional 350 nurses to become CNSs and chemotherapy nurses. The People Plan also commits to extending cancer support-worker training which will further increase the capacity of Clinical Nurse Specialists already in post.

■ **Bowel Cancer: Screening**

Rosie Cooper:

[102009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to provide, how many patients have been awaiting bowel cancer screening; and what the average delay in weeks has

been for patients waiting to receive bowel cancer screening in (a) the North West and (b) the UK in each month since March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: Bowel screening service providers across the country took the decision to delay invites for routine screening during the first wave of COVID-19 to protect patients and support the redeployment of staff to respond to the pandemic. As a result, there were delays in sending routine invitations.

There are currently 1.7 million participants awaiting an invitation to the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme in England, of which 283,000 are in the North West. NHS England and NHS Improvement do not collect data on the average delay in weeks for patients.

All 64 NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Centres are now issuing routine invitations and in September 2020, nearly 400,000 routine invitations, compared to an average of 370,000 per month prior to the pandemic, were sent as centres work to get back on track.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[102010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog of bowel cancer screenings that has developed since those services were paused as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: To minimize the impact on patients and ensure safe clinical practice for the NHS Bowel Screening Programme, NHS England and NHS Improvement prioritised individuals with the highest risk during the COVID-19 response.

All 64 bowel screening centres are now undertaking diagnostic colonoscopies and sending routine invitations. As of 5 October 2020, the number of people who have had a FIT-positive result and are awaiting a diagnostic test has nearly halved in comparison to those waiting in April 2020.

■ **Breast Cancer: Coronavirus**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[100905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect a second wave of covid-19 infections on the waiting times for breast cancer (a) appointments and (b) diagnosis.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 October 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to increase the resilience of breast cancer screening and diagnosis during the ongoing COVID-19 response. Funding has been made available to support the adaptation of mobile breast screening units in order to enhance their safe use and so maximise the number of units available to screen women.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have prioritised increasing the number of urgent cancer referrals, in order to reduce the number of patients waiting longer than 62 and 104 days for treatments or diagnostics, and ensuring capacity is in place for patients returning to the system in winter. The newly formed Cancer Recovery Taskforce will oversee the development of the cancer recovery plan and review progress against objectives, including considering any impact of a “second wave” of COVID-19.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[100906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's strategy is on increasing breast screening uptake.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 October 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are investing in initiatives to help promote and increase the uptake of breast screening.

The ‘Help Us Help You’ campaign has recently been launched to encourage the public to continue to access cancer services, including routine appointments such as breast screening.

Breast cancer screening providers are encouraged to work with cancer alliances, primary care networks and NHS England and NHS Improvement regional teams to bring together work to promote uptake of breast screening and take action to ensure as many people as possible can access services.

Providers have been encouraged to use methods such as text messaging to remind women about their breast screening invitation and encourage them to attend.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[101304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve breast screening uptake in (a) South East and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 October 2020]: Cancer Alliances work very closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England (PHE) and local systems to understand the numbers attending screening, particularly where there is low attendance, for example, in the South East, and to take action to increase uptake. These actions include health promotion messaging for primary care to encourage women who are eligible to attend their screening appointment and, most recently, the promotion of COVID-secure pathways that have been developed to reassure women that appointments are still safe to attend.

Nationally, breast screening providers have been encouraged to use methods such as text messaging to remind women about their breast screening invitation and encourage them to attend. NHS England and NHS Improvement and PHE have been working with Cancer Alliances on the ‘Help us Help you’ campaign and will be

running a more targeted campaign in January 2021 to address some of the barriers to screening uptake.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[101306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps has he taken to encourage those invited for a breast screening to attend in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 October 2020]: The Thames Valley Cancer Alliance has identified East Berkshire and Slough as a priority area for improving the uptake of breast screening. They are working with Public Health England (PHE) and local communities to develop specific approaches to raise awareness of the importance of early detection and attending screening appointments in these areas.

The approaches include providing information in multiple languages that focus on dispelling misconceptions about cancer; offering female-only appointments to support cultural sensitivities; and collaborating with charity partners to deliver cultural sensitivity training to improve communications with diverse populations. There has also been a focus on supporting improved uptake for those with learning disabilities through the provision of longer appointments, easy to read and pictorial communications, and ensuring learning disability is recorded within the patient's care record. Evening screening appointments have also been offered to improve access for working women.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[101307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure women from Black and Minority Ethnic groups are not be negatively effected by a change to open invitations to breast screening, instead of a timed appointment.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 October 2020]: Breast screening services are focusing on restoring appointments following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Services have a responsibility to reduce health inequalities, and considerations of equality of access have been included in the recovery process.

Local services have been able to choose whether to implement open appointments or maintain fixed timed appointments, as services are restored. This choice reflects the needs of the local breast screening population: the service must evidence that their given approach better supports the recovery of appointments and the reduction of inequalities. For this reason, services in Thames Valley have decided not to implement open invitations as part of wider efforts to encourage equality in screening uptake.

Rosie Cooper:

[102711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to allow breast screenings and treatments to continue during a potential second wave of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to increase the resilience of breast cancer screening and diagnosis so that services may continue to operate during a second wave of COVID-19. The NHS England and NHS Improvement Public Health Commissioning and Operations Team advise that where there are local COVID-related lockdowns or other restrictions in place the expectation is that screening services should continue as contracted, including continuing actions to support the full restoration of National Health Service screening services. This includes the expectation that screening staff should not be diverted towards other services, or their buildings or facilities repurposed for other uses, without the specific agreement of the relevant regional commissioner.

Cancer treatment continued during the first wave and will continue during any second wave. Between March and August, over 200,000 cancer treatments were carried out, 85% of the number for the same period in 2019. From the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, NHS England and NHS Improvement have been clear that cancer treatment should continue, a challenge which the NHS has risen to.

■ Cancer**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[102000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the NHS backlog in cancer (a) screening and (b) treatment.

Jo Churchill:

Although some appointments for cancer screening have been rescheduled during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect vulnerable patients, NHS England and NHS Improvement have taken a robust approach to ensuring that people at highest risk are seen as a matter of priority. The backlog of people in these screening pathways is reducing, and there is a continued focus on sending out invites for routine screening appointments that were previously delayed.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have prioritised increasing the number of urgent cancer referrals, in order to reduce the number of patients waiting longer than 62 and 104 days for treatments or diagnostics, and ensuring capacity is in place for patients returning to the system in winter. The newly formed Cancer Recovery Taskforce will oversee the development of the cancer recovery plan and review progress against objectives.

■ Cancer: Diagnosis**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[98948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for a patient to be diagnosed by a cancer specialist.

Jo Churchill:

Data on pathway timescales for different types of cancer can be found on the National Health Service website at the following link:

https://www.cancerdata.nhs.uk/median_pathways/tool

The Cancer Alliance Data Evidence and Analysis Service has calculated the median pathway length of 15 types of cancer for patients diagnosed in 2013-2018.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Zarah Sultana:

[103633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of implementing covid-safe spaces for cancer services to ensure cancer diagnostic services are not interrupted during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: The Government has been clear from the start of the pandemic that cancer services must continue; cancer treatments and other essential care should only be postponed if a clinician and patient agree it is in the patient's best interests. As part of the phased response to COVID-19, local healthcare providers and cancer alliances have worked together to identify ring-fenced diagnostic and surgical capacity for cancer treatment, including using the additional capacity negotiated within the independent sector.

The newly formed Cancer Recovery Taskforce will oversee the development of the cancer recovery plan and review progress against objectives.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments

Jim Shannon:

[91758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the resources needed to support the provision of remote services such as phlebotomy and radiology clinics to improve the treatment for cancer patients who have been referred after remote consultations.

Jo Churchill:

The Cancer Recovery Taskforce is overseeing the development of the cancer recovery plan, which will consider how best to consolidate innovations developed as a result of the pandemic, including the provision of remote services.

The Taskforce is chaired by Professor Peter Johnson, the National Clinical Director for Cancer. It forms part of the NHS Cancer Programme governance structure and reports directly to the National Cancer Board.

Local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for ensuring that services meet the needs of local patients.

■ Cardiovascular System: Diseases

Henry Smith:

[102034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to section 3.70 of the NHS Long Term Plan, what plans the Government has for the appointment of a

national cardiovascular disease policy lead to support primary care networks in establishing greater community detection of heart valve disease.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England has appointed a National Clinical Director for cardiovascular disease prevention and a National Clinical Director for heart disease.

They are working closely with the NHS England and NHS Improvement primary care contracting team, to develop the draft specification for the Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and early diagnosis Primary Care Network Directed Enhanced Service which will support primary care networks to improve community detection of heart valve disease.

■ **Care Homes: Barnet**

Theresa Villiers:

[45036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that the (a) Rosetrees and (b) Lady Sarah Cohen House care homes in Friern Barnet receive the covid-19 tests they have requested for their staff and residents.

Helen Whately:

We can confirm that, based on the most recent data held, both of these homes have received the test kits they have ordered.

Rosetrees requested 350 test kits on 10th September, these were dispatched three days later and delivered on the 15th September.

Lady Sarah Cohen House requested 200 test kits on 18th August, this order was dispatched on the 25th August and delivered to the home on the 27th August.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[86105]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risks to care home residents of the cessation of visits of (a) family and (b) health professionals during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

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

Our first priority remains to prevent infections in care homes and protect staff and residents. On 18 September we published our Winter Plan which sets out tightened infection prevention and control measures to enable visits to continue safely. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-coronavirus-covid-19-winter-plan-2020-to-2021/adult-social-care-our-covid-19-winter-plan-2020-to-2021>

At all times we have based our advice on the latest domestic and international evidence. We always seek to balance the impact that these measures may have, considering the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals alongside risks around transmission and the need to safeguard those living and working in care homes.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[91014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has published guidance on whether people in care homes with covid-19 virus should not be admitted to hospitals.

Helen Whately:

It is our priority to ensure that everyone receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

On 18 September 2020, the Government published 'Adult social care – our COVID-19 winter plan 2020 to 2021'. The guidance sets out the National Health Service policy that clinical decision making should always be personalised and never done on a blanket basis. This includes decisions on admission to hospital and on the use of ambulances.

■ Care Homes: Dementia

Justin Madders:

[97604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of care home visiting guidance on the health and wellbeing of care home residents with dementia.

Helen Whately:

We are aware that limiting visits in care homes has been difficult for many families and residents who want to see their loved ones, particularly for people with dementia.

As part of the Adult Social Care Winter Plan (published on 18 September) we have set out tightened infection prevention and control measures to enable visits to continue safely. The Winter Plan is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-coronavirus-covid-19-winter-plan-2020-to-2021/adult-social-care-our-covid-19-winter-plan-2020-to-2021>

These measures build on the visiting arrangements published on 22 July 2020 that allows local decision making, based on the assessment of the Director of Public Health and the care provider. This guidance is available at the following link:

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

Care home providers should develop a policy for limited visits (if appropriate), in line with up-to-date guidance from their relevant Director of Public Health and based on dynamic risk assessments which consider the vulnerability of residents. This should include both whether their residents' needs make them particularly clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and whether their residents' needs make visits particularly important.

■ Care Homes: Standards

Fiona Bruce:

[\[98692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve dependency ratios in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 October 2020]: Care homes that carry out regulated activities must be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and providers must comply with the Fundamental Standards, below which the standard of care must not fall. The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 require that sufficient numbers of suitably qualified, competent, skilled and experienced persons must be deployed to meet the needs of the people using the service in order to meet regulatory requirements.

■ Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[90104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the (a) physical and (b) mental health of people with long-term covid-19 symptoms; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In July, the National Health Service launched the Your COVID Recovery service to support the recovery of people who have been in hospital or suffered at home with the virus. This is a two-phase endeavour with phase one being available as an open, publicly available site containing general information on all aspects of recovering from COVID-19, including physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Phase 2 will be launched this autumn and will be available to people who are assessed and referred by a health care professional.

The Government and NHS England and NHS Improvement are also working closely with mental health trusts to ensure those who need them have access to mental health services. This includes those that are experiencing mental ill health due to long-term COVID-19 symptoms.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[94578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to raise awareness amongst healthcare professionals of the difficulties experienced by people suffering from post covid-19 side effects.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In June 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance supporting primary care and community health services to meet the immediate and longer-term care needs of patients discharged following an acute episode of COVID-19. This guidance will be kept under regular review.

The National Health Service and wider scientific community are currently working to better understand the disease course of COVID-19 infection, including the

prevalence, severity and duration of symptoms, and how best to support recovery. The National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation have invested £8.4 million in the Post-HOSPitalisation COVID-19 study (PHOSP-COVID), led by Christopher Brightling at the University of Leicester. The outputs of that research will continue to inform future NHS service design and provision.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Julian Sturdy:

[\[100977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when data will be available to enable an assessment of the effectiveness in suppressing the transmission of covid-19 with the rule of six and mandated table service conditions imposed on hospitality businesses.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies will continue to publish minutes from its meetings and the supporting scientific papers on the GOV.UK website, as has been the case since the start of the pandemic.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[101048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 restrictions on people in flat shares; and what steps he is taking to (a) support the mental health and (b) combat loneliness of people living in flat sharing arrangements.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government has considered the need to limit social contact for people living in all types of accommodation. Individuals in shared accommodation, like others, can meet friends and family as part of a group of no more than six people in total, except where specific local restrictions apply.

We recognise how difficult it has been for people to be cut off from their friends and family throughout the past few months and the Government has taken steps to provide £4.2 million additional funding to mental health charities and other charities providing bereavement support. This funding is part of an overall £750 million package for the voluntary sector announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in April.

Bill Esterson:

[\[102775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the level of public understanding of the covid-19 rules on household bubbles.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government uses a range of data to assess the level of public understanding on COVID-19 policies and has simplified COVID-19 rules to make them easier for the public to understand. Changes such as the 'rule of six' and the Local COVID Alert Levels mean that people should know what they can and cannot do at each level of

lockdown. We continually work with a range of stakeholders and digital colleagues to ensure guidance is created in an easy to understand and accessible format.

Guidance on support bubbles have stressed that support bubbles must be exclusive to avoid chains of transmission and those that are at higher risk of exposure or are clinically vulnerable have been advised to take particular care when deciding whether to form a support bubble. This targeted policy is aimed at assisting the most isolated in society while restricting the negative effect on transmission.

Alex Cunningham:

[102789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to permit a person in a tier two covid-19 area to travel to a family wedding in a tier one area and stay overnight in a hotel.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

If you live in an area where the local COVID-19 alert level is high you can stay in a hotel outside of your area, but you must only do this with people in your household or support bubble.

Similarly, you are able to attend a wedding service and attend a wedding reception provided it takes place at a COVID-secure venue or in public outdoor space, unless specific exemptions apply. Up to 15 people can attend a wedding, or a wedding reception in a medium risk area. However, you should not mingle with anyone outside of your household or support bubble while you are there.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[96098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the local covid-19 lockdown restrictions introduced by the Government to date have included restrictions on entering premises which have been introduced through legislation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 October 2020]: No local COVID-19 regulations have included specific restrictions on entering premises.

Ian Mearns:

[96852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage employers to follow the Government's guidance pertaining to allowing employees to work from home in response to increased covid-19 cases.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: The Government made the announcement on 22 September that people should work from home if they can. It is expected that employers will follow this advice, where it is appropriate to do so. A number of guidance documents are available, targeted at specific sectors, on working safely during the COVID-19 pandemic at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Jon Trickett:

[97463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the advice the Government received from (a) the Chief Medical Officer and (b) Public Health England on whether people who are clinically extremely vulnerable should be required to shield at present.

Jo Churchill:

Shielding advice is challenging to follow and prolonged shielding may have negative mental and physical health consequences, so it is not an intervention that we advise lightly. It is important that guidance and support to the clinically extremely vulnerable balances the risk of exposure to the virus with the potential negative consequences of shielding for a prolonged period.

As we have learned more about the virus, we have improved our understanding of its transmission, and about how best to control it in all environments. Many individuals and settings are now taking measures to reduce the risk of transmission, such as wearing face masks and implementing social distancing. We also have a much more detailed understanding of local outbreaks and can intervene quickly when case numbers rise.

The updated guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Jon Trickett:

[97465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support the Government is providing to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable who are unable to work from home and feel unsafe in their workplace.

Jo Churchill:

Shielding was paused on 1 August 2020 in England and clinically extremely vulnerable people are now required to follow the Local COVID Alert Level arrangements in place in their area. Advice has also been provided to the clinically extremely vulnerable to follow in addition to these measures.

Currently, everyone is advised to work from home if they are able. If not, they should return to the workplace. Employers are required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, ensuring the workplace is COVID-secure. Where employers are not managing this risk, the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities will take action. If an individual has concerns about their health and safety at work they should raise them with their workplace union, the Health and Safety Executive or local authority.

If the Government reintroduces shielding advice then individuals will be advised not to attend the workplace. If they are unable to work from home they may be eligible for statutory sick pay.

Charlotte Nichols:

[99138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing a two person household, in which one person is a carer, to form a support bubble with another household which consists of at least two people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government recognises the vital role unpaid carers play and understand the many difficulties and challenges they are face, especially during this difficult period. We also acknowledge how difficult it has been for people to be cut off from their friends and family throughout this period. However, as we are seeing COVID-19 cases rise at a rapid rate across the country and, given how serious this virus is, it is important that everyone plays their part by following the measures in place, including the rule of six, washing their hands, practicing social distancing and wearing a mask in enclosed spaces.

Support bubbles are to assist the loneliest and most isolated in society. They were introduced to provide extra support to some of those most impacted by the difficult effects of the social restrictions, while ensuring we continue to keep the rate of transmission low. This is why the policy has been targeted at single-adult households.

To help family carers continue to access support they need we have worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance to help make decisions on restarting respite provision in day centres services or alternatives to support carers and to provide quality care safely. This guidance was published in July.

We know carers need more support and will continue to keep our guidance under review and continue to work closely with carer organisations and others to support unpaid carers.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[99539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to advise people who had previously been shielding to do so again in response to increasing infection rates across the UK.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Shielding was paused on 1 August 2020 in England and clinically extremely vulnerable people are now required to follow the Local COVID Alert Level arrangements in place in their area. Advice has also been provided to the clinically extremely vulnerable to follow in addition to these measures.

It is important that guidance and support to the clinically extremely vulnerable balances the risk of exposure to the virus with the potential negative consequences on people's mental and physical health caused by prolonged social and financial isolation.

In the future, we will only introduce shielding in the worst affected areas and this decision will be based on the latest evidence and on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer. The Government will write to those affected if they are being asked to shield.

■ Coronavirus: Physiotherapy

Liz Twist: [\[87617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the additional number of physiotherapists and physiotherapy support workers required to support people who have had covid-19 to rehabilitate.

Liz Twist: [\[87618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of the NHS to increase the number of rehabilitation support staff to help the rehabilitation of people who have had covid-19.

Helen Whately:

NHS England recently announced that people suffering from longer term symptoms of COVID-19 will be offered specialist help at clinics across England.

A range of professionals, including physiotherapists, other specialists and general practitioners will all help assess, diagnose and treat thousands of sufferers who have reported ongoing symptoms. £10 million will be invested this year in additional local funding to help initiate and designate 'long COVID-19' clinics in every area across England, to complement existing primary, community and rehabilitation care.

As at May 2020 there are 2,548 (14.4%) more full-time equivalent (FTE) physiotherapists and 861 (23.7%) more FTE support staff to physiotherapists than in May 2015 to provide care to patients.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Mr Clive Betts: [\[102674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 August 2020 to Question 74433 on Coronavirus: Protective Clothing, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of producing a national badge or pass to indicate when individuals are exempt from wearing a face mask on public transport or in shops.

Jo Churchill:

Those who have an age, health or disability reason for not wearing a face covering should not be asked to give any written evidence of this, this includes exemption cards. No person needs to seek advice or request a letter from a medical professional about their reason for not wearing a face covering.

Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face covering. Different options are available on GOV.UK (including printable templates and a template for mobile telephones), and on charity and organisations websites, or could be hand-made. This aims to help tackle any potential stigma that may be faced by people who are unable to wear a face covering due to hidden disabilities and/or mental health reasons.

Robert Halfon:

[102763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to review the decision to require individuals to wear face coverings in places of worship during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Members of the public must wear a face covering in a range of indoor public settings in England, which includes places of worship.

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

The Government is committed to following the evidence and will keep reviewing evidence from around the world and update our position as and when needed.

Guidance around using places of worship safely during the pandemic can be found online at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

Caroline Lucas:

[103473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the operational capacity of the PPE portal; what plans his Department has to reimburse (a) local authorities, (b) care homes and (c) other organisations eligible to use that portal for costs of alternative procurement in the event that adequate personal protective equipment is unavailable through the portal during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

All adult social care homes, domiciliary care providers, community pharmacies, children's care homes and secure homes, children's special schools, community drug and alcohol services, residential drug and alcohol services; and general practitioners, optometrists and dentists with National Health Service patients, will be supplied with personal protective equipment (PPE) for their COVID-19 needs via the PPE Portal.

The order limits on the PPE portal are being increased in a phased approach so that all eligible providers will be able to order PPE to meet all of their COVID-19 PPE needs, with the majority of providers' order limits already at this point.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[103482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of mandatory face coverings for contractors completing building work and maintenance in an individual's home.

Jo Churchill:

Businesses are already subject to legal obligations to protect their staff under existing legislation. This includes taking appropriate steps to provide a safe working

environment, which may include providing face coverings where appropriate, alongside other mitigation to provide a safe working environment.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has provided detailed guidance for specific workplace settings (including when undertaking work in other people's homes). Employers must make sure that the risk assessment for their business addresses the risks of COVID-19 using BEIS guidance to inform decisions and control measures including close proximity working. Guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

We will keep the situation and the evidence for face coverings under review and will take further action if needed.

Grahame Morris:

[104098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October 2020 to Question 94389 on Coronavirus: Protective Clothing, what steps business and public transport operators should take to ensure people required to wear facemasks do so to safeguard the public and employees.

Jo Churchill:

From 28 September, it became a legal requirement for those sectors where face coverings are required, to display signage or to verbally remind customers and employees, who have a legal obligation to do so, to wear a face covering when on their premises.

While the Government expects the vast majority of people will comply with the rules, as they have done throughout the pandemic, Regulations have been made under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984 to give powers to the police and Transport for London officers to enforce the requirement to wear a face covering. Enforcing officers have the ability to issue Fixed Penalty Notices but will use the 4Es approach of engaging, explaining, encouraging and enforcing, only issuing a fine as a last resort.

Advice on face coverings follows advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies. We are committed to following the evidence and will keep reviewing evidence from around the world and update our position as and when we need to.

Theresa Villiers:

[93552]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what items of personal protective equipment people conducting covid-19 testing are required to wear to be covid-secure; and what steps the Government is taking to help ensure adequate supplies of that equipment are available for covid-19 testing.

Navendu Mishra:

[93702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of personal protective equipment at the covid-19 walk-in testing site in Tiviot Dale Church, Stockport; and what plans the Government has to help ensure

the adequacy of supplies of that equipment during a potential second wave of covid-19 infections.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has worked with private sector partners to establish local test sites in metropolitan areas across the country. These local test sites are being used to test eligible individuals for COVID-19 without access to a car as part of the Government's national testing programme. They are set up in different types of locations, such as car parks, town halls and sports courts, where there is space and local demand for testing.

We have detailed clinical operating procedures, developed in collaboration with clinical experts, for local walk-through testing sites. Layouts at walk-through testing sites have been carefully designed to ensure people can move around them safely and prevent spread of the virus; social distancing will be maintained throughout the testing process; and people attending the sites are asked to wear a face covering.

Liz Twist:

[\[99714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to recover the monetary cost of faulty personal protective equipment supplied from Turkey in May 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Gowns and overalls were ordered by the Royal Free Trust from a new supplier in Turkey. Further supply from the manufacturer was held in country as it was already clear looking at the first batches that the quality was suspect and not suitable for use in the National Health Service.

Once the first batches were seen and the quality was identified as a concern, the United Kingdom Embassy team in Turkey and the Turkish Government helpfully stepped in and provided some Turkish Government-sourced gowns which met UK standards to make up the order.

Discussions are underway between the Royal Free Trust and the UK distributor to agree a refund or acceptable alternative product.

■ **Coronavirus: Public Houses**

Grahame Morris:

[\[102756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons wet only pubs are required to close in a tier-three covid-19 lockdown while pubs serving food are allowed to remain open.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In areas when the local COVID-19 alert level is very high pubs and bars must close. They can only remain open where they operate as if they were a restaurant, which means serving substantial meals, like a main lunchtime or evening meal. They may only serve alcohol as part of such a meal.

There are higher environmental risks in hospitality settings when compared with other indoor settings. This is due to the close proximity of other people, relatively long periods of time spent on a visit, and loud atmospheres leading to louder talking and shouting and sometimes, poor ventilation. Additionally, the consumption of alcohol can impact on people's behaviour and make it less likely that they comply with social distancing measures.

By limiting the amount of time people spend in hospitality we reduce the risks. And by ensuring that people are eating and are not attending a venue solely to drink alcohol we reduce the risks posed by falling inhibitions and failure to comply with social distancing measures.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[48584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 test swabs have been sent for analysis overseas since the start of the outbreak of that disease.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 June 2020]: The vast majority of our tests are processed through the Lighthouse Laboratories and associated laboratories domestically, and only a small proportion of tests have been sent abroad for processing.

In May 2020, 66,648 tests were sent to the United States of America as demand exceeded laboratory network capacity. We have, and continue to, work hard to expand capacity.

Between late August 2020 - 3 October, 271,716 tests were sent to Italy and 126,338 to Germany.

The REal-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) national surveillance study currently sends around 150,000 tests per month to Germany for processing as part their agreement with the testing provider.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[97002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in (a) England and (b) Slough admitted to hospital with covid-19 symptoms have been discharged from hospital without being tested for covid-19 despite consenting to being so tested.

Helen Whately:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ **Cremation: Coronavirus**

Sarah Champion:

[\[102818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the limit is on attendance for the scattering of ashes in each of the three tiers of covid-19 restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We understand how important the grieving process and related formal and informal rituals through which we mourn the passing of loved ones are for the health and wellbeing of the bereaved

For these reasons in all local COVID-19 alert levels, funerals can take place in COVID-secure venues or in public outdoor spaces with up to 30 people in attendance. Wakes or linked ceremonial events, such as scattering ashes, before or after the funeral are limited to 15 people and must not take place in private homes.

■ Dementia: Coronavirus**Rosie Cooper:****[96819]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the effect of the covid-10 outbreak on (a) people with dementia and (b) their carers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: The Government has taken a range of action to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic, including for people with dementia and unpaid carers.

We commissioned research through the National Institute for Health Research on how to manage or mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia and their carers living in the community. Concise advice based on this research for people with dementia and their carers is available at the following link:

<http://www.idealproject.org.uk/covid/>

Guidance for care homes and for carers on how best to support people living with dementia during the pandemic as well as wider advice for unpaid carers has also been made available. In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement have issued guidance to the health service on the adjustments that are needed across the NHS Dementia Well Pathway.

Support for recovery and managing any ongoing symptoms is also available at the following link:

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

Alexander Stafford:**[97064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) people with dementia and (b) the carers of people with dementia.

Helen Whately:

The Government has taken a range of action to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic, including for people with dementia and unpaid carers.

We commissioned research through the National Institute for Health Research on how to manage or mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia and

their carers living in the community. Concise advice based on this research for people with dementia and their carers is available at the following link:

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Support for recovery and managing any ongoing symptoms is also available at the following link:

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

■ Dementia: Social Services

Elliot Colburn:

[82459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to bring forward a long-term social care reform proposal by the end of 2020 which recognises the additional cost of dementia care.

Helen Whately:

The Government's number one priority for adult social care is for everyone who relies on care to get the care they need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are committed to bringing forward a plan for social care reform and want to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and offered the security they deserve, and that nobody needing care is forced to sell their home to pay for it. We want to find long-term solutions for one of the biggest challenges we face as a society. There are complex questions to address and it is important that we give these issues our full consideration in the light of current circumstances.

■ Drugs: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[102816]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure the availability of supplies of medicines in Northern Ireland after the transition period.

Edward Argar:

The Department, in consultation with the devolved administrations and Crown Dependencies, is working with trade bodies, product suppliers, and the health and care system to make detailed plans to help ensure continued supply of medicines and medical products to the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, at the end of the transition period.

This includes:

- medicines (prescription-only, pharmacy and general sales list and unlicensed medicines);
- medical devices and clinical consumables;
- supplies for clinical trials and clinical investigations;
- vaccines and countermeasures; and
- blood, tissue and transplant materials.

Further detail on the plans to help ensure continuity of medical supplies can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-3-august-2020/letter-to-medicine-suppliers-3-august-2020>

■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Colleen Fletcher:

[100426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the proportion of women with endometriosis who do not receive the correct (a) diagnosis of and (b) treatment for that condition.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: There has been no assessment made on the proportion of women with endometriosis who have not received the correct diagnosis or treatment.

■ Endometriosis: Medical Treatments

Jim Shannon:

[98971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of treating endometriosis in the last 12 months.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department does not hold data on the cost of National Health Service treatment for endometriosis. NHS England does not specifically categorise expenditure on services relating to endometriosis.

■ Fireworks: Accidents

Alex Davies-Jones:

[102957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital admissions in England were classified as relating to injuries or accidents as a result of firework displays in each year since 2015.

Edward Argar:

A count of finished admission episodes (FAEs) with a cause code of firework injury for each year from 2015-16 to 2019-20 is shown in the following table:

Activity in English National Health Service hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector

YEAR PERIOD	FAEs
2015-16	168
2016-17	183
2017-18	164
2018-19	154
2019-20	153

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Digital

Notes:

A FAE is the first period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FAEs are counted against the year or month in which the admission episode finishes. Admissions do not represent the number of patients, as a person may have more than one admission within the period.

Cause Code

A supplementary code that indicates the nature of any external cause of injury, poisoning or other adverse effects. Only the first external cause code which is coded within the episode is counted in HES. Recording of external cause is not mandatory and recording practice varies over time and regionally, care should be used when interpreting this data.

W39 - Firework injury

Assessing growth through time (admitted patient care)

HES figures are available from 1989-90 onwards. Changes to the figures over time need to be interpreted in the context of improvements in data quality and coverage (particularly in earlier years), improvements in coverage of independent sector activity (particularly from 2006-07) and changes in NHS practice. For example, apparent reductions in activity may be due to a number of procedures which may now be undertaken in outpatient settings and so no longer include in admitted patient HES data. Conversely, apparent increases in activity may be due to improved recording of diagnosis or procedure information.

It should be noted that HES include activity ending in the year in question and run from April to March, e.g. 2012-13 includes activity ending between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013.

■ Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[97658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for children to be diagnosed with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders in each of the last five years; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce those waiting times.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not collected centrally.

■ Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome

Christian Wakeford:

[\[91201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recent World Health Organisation updates and the addition of fetal valproate spectrum disorder to the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases, what steps he is taking to (a) integrate that disorder into treatment and (b) ensure its diagnosis on the NHS.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England currently does not provide specialised treatment or a diagnostic service for patients suffering with symptoms of fetal valproate syndrome - treatment and diagnosis are integrated into existing services.

■ Gambling: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department received on the rate of covid-19 transmission in adult gaming centres (a) before 10pm and (b) between 10pm and 5am.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of varying the hospitality curfew to account for lower evening transmission rates across different categories of leisure and hospitality premises.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Experience from areas of local interventions where the curfew has implemented suggests it strikes the right balance, allowing businesses to trade for the majority of the evening while reducing the risk of non-compliance with social distancing measures and unnecessary contact with people you do not usually meet.

Early data also suggests that a significant proportion of exposure to the virus is seen in the hospitality sector, which is even more pronounced in younger age groups. We will continue to gather evidence and monitor the data. We have seen from Belgium how effective operating restrictions can be, where a marked decline in case numbers was seen after early closure measures were introduced.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care will conduct the reviews, following discussion with other Ministers and always guided by officials and experts, ensuring the measures continue to be both proportionate and necessary.

■ Gender Selection: Screening

Scott Benton:

[102941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the UK National Screening Committee's recommendation that non-invasive prenatal testing should not be used for testing of foetal sex, what his policy is on prenatal screening for foetal sex.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) has not looked at the evidence to offer prenatal screening for fetal sex as a population screening programme.

Every year the UK NSC hosts a call for new topics to be considered. The UK NSC's call for new topics is open and will close on 6 December 2020. The UK NSC welcomes submissions.

More information about the 2020 annual call can be found at the following link:

<https://phescreening.blog.gov.uk/2020/09/15/annualcall2020/>

Information on how to submit a proposal can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process>

■ General Practitioners: Bolton

Chris Green:

[102100]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on people's health in Bolton local authority area of the reduction in GP referrals of almost 20,000 as a result of the covid-19 lockdown.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Health: Females

Sarah Champion:

[99620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what topics will be included in his Department's women's health strategy; and when his Department plans to publish that strategy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It has become clear over the last few years that we can do better both in terms of the services we provide for women, and how the system listens to women's voices.

Plans to develop a women's health strategy were temporarily paused due to the initial response to COVID-19. We have however, recently restarted work in this area and we are currently working with officials to consider priorities for women's health including how we can ensure that women's voices are heard more effectively moving forward.

■ Heart Diseases: Coronavirus

Chris Green:

[\[103546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) diagnosis and treatment of and (b) support available for patients with heart valve disease.

Jo Churchill:

Primary and secondary care have remained open throughout the pandemic and patients have been encouraged to access these services.

Since 29 April NHS England has prioritised the reintroduction of non COVID-19 services with the aim of recovering as much performance as possible before winter. To aid this, new COVID-19 secure hubs for surgery and diagnostics have been established.

Further planning is underway to ensure critical services, such as cardiac surgery, are maintained during any future waves.

■ Heart Diseases: Diagnosis

Henry Smith:

[\[102032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of primary care networks on rates of detection of heart valve disease.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made of the effect of primary care networks (PCNs) on rates of detection of heart valve disease.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Henry Smith:

[\[102031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the care and treatment of patients with heart valve disease; and what plans he has in place to mitigate that effect.

Jo Churchill:

Patients with heart valve disease have been prioritised throughout the pandemic and continue to be through the recovery period. Services in both primary and secondary care have been open throughout and patients have been encouraged to use these services.

With the learning from the initial wave of the pandemic we are planning for any future waves, meaning we can protect the most vital services.

Henry Smith:

[\[102035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with heart valve disease symptoms are able to access (a) diagnostic assessments and (b) treatment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Primary and secondary care have remained open throughout the pandemic and patients have been encouraged to access these services.

Since 29 April NHS England has prioritised the reintroduction of non COVID-19 services with the aim of recovering as much performance as possible before winter. To aid this, new COVID-19 secure hubs for surgery and diagnostics have been established.

Further planning is underway to ensure critical services, such as cardiac surgery, are maintained during any future waves.

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

Clive Efford:

[\[90032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of domiciliary care workers on minimising the risk of infection from covid-19 for (a) disabled people and (b) their carers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: Expansion of asymptomatic testing for SARS-CoV-2 in domiciliary care workers is being guided by the results from the Public Health England point prevalence survey of domiciliary care workers. This study found that COVID-19 prevalence among domiciliary care workers was similar to prevalence in the general population. Based on the evidence, the report does not recommend rolling out asymptomatic testing to domiciliary workers unless recommended by local risk assessments or in response to local outbreaks. Symptomatic staff should continue to access priority testing via the Pillar 2 testing service. We are currently reviewing the implications for asymptomatic testing in domiciliary care. Domiciliary care providers should continue to ensure that staff are appropriately supported to follow current guidance and that staff have appropriate personal protective equipment and training on its use, following national guidance.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers:

[\[101993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific basis for the rule that pubs and restaurants must close at 10.00pm.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 October 2020]: The Government's process for understanding and analysing the data involves experts across the country feeding through scientific

advisory groups and sub groups to make sure decisions are informed and supported by a strong evidence base.

The evidence considered by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and used to support the Government response to COVID-19 is shared on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[73094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what scientific tests have been used to assess the suitability of Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVACR) technologies installed in the temporary hospitals erected in the UK during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The COVID-19 Nightingale temporary hospitals are the responsibility of the designated sponsoring National Health Service trust. Each such trust appointed a designated and appropriately qualified individual to oversee the design process and installation of the heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration-related infrastructure where required. All installations within each Nightingale facility were subject to a specific testing and commissioning process prior to operational use.

■ Kit Tarka Foundation

David Linden:

[99717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Kit Tarka Foundation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department has not had any discussions with the Kit Tarka Foundation.

■ Malnutrition: Children

Ed Davey:

[101942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children in London have been hospitalised with malnutrition since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak in March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 October 2020]: Information is not available in the format requested.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review**Emma Hardy:** [\[98751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the The Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, published 8 July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

All recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully. The Government will provide an update in due course.

Jon Trickett: [\[98873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 September 2020 to Question 78516 on Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review, what the Government's timetable is for providing an update on its consideration of the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, published on 8 July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

All recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully.

We do not consider it appropriate to commit to a specific timeframe for a response while these recommendations are being considered. While this report was published on 8 July, it took over two years to compile and we therefore consider it vitally important that it is given full consideration.

■ Members: Correspondence**Justin Madders:** [\[97606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to correspondence from the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston of the 29 May 2020 regarding the experience of parents with extremely clinically vulnerable children during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

I replied to the hon. Member's letter on 9 October 2020.

■ Mental Health Services**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[102079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with NHS England to ensure more timely data is published on the capacity of mental health services during winter.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: The Mental Health Services Dataset and the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies dataset are the primary routine sources of information on mental health services activity.

Alongside the existing mental health data publications available across the system, NHS Digital has taken steps to increase timeliness of data on mental health services by releasing a provisional version of published monthly statistics early each month. However, it is important to note that the data quality of this provisional data is not as complete as the final data and will cover a lower set of providers.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[102177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of the capacity of NHS mental health services during periods of high levels of unemployment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise the additional pressures on mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on the economy and levels of unemployment. National Health Service mental health services have remained open for business throughout this time, including delivering support digitally and by phone. For those with severe needs or in crisis, NHS mental health providers have established 24 hours per day, seven days a week mental health crisis lines.

We are working with the NHS, Public Health England and other key partners to gather evidence and assess the potential longer-term mental health impacts, and plan for how to support mental health and wellbeing throughout the coming weeks and months.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Jim Shannon:**[\[99607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure children and young people who need mental health support who (a) meet and (b) do not meet the thresholds for eligibility for children and adolescent mental health services are able to access timely support.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are introducing two waiting times for children and young people by the end of 2020/21: for 95% of children (up to 19 years old) with eating disorders to receive treatment within one week for urgent cases and four weeks for routine cases, and for 60% of patients of all ages experiencing a first episode of psychosis to receive treatment within two weeks of referral.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to an additional 345,000 children and young people in England accessing mental health support each year by 2023/24, via National Health Service-funded mental health services and schools- and college-based mental health support teams.

We are also piloting a four-week waiting time for children and young people's mental health services in 12 areas to inform the development of a new national access and waiting times standard.

If a young person does not meet the threshold of a local NHS children and young people's specialist mental health service, the young person and/or their carers should be signposted to appropriate support elsewhere. On 8 September, the Government launched a mental wellbeing campaign for children and young people. This involves an extension of Public Health England's Every Mind Matters webpage and signposts to a range of support available to children and young people and their parents and carers.

■ **Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[102175]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure continued access to mental health services in areas with covid-19 lockdowns.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National Health Service mental health services have remained open for business throughout this time, delivering support digitally and over the phone where possible. This includes areas where local COVID-10 alert levels have been put in place.

For those with severe needs or in crisis, NHS mental health providers have established 24 hours per day, seven days a week mental health crisis lines.

We have released tailored guidance to help people deal with this pandemic. People can go to the Every Mind Matters website and GOV.UK for advice and tailored, practical steps they can take to support their wellbeing and manage their mental health.

We have provided £10.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities to support their work during COVID-19. A list of charity mental health helplines can be found on the NHS website.

■ **Mental Health Services: Ethnic Groups**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[102178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that BAME people can access the same level of support through mental health services as people from other backgrounds.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We want to ensure that all communities, including people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, can access mental health services when they need to. National Health Service mental health services have remained open, and our community, talking therapies and children and young people's services have

deployed digital tools to connect with people as well as face to face appointments where possible to provide ongoing support.

The Government has provided £10.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities to support adults and children. This includes charities that offer some support to BAME communities, such as the What? Centre, which supports young people with furthering their understanding of race, culture and identity in relation to mental health.

■ **Mental Health Services: Females**

Sarah Champion:

[\[99623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) women and (b) girls with their mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are absolutely committed to supporting everyone's mental wellbeing, including women and girls, especially during this unprecedented period. National Health Service mental health services have remained open for business throughout this time, including delivering support digitally and by phone. For those with severe needs or in crisis, NHS mental health providers have established all-age 24 hours per day, seven days a week mental health crisis lines.

Women and girls will benefit from our commitment in the NHS Long Term Plan that 2 million more people will be able to access mental health services by 2023/24. This includes expanding access to specialist perinatal mental health care and mother and baby inpatient services for women with serious mental health issues.

■ **Mental Health Services: Schools**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on allocating additional resources for mental health support within schools.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

I have met several times in recent months with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (Vicky Ford MP) to discuss how health and education can work together to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing as schools reopened.

We remain committed to investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year into all-age mental health services by 2023-24, meaning an additional 345,000 children and young people accessing support through National Health Service-funded services or school- and college-based mental health support teams, if they need them.

The Department for Education's £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme will also provide schools and colleges all over England with the

knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

■ **Mental Health: Charities**

Gavin Robinson:

[104103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the adequacy of and (b) progress on disbursing the additional financial support available to mental health charities since 22 May 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

During the COVID-19 outbreak the Government provided £10.2 million of additional funding to mental health charities to support adults and children. This includes £6 million provided to the Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund (CMHRF), led by Mind and the Mental Health Consortia and £4.2 million to mental health charities through the Government's £750 million Coronavirus Charities Fund. We have also provided local authorities with £3.7 billion for COVID-19 pressures, including social care services provided by charitable organisations.

The CMHRF has supported over 130 charities to date. The list of charities that have received funding through this process was announced on 29 May 2020. The press release can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/5-million-funding-given-to-mental-health-community-projects>

Gavin Robinson:

[104104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the adequacy of and (b) progress on disbursing the additional financial support available to mental health charities since 22 May 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

During the COVID-19 outbreak the Government provided £10.2 million of additional funding to mental health charities to support adults and children. This includes £6 million provided to the Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund (CMHRF), led by Mind and the Mental Health Consortia and £4.2 million to mental health charities through the Government's £750 million Coronavirus Charities Fund. We have also provided local authorities with £3.7 billion for COVID-19 pressures, including social care services provided by charitable organisations.

The CMHRF has supported over 130 charities to date. The list of charities that have received funding through this process was announced on 29 May 2020. The press release can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/5-million-funding-given-to-mental-health-community-projects>

■ Multiple Births

Giles Watling:

[\[99116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2020 to Question 92882 on Multiple Births, (a) how many twins were delivered after 38 weeks gestation and (b) what percentage of twins were delivered by caesarean section in each hospital trust between (i) April 2015 and March 2017 and (ii) April 2017 and March 2019.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information requested is in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Multiple births 2015-2019 [PQ99116_Table.xlsx]

■ NHS: Computer Software

Chi Onwurah:

[\[102073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what safeguards are in place to prevent (a) children and (b) those suffering from eating disorders using the NHS's Better Health weight loss app.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: The NHS Weight Loss Plan app asks users to enter their height and weight to calculate their body mass index (BMI). If a user is underweight or a healthy weight according to their BMI, messaging is shown that explains this weight loss tool is not for them. App users who are underweight or at the lower end of a healthy weight are not prompted to use the app any further than the BMI calculation stage. The app also advises users to discuss their weight with their general practitioner if they have any concerns.

It is clearly stated in the initial 'onboarding' screens that the app is not suitable for those under 18 years of age.

■ NHS: Medical Treatments

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[103437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the (a) clinical performance and (b) delivery rate of NHS treatments not related to covid-19.

Edward Argar:

The Department uses data published on a monthly basis to monitor compliance against performance standards. There are robust processes in place to hold NHS England and NHS Improvement to account and action to ensure compliance with different performance standards is discussed in the course of this process.

Guidance issued by NHS England and NHS Improvement at the end of July set the ambition for providers to recover elective services in October to 90% of last year's

levels for admissions, and 100% for outpatients. The Department continues to monitor performance against these ambitions.

■ Orthopaedics: Children

Julian Sturdy: [\[81854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of directing NHS England to reclassify splint replacements for children by hospital orthotics departments as an essential service so that their ordinary treatment routines can resume.

Julian Sturdy: [\[81855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on the long-term muscle development of child patients by the current delay in hospital splint replacements as a result of their classification as a non-essential service under national NHS policy.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning a comprehensive health service. CCGs make decisions about the planning and commissioning of healthcare services that meet the needs of their local population. The Government supports CCGs in local, clinically-led commissioning of services, as they are best placed to know the different needs of their areas.

■ Pregnancy

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[102666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that safe and healthy pregnancy information is communicated effectively as outlined in the NHS' guidance entitled Saving Babies' Lives Version Two, published in March 2019.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The second version of the Saving Babies' Lives Care Bundle has been updated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to reflect the most up to date information for women to receive safe and healthy pregnancy information. NHS England and NHS Improvement are asking trusts to work towards full implementation of the Care Bundle as the safety of maternity services is a key priority.

Information and advice for the public from the Care Bundle is contained on the NHS.UK Start 4 Life webpages, which women are encouraged to use. The Care Bundle document is also available on NHS England and NHS Improvement's webpages, and has been promoted widely to all Local Maternity Systems.

■ Protective Clothing: Fees and Charges

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[101941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his decision to supply personal protective equipment (PPE) free of charge to establishments in England registered with the Care Quality Commission, whether he made an assessment of the effect of that policy on businesses supplying PPE prior to taking that decision; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 October 2020]: The rationale for the Department's decision to supply personal protective equipment (PPE) free of charge to establishments in England registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is to protect the lives of frontline staff by ensuring a sustainable readily available supply of free PPE for COVID-19 use in line with the clinical guidance.

This decision was informed by a range of data on demand and supply of PPE, including the impact on businesses supplying PPE.

■ Public Health: Coronavirus

Mhairi Black:

[49035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role (a) he and (b) officials in his Department played in the design of the covid-19 public advice to stay alert, control the virus, save lives.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has developed a strong national campaign across all four nations of the United Kingdom to provide information and reassurance to the public about COVID-19. This is a cross-Government campaign involving multiple departments and is being coordinated centrally by the Cabinet Office.

■ Sepsis: Diagnosis

Christina Rees:

[100504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve diagnostic testing for sepsis and bloodstream infections.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Since 2014, the Government has invested over £360 million in antimicrobial resistance research and development, including funding to support the development of diagnostics for infection. In order to support the work in delivering upon objectives set out in both the 'UK's 20-year vision for Antimicrobial Resistance' and five-year national action plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement has laid out human health-related commitments specifically regarding the development of and access to diagnostics in relation to infections.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[99147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he plans to offer to adult social care providers facing additional costs as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises that COVID-19 is imposing significant pressures on the social care sector. £3.7 billion has now been made available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care. On 17 September 2020 the extension of the Infection Control Fund was announced, meaning over £1.1 billion of ring-fenced funding has been provided for infection control throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognising the increase in demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) this year, the Government has committed in the recently published Adult Social Care Winter Plan to the provision of free PPE for COVID-19 needs for adult social care providers until March 2021

The Government will continue to monitor pressures on adult social care.

■ Social Services: Disability**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[93672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to provide ring-fenced funding in the Comprehensive Spending Review for community social care services to help ensure disabled people receive the support they need.

Helen Whately:

To support adult social respond to growing demand and pressures, we have provided councils with access to an additional £1.5 billion for adults and children's social care in 2020/21.

We have now made £3.7 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care. On 17 September 2020 we announced the extension of the Infection Control Fund, meaning we have provided over £1.1 billion of ring-fenced funding for infection control throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government will continue to monitor pressures on adult social care. Decisions on future funding will be set out at the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn.

■ Sodium Valproate: Prescriptions**Liz Twist:**[\[96997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether GPs are required to (a) record and (b) report each instance when they have warned a female patient of the risks of prescribed valproate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Within the terms of the valproate Pregnancy Prevention Programme, general practitioners (GPs) are required to identify all relevant women and girls in their practice who are taking valproate and refer them for specialist review annually. Specialists should review treatment and ensure that an Annual Risk Acknowledgement Form is signed by the prescriber and the patient and shared with the patient's GP. GPs should check that the patient has a signed, up-to-date Annual Risk Acknowledgment Form each time a repeat prescription is issued. A GOV.UK toolkit on valproate use by women and girls is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/valproate-use-by-women-and-girls>.

Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus**Jon Trickett:****[102681]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance provided by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England that informed the decision that sporting arenas cannot currently accommodate spectators during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As the Prime Minister set out in his statement to the House on 22 September (*Official Report*, col. 798), the spread of the virus is now affecting our ability to reopen large sporting events. If we open sporting arenas this will result in increased social contact in and around the arena and on public transport.

The evidence considered by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and used to support the Government response to COVID-19 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

Suicide**Dr Matthew Offord:****[98951]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to include the elderly and infirm as high risk groups requiring particular interventions within the Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National statistics show that, since the early 1980s, suicide rates vary with age. Rates peak among the middle-aged (45 to 54 years) and then decrease until the ages of 80 to 84 years, from which they begin to rise. As the 2012 suicide prevention strategy for England makes clear, rates of suicide in men aged over 75 are high. Different risk factors, such as loneliness and physical illness, may be important in this age group.

As set out in the 2019 cross-Government suicide prevention workplan, updates to the workplan will be published alongside future progress reports to the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

Future updates to the workplan and will consider actions taken across the health sector, and national and local government, to reduce suicide rates in older people.

■ Suicide: Travellers

John McDonnell:

[\[98662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the the report by Friends, Families and Travellers entitled Suicide Prevention in Gypsy and Traveller communities in England and its findings that (a) only five out of 79 local authority suicide prevention plans mention Gypsy and Traveller communities and (b) only two out of 79 local authority suicide prevention plans listed any action to address the high suicide rate in their local Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have not made a formal assessment. We continue to explore ways of improving the quality and timeliness of suicide data to allow both national and local partners to continue to monitor rates, identify trends and develop effective prevention plans.

We know that there are certain groups that may be exposed to more risk factors for suicide, and we expect local agencies to work together to ensure that their plans are tailored to meet the needs of these groups. These groups include people from minority ethnic groups, such as Romany Gypsies or Irish Travellers.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants

Emma Hardy:

[\[97694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure the proposed NHS Mesh specialist centres function as a network.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The proposed National Health Service mesh specialist centres will function within a clinical network arrangement. Centres within a region will have jointly agreed guidelines, pathways, referral guidelines and protocols for patient follow up.

Emma Hardy:

[\[97695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to support the creation of a holistic pain management service as part of the proposed NHS mesh specialist centres.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are currently no plans to create a separate holistic pain management service as part of the proposed National Health Service mesh specialist centres.

Women who are referred to the mesh specialist centres will be discuss their treatment with the Mesh Service's Multi-Disciplinary Team. The team will include a specialist in pain management with an expertise in pelvic pain who will support patients in managing their pain.

Emma Hardy:

[\[98752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take following the Cumberlege Report to ensure that GPs are informed of (a) the effects of faulty mesh surgery on the patient and (b) all support and treatment options that are available for those patients.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

All recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully and the Government will provide an update in due course.

If a woman has previously had vaginal mesh inserted and is having complications she should speak to her general practitioner (GP) or surgeon in the first instance. NHS England is also working with providers to set up specialist centres for mesh inserted for urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse. GPs will be able to refer patients to these specialist centres to ensure patients can get the treatment and support they require.

■ TB Alert

Caroline Lucas:

[\[91604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) the charity TB Alert on the national TB response and (b) that charity's impending closure on the future delivery of the multi-stakeholder TB Action Plan 2020-25; what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing statutory funding to the charity in light of the increasing proportion of TB patients with risk factors such as (i) homelessness, (ii) drug/alcohol misuse, (iii) current or past imprisonment and (iv) other risk factors; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

TB Alert has made a valuable contribution to our national tuberculosis (TB) response, including by developing a peer-support group for patients in the United Kingdom, many of whom have concerns about the stigma surrounding TB for themselves and their families. In addition, the charity has provided accessible support and information for patients, including through an online TB training module for general practitioners, material for healthcare professionals and co-production of a Latent TB Infection Toolkit.

While we recognise that many charities, including TB Alert, are facing difficult decisions at the exact time their services are needed most, the Department does not routinely provide financial support to charities. However, as before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department is continuing to work with charities to deliver specific aims and objectives for which the organisations will be reimbursed.

■ Women's Health Taskforce for England: Meetings**Sarah Champion:** [\[99622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what dates the Women's Health Taskforce for England has met since January 2020; and what the topics of discussion were at each of those meetings.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Women's Health Taskforce has not held any meetings since January 2020.

HOME OFFICE**■ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence****Alex Davies-Jones:** [\[104212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 81 articles in the 2012 Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and girls have yet to be confirmed in UK law.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[104213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the annual report on progress on UK ratification of the Istanbul Convention in line with the Government's responsibilities under section 2 of the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[104214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that Article 4(3) of the 2012 Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and girls is ratified into UK law.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK signed the Istanbul Convention in 2012, signalling its strong commitment to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) and this Government remains committed to ratifying it.

The Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017 requires Ministers to publish annual reports on their progress towards being able to ratify the Convention. The third such report was published on 31 October 2019.

We will shortly be publishing this year's report on our progress, which will set out our compliance position and the steps we are taking towards ratification.

■ Immigration

Stephen Timms:

[\[104010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2020 to Question 100882 on Immigration, whether the figures given for in-country family extensions include all family and human rights extensions.

Stephen Timms:

[\[104011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2020 to Question 100882 on Immigration, in how many cases in each of the four quarters given were fee waivers granted for extension applications in which it was subsequently decided (a) to apply the No Recourse to Public Funds condition and (b) to grant Recourse to Public Funds.

Chris Philp:

We can confirm that the figures given in the Answer of 13 October 2020 to Question 100882 include all initial decisions for 'family and human rights' applications.

Fee Waiver applications are recorded as a separate case in our systems and so the data does not allow us to report which immigration decision a successful Fee Waiver application relates to, although caseworkers making immigration decisions are able to see all relevant information when considering the application. To manually check each immigration decision would incur a disproportionate cost .

■ Visas: Skilled Workers

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[104150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether people applying for a skilled workers visa after 31 December 2020 will be subject to a market labour test.

Kevin Foster:

As already set out in the Government's Policy Statement on the UK's Points-Based Immigration System, published on 19 February, and the 13 July Further Details document, we will be abolishing the Resident Labour Market Test.

This will take effect when the new Skilled Worker route launches later this year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ House of Commons: Twitter

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[104064\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to the Answers to Questions 98904, 101251 and 101252, what discussions members of the House of Commons Commission have had with the members of the House Service on (a) the decision on the House Twitter account to no longer cover Divisions, (b) other changes to that Twitter account and (c) the compatibility of those changes with (i) the objective in the Strategy for the House of

Commons Service 2016-21 of involving and inspiring the public and (ii) other objectives in that strategy.

Pete Wishart:

The Commission has had no discussions with House Service staff regarding the House of Commons Twitter account. The account is managed by the House of Commons Communications Office, part of the House Service, and it is for the House Service to take any decisions about its content.

A core task of the House Service is to support the House of Commons, its committees, and individual members of all parties and their staff. As such, its commitment to, and perception of, impartiality is critical.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Insulation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[102039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will hold discussions with representatives of the British Standards Institution on creating a British Standard for fire safety inspections of building cladding systems.

Christopher Pincher:

My officials hold regular discussions with the British Standards Institution to support our work to improve building safety. We are funding the British Standards Institution to develop technical guidance to support professionals to make an assessment of the fire risk posed by external wall systems. This guidance will support industry to upskill more professionals to take on this work and will increase the quality and consistency of these assessments. This guidance is currently in development and is expected to be published in July 2021.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[102044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will introduce a model similar to Flood Re for fire risk assessments.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is aware that many fire safety professionals are struggling to obtain appropriate professional indemnity insurance (PII). PII cover is essential for these professionals to undertake fire risk assessments on multi-storey residential buildings. The Building Safety Minister is holding regular roundtables with insurance industry representatives to address this issue and a number of options are being considered.

■ Buildings: Safety

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[102045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the recommendation of the Construction Industry Council's interim report

entitled, Raising the Bar, published in August 2019, if he will make it his policy to establish a building safety regulator.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has committed to establish a new Building Safety Regulator within the Health and Safety Executive. The regulator has begun operating in shadow form in order to prepare for transition to the new regulatory regime. Two of the regulator's priorities will be to support industry-led work to strengthen professional competence across the sector, and to establish a committee to oversee its progress.

■ **Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus**

Jess Phillips:

[\[104105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of the new bed spaces provided by the £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund are in move-on accommodation.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Emergency Support Fund aimed to ensure safe accommodation charities, including refuges, could continue to provide support to victims and their children during the pandemic. Charities could apply for funds to create additional temporary provision to meet short-term increases in demand as a result of the pandemic.

We have extended the period for which applicants can spend their grant funding and deliver their outcome by, and this may result in some changes to initial applications.

We are therefore unable to provide a breakdown of beds, in the manner requested, at this time.

Jess Phillips:

[\[104106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many of the new bed spaces provided by the £10 million domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund are in short-term emergency accommodation.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Emergency Support Fund aimed to ensure safe accommodation charities, including refuges, could continue to provide support to victims and their children during the pandemic. Charities could apply for funds to create additional emergency provision to meet short-term increases in demand as a result of the pandemic.

We have extended the period for which applicants can spend their grant funding and deliver their outcome by, and this may result in some changes to initial applications.

We are therefore unable to provide a breakdown of beds, in the manner requested, at this time.

Jess Phillips:

[\[104107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans are in place for occupants of the 1500 new beds provided by the domestic abuse safe accommodation covid-19 emergency support fund of £10 million after 31 October 2020, when that funding has been spent.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The MHCLG £10 million Domestic Abuse Emergency Support Fund aimed to ensure safe accommodation charities, including refuges, could continue to provide support to victims and their children during the pandemic. Charities could apply for funds to create additional temporary provision to meet short-term increases in demand as a result of the pandemic.

Charities can now request to extend the spending period beyond the original 31 October deadline. Plans for occupants of additional beds beyond the emergency funding period will vary depending on the local arrangements put in place by bidders. Charities will be working with local partners to either extend the duration of bedspaces or to ensure occupants can safely move on.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[102041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of applying a risk-based approach to the use of his Department's £1 billion fund to remove and replace unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Fund targets buildings over 18 metres with unsafe cladding because experts, including Dame Judith Hackitt, advise that these are higher risk than lower rise buildings. Higher rise buildings are the least likely to safely evacuate in the event of a fire spreading via external cladding.

It remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings. Government funding should not be the only means of funding remediation. Building owners should meet the costs without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible, through their own resources or by recovering costs from applicable warranty schemes or from the developers or contractors who were responsible for the installation of installed unsafe cladding, as has happened with more than half of the private sector buildings with Aluminium Composite Material cladding.

■ Housing: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[102098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the housing market; and what estimate he has made of the number of completed house sales in each month since the beginning of the outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the housing market and the Government has taken unprecedented measures to help those facing challenges. To support the property sector and home buyers the Government has issued guidance to help people move safely, and temporarily cut Stamp Duty Land Tax for home buyers until the end of the financial year. According to the property website Rightmove, the housing market had its busiest month in July in more than 10 years, with the highest number of monthly sales agreed in Britain. HMRC publishes monthly property transactions at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monthly-property-transactions-completed-in-the-uk-with-value-40000-or-above>. The Nationwide house price index reported that annual house price growth picked up to 5 per cent in September, the highest rate since Sep 2016: https://www.nationwide.co.uk/-/media/MainSite/documents/about/house-price-index/2020/Sep_Q3_2020.pdf.

Housing: Insulation**Dr Matthew Offord:****[102040]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on interested parties of developments of sub-18 metre buildings of the provisions of his Department's Guidance of 20 January 2020 entitled Advice for Building Owners of Multi-storey, Multi-occupied Residential Buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The Independent Expert Advisory Panel's consolidated advice note was issued in January to support Building Owners to ensure their buildings, and occupants are safe, regardless of height. It set out more detailed expert advice based on emerging and new evidence on building safety following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The Department is aware that the guidance has been used by insurers and lenders in their work to support valuations for mortgage purposes, using the RICS EWS1 process. The Government does not support a blanket approach in EWS1 use for lower risk properties. We are working with mortgage lenders to support a more pragmatic approach in their valuation of homes within multi storey residential buildings.

Dr Matthew Offord:**[102042]**

ORIGINAL: To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will allocate additional resources to his £1.6 billion fund to remove and replace unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings to include in that fund properties under 18 metres.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has made £1 billion available to fund the removal of unsafe non-Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding. This is in addition to the £600 million made available already to ensure the remediation of the highest risk ACM cladding.

The Government's decision to place the scope of the Building Safety Fund at buildings over 18 metres reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height.

It remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings of all heights. Government funding should not be the only means of funding remediation. Building owners should meet the costs without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible, through their own resources or by recovering costs from applicable warranty schemes or from the developers or contractors who were responsible for the installation of installed unsafe cladding, as has happened with more than half of the private sector buildings with ACM cladding.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[102043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will create an online publicly accessible portal of all residential buildings with external cladding systems.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department publishes data on the number of high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations. The latest data is available [here](#). The Department has commenced a data collection exercise which will enable us to build a picture of external wall systems in use on high rise residential buildings. The exercise will collect data on residential buildings 18 metres and over covering private and social buildings, student accommodation and hotels. We will publish appropriate summary information from the data collection in our monthly Building Safety Programme data release when ready.

■ Private Rented Housing: Evictions

Tim Farron:

[104077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of Section 21 eviction notices served since the Government consultation on removing Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 on 12 October 2019.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not routinely collect data on the number of Section 21 notices served by landlords. The service of a Section 21 notice precedes the court process for possession and does not necessarily lead to any action in court.

The Ministry of Justice publishes national statistics on possession actions in county courts by private and social landlords at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-april-to-june-2020>. This includes statistics on claims, orders, warrants and possessions.

We have changed the requirements on notice periods in response to the Coronavirus pandemic so that Section 21 notices issued on or after the 29th August must provide tenants with six months' notice before a landlord can lodge a claim for possession in court.

Tim Farron:

[104078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of section 21 eviction notices served from 12 October 2019 to 12 October 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not routinely collect data on the number of Section 21 notices served by landlords. The service of a Section 21 notice precedes the court process for possession and does not necessarily lead to any action in court.

The Ministry of Justice publishes national statistics on possession actions in county courts by private and social landlords at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-april-to-june-2020>. This includes statistics on claims, orders, warrants and possessions.

We have changed the requirements on notice periods in response to the Coronavirus pandemic so that Section 21 notices issued on or after the 29th August must provide tenants with six months' notice before a landlord can lodge a claim for possession in court.

■ Rented Housing: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[102221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to provide support for tenants in Rother Valley constituency who have built up rent arrears as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

To support renters and ensure they can continue to afford their housing costs, the Government has put in place an unprecedented support package, including support for business to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. We have quickly and effectively boosted the welfare safety net by over £9 billion in 2020/21. These measures include increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by £1,040 a year for the next 12 months, and a significant investment in the Local Housing Allowance of nearly £1 billion, lifting rates to the 30th percentile from April this year. The Chancellor has recently announced the Government's Winter Economy Plan which sets out further measures to support jobs and businesses.

For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available. DHPs can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21, there is already £180 million in DHPs

for local authorities to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs, including an additional £40 million to help tackle affordability pressures in the private rented sector.

To further protect renters over winter, we have legislated to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but most serious circumstances and asked bailiffs not to carry out evictions over Christmas or in areas that are subject to a local lockdown where that includes a restriction on gatherings in homes.

■ Respite Care: Finance

Alexander Stafford:

[\[102222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of local authorities to fund short break services to provide respite for disabled children and their families.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise the pressures that the pandemic has placed on local authority finances, and are monitoring this closely through monthly financial returns.

We are providing local authorities with an unprecedented package of support, including £3.7 billion of unringfenced grants. Local councils can use this funding to respond to pressures in their local area, including for respite services for disabled children and their families.

In addition the Prime Minister has announced a further £1 billion of funding for local authorities, details of which will be announced shortly.

■ Silica: Health Hazards

Matt Western:

[\[104154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has commissioned research on the potential effect on health of silica particulates transported in air related to mineral extraction.

Christopher Pincher:

The MHCLG has not commissioned any research into the potential effect on health of silica sand particulates transported in air related to mineral extraction. The remit of my Department is related to planning matters.

Our National Planning Policy Framework sets out how mineral planning authorities should approach planning for and dealing with mineral planning developments. It states that in granting planning permission for mineral extraction planning authorities should ensure that any unavoidable dust and particle emissions are controlled, mitigated or removed at source.

It is, therefore, for mineral planning authorities to plan for and determine planning applications for silica sand and assess the impacts of those proposals, including the impacts of any dust emissions. In dealing with mineral proposals, mineral planning authorities would seek the views of appropriate consultees, such as local

environmental health authorities, Environment Agency, Public Health England and/or the Health and Safety Executive depending on the particular facts of the case.

■ **Towns Fund**

Matt Western:

[\[104161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria his Department used to select the places which receive funding from the Towns Fund.

Luke Hall:

Ministers considered a range of factors and different methods of identifying and prioritising towns. The metrics selected and their weighting was decided based on an analysis of the policy problem and aims and was calibrated against local intelligence and feedback. Further detail can be found within the National Audit Office Review of the Town Deals selection process.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Brendan Cox**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[103461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department had with Brendan Cox on the GREAT campaign in financial year 2019-20; and whether Brendan Cox received remuneration for discussions on that campaign.

Graham Stuart:

All meetings of senior officials with external organisations or persons are published in line with the usual transparency requirements, and can be viewed on gov.uk. There have been no contracts awarded or purchase orders set up by the Department for International Trade to make payments to Brendan Cox.

■ **Foreign Investment: Georgia**

Alyn Smith:

[\[102928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 91155 on Georgia: Freedom of Expression, what assessment the Government has made of the investment climate in the Republic of Georgia.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Georgia is ranked seventh in the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' index, as she has an open business environment and a strong investment climate.

At the recent United Kingdom-Georgia Wardrop Dialogue, opportunities for British business were identified in areas such as renewable energy, business services and light manufacturing. The Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between both countries – signed on 21st October 2019 – will allow businesses to continue to

trade on preferential terms following its entry into force at the end of the Transition Period.

■ Fuel Cells: Exports

Chi Onwurah: [\[103507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to support UK fuel cell manufacturers export their products.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade has a dedicated team that supports renewable energy businesses, including those exporting fuel cell technologies in which the UK has world-leading capability. The Department engages UK suppliers from within the hydrogen industry, sector specific research centres, and UK Government departments to understand and promote UK capability. UK Export Finance, regional offices, and the department's overseas network are all part of the support offer available.

■ Generalised System of Preferences: EU External Relations

Emily Thornberry: [\[101258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the graduation thresholds will be under the UK general framework compared with the EU generalised scheme of preferences.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) will replicate the EU's approach to graduating products that are internationally competitive. On 31st December 2020, when our GSP takes effect, it will replicate the EU's current list of graduated goods. Thereafter, trade preferences will be suspended from countries in the General Framework for goods where the import ratio for those goods, over a three-year import review period, exceed the following thresholds:

- Plants, oils and metals: 17.5%
- Textiles and apparel: 47.2%
- All other goods: 57%.

The list of graduated goods will be reviewed every three years and the outcome published in a notice.

Emily Thornberry: [\[101259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the vulnerability thresholds will be under the UK enhanced framework compared with the EU GSP+ system.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

At the end of the Transition Period, the United Kingdom will create her Enhanced Framework, which will take a similar approach to the conditions in the EU GSP+.

To be eligible for the Enhanced Framework, countries may be economically vulnerable due to a lack of export diversification and low level of integration with the international trading system. A country may be considered economically vulnerable where:

- For products to which the Enhanced Framework applies, imports of the seven largest types of products from a country must make up more than 75% of all imports from that country;
- The ratio of the beneficiary's import share in relation to the rest of the GSP beneficiaries must be lower than 9%.

A country will also be considered for inclusion as economically vulnerable if it benefitted from the EU GSP+ on 31st December.

JUSTICE

■ Chief Coroner: Annual Reports

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[102180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the Chief Coroner's annual report for 2018-19 will be published.

Alex Chalk:

The Chief Coroner has provided his combined annual reports 2018-19 and 2019-20 to the Lord Chancellor who will publish them shortly.

■ Courts: Coronavirus

Mr David Lammy:

[\[101943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many external consultants have been employed to help implement temporary courts during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr David Lammy:

[\[101944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much has been spent on external consultants employed to implement temporary courts during the covid-19 outbreak to date.

Mr David Lammy:

[\[101945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which companies have been awarded contracts to provide consultancy services to help implement temporary courts during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

No external consultants have been employed and no contracts have been awarded for the specific purpose of implementing temporary Nightingale courts.

The project to implement temporary Nightingale courts has been administered by an in-house team of HMCTS project and programme staff. While the project is in-house,

HMCTS has engaged the services of Cushman and Wakefield - Commercial Real Estate Services to a value of approximately £43k to provide specialist support in negotiating licences for hire venues.

These additional hearing venues are being rapidly set up by HMCTS to alleviate the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic

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 our recovery plans and includes details about Nightingale courts.

■ Prison Service: Ethnic Groups

Mr David Lammy:

[101949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what targets his Department has set for recruiting Black and ethnic minority staff to the prison service; and what progress his Department has made on achieving those targets.

Lucy Frazer:

In response to recommendation 28 of the Lammy Review 2017, HMPPS committed to a target of 14% of all staff recruited being from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background by December 2020.

The latest published workforce statistics evidences information on recruitment diversity statistics. The following outcomes have been identified:

- All Prison Officer Entry Levels: BAME candidates made up 18.2% of applicants and 11.0% of formal offers accepted between July 2018 and June 2020. These proportions varied over the quarters ranging from 14.5% to 29.9% for applicants, and 7.1% to 17.6% for offers formally accepted.
- **Public Sector Prison Officers:** BAME candidates made up 17.4% of applicants and 10.7% of formal offers accepted between July 2018 and June 2020. These proportions varied over the quarters ranging from 12.0% to 25.2% for applicants and 7.1% to 17.2% for offers accepted.
- **Youth Custody Services Prison Officers:** BAME candidates made up 31.9% of applicants and 22.7% of formal offers accepted over the whole period.
- Officer Support Grades: BAME candidates made up 18.8% of applicants and 12.6% of formal offers accepted, with large variations between the quarters.

While the proportion of prison staff from diverse backgrounds is gradually rising, we recognise we must continue to do more. We continue to work hard to increase diversity in our prison workforce by ensuring we are listening and acting on the views of staff, making adjustments to selection processes to address any areas of disparity and targeting our efforts on areas which may not have a representative workforce.

■ Prisoners: Babies

Mr David Lammy:

[101946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the planned timescale is for publishing the report by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman on the death of two babies in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

The PPO's final investigation reports into deaths are only published after an inquest has taken place. Reports are not published in advance of the inquest to avoid any possibility of influencing the verdict.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) has advised me that she has concluded the independent investigation into the death of a baby at HMP Bronzefield and will shortly issue a draft report to the mother, the prison and the healthcare providers for fact checking, as well as to the coroner for information. A final report will then be produced and sent to the same stakeholders.

She has also advised that the independent investigation into the death of a baby at HMP Styal is ongoing, and that a timescale for publication of the report will not be available until its conclusion.

■ Remand in Custody

Mr David Lammy:

[101947]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will place a copy in the Library of the equalities impact assessment of the changes to custody time limits in the crown court.

Chris Philp:

The Equalities Impact Statement is publicly available on gov.UK:

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/953/pdfs/uksipes_20200953_en.pdf

■ Wakefield Prison: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[102202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners had been diagnosed with covid-19 up to the end of September 2020.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[102203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers had been diagnosed with covid-19 up to the end of September 2020.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[102205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners at HMP Wakefield have been diagnosed with covid-19 since March 2020.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[102206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers at HMP Wakefield have been diagnosed with covid-19 since March 2020.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[102207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many operations for prisoners at HMP Wakefield have been cancelled since March 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

Verified data on the number of staff and prisoners that have tested positive for COVID-19 is due to be published in November as part of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) national COVID-19 statistics on gov.uk. Prisoner data is published monthly. Staff data is published quarterly, the most recent data covers the period up to 31 July 2020.

For the purposes of this data, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Much of the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic has been done at pace, with recording practices evolving as we understand more about the requirements and conditions we are facing. In order to present the timeliest information, the data presented has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics. Data in relation to prisoners has been rounded to two significant figures.

For the purposes of prison officer data, this combines the reporting categories for i) operational grades 3-5 and ii) grades deemed as prison officer and above.

The number of prisoners recorded as being tested positive for covid-19 up to 30 September is 630. This number includes 10 cases recorded within the Youth Custody Service.

The number of prison officers recorded as being tested positive for COVID-19 up to 31 July 2020 is 635.

Five prisoners had tested positive at HMP Wakefield in the period up to 30 September.

Three prison officers had tested positive at HMP Wakefield in the period up to 31 July.

HMPPS does not own or centrally collate data on the number of prisoner operations that have been cancelled. This data is owned by the current Healthcare provider at HMP Wakefield - Care UK.

We have robust plans in place to keep prisoners, staff and the public safe, based on the latest Public Health England advice. We continue to monitor the situation across the estate, and should restrictions need to be re-imposed to maintain safety, we will not hesitate to do this. Prisons operate under a National Framework which sets out how restrictions are managed: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>.

■ Youth Justice: Equality

Mr David Lammy:

[\[101948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) composition and (b) remit is of the Scrutiny Panel set up to deal with racial disparity in the youth justice system.

Lucy Frazer:

The Race and Ethnicity Board, chaired by Ministry of Justice, oversees all work on reducing race and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system for both children and adults. This board is designed to hold to account policy makers and agencies responsible for tackling disproportionality.

A range of other groups exist at local and national level to provide scrutiny and oversight of racial disparity in the youth justice system, sometimes as part of a broader focus on a particular area of practice or broader focus on equalities across the system.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Trade: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[102211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what provisions he has put in place to ensure that Northern Ireland goods do not face competitive disadvantage or discrimination when placed on the market in Great Britain.

Stephen Farry:

[\[103660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to ensure that goods produced in Northern Ireland do not face competitive disadvantage when placed on the market in Great Britain.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government has committed to delivering unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses in legislation, including through the UK Internal Market Bill and the Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods Regulations.

The UK Internal Market Bill will prohibit new checks and controls on qualifying Northern Ireland goods, and through the mutual recognition principle will enable qualifying Northern Ireland goods to be placed on the market in Great Britain without additional approvals. This will ensure direct trade from Northern Ireland to Great Britain will continue as it does now.

The non-discrimination principle contained in the bill will also apply fully to qualifying Northern Ireland goods. This principle will apply to certain types of regulatory requirements not captured by mutual recognition, for example on transportation and manner of sale, and will prevent requirements that discriminate against qualifying Northern Ireland goods by putting them at a disadvantage when sold in Great Britain.

Furthermore, through the UK Common frameworks programme we will work with the devolved administrations to ensure that coherent approaches are maintained across the UK in frameworks policy areas from the end of the transition period.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[98999\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, if he will appoint a new Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief before the Open Doors World Watch List launch event to be held in January 2021.

Boris Johnson:

An appointment will be announced in the usual way.

All Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Ministers raise concerns about human rights violations and abuses, including on Freedom of Religion or Belief, where appropriate. As the UK Minister for Human Rights, my Hon Friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon also champions and leads on Freedom of Religion or Belief as part of his wider responsibilities and through multilateral fora including the United Nations.

TRANSPORT

■ Delivery Services: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[101956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to incentivise fleet delivery companies to install air quality monitors on their vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not currently have plans to incentivise the use of air quality monitors by fleet delivery companies in their vehicles.

■ High Speed Two: Disclosure of Information

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[104007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many non-disclosure agreements have been entered into by HS2 Ltd; and if he will list the parties to those agreements.

Andrew Stephenson:

Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) are used to protect both HS2 Ltd's information and the information of the other signatory party and are in accordance with typical business practice. These agreements help to avoid placing homes and businesses in unnecessary blight, protect commercially sensitive information of both parties and the personal information of those potentially affected by any proposed changes to the scheme. HS2 Ltd's Register shows 342 such agreements have been put in place. As

this number changes on a frequent basis as the project develops and new agreements are added to the Register we do not intend to publish a list of the parties at the present time.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Air Pollution**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[101955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to incentivise the use of air quality monitors on Heavy Goods Vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not currently have plans to incentivise the use of air quality monitors on Heavy Goods Vehicles.

■ **Large Goods Vehicles: Environment Protection**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[101954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to (a) encourage and (b) incentivise the use of environmentally sustainable (a) Heavy and (b) Medium Goods Vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is currently working to produce a Transport Decarbonisation Plan that will deliver a cross-modal approach to decarbonising transport, including road freight. We are also promoting best practice and effective actions to enable operators to reduce emissions and improve the environmental sustainability of their vehicles.

A number of local authorities are implementing Clean Air Zones (CAZ) in order to reduce NO2 emissions to legal levels. The Government is providing funding to these areas to allow them to offer grants to businesses operating HGVs impacted by CAZ charges to help them upgrade their vehicles to cleaner, compliant models.

■ **Leeds Station: Coronavirus**

Richard Burgon:

[\[102120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to protect staff (a) employed by Northern Trains and (b) employed at Leeds City Station from contracting covid-19 during the course of their employment.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Comprehensive guidance has been issued and updated throughout the pandemic. Our priority is the safety of staff and passengers and our operators remain committed to ensuring their stations are safe for everyone.

■ Northern: Coronavirus**Richard Burgon:****[102121]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what enhancements have been made to cleaning regimes at (a) Leeds City Station and (b) all Northern Trains stations in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Northern Trains Ltd (NTL) has received and confirms that it has followed Rail Delivery Group guidelines on the cleaning of its stations and has carried out a robust cleaning schedule since the outbreak.

In addition to routine cleaning regimes, NTL's process is that all stations are treated at least once per week with a long-lasting broad spectrum; anti-bacterial; anti-viral, anti-fungal; and anti-algal cleaning product either by static cleaning staff or by mobile teams.

Once applied (by aerosol or by direct application) it bonds to surfaces and delivers persistent protection, even after regular washing and cleaning. The protective layer or "invisible shield" attracts and kills organisms mechanically, removing the risk of cross contamination, resistance or mutation.

The teams target high-touch areas like ticket vending machines. NTL has also worked with its services contractor, ISS, to recruit and train additional staff and provide additional transportation to facilitate this heightened cleaning regime

Richard Burgon:**[102122]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the provisions of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, what steps he is taking to consult on matters relating to covid-19 with safety representatives at (a) Leeds City Station and (b) all Northern Trains stations.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Engaging on health and safety matters at Leeds station is the responsibility of employers and service providers amongst others on the site as well as the station operator, Network Rail. Northern Trains Ltd has similar responsibilities as employer and operator of its own managed stations.

■ Public Transport: Leicestershire**Dr Luke Evans:****[102190]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to fund public transport in (a) Bosworth and (b) Leicestershire.

Rachel Maclean:

Last year Leicestershire County Council received £534,721 from the £43m Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) grant to subsidise socially necessary bus services. In addition, Leicestershire has this year been provided with additional allocation of £556,627 as part of 'Better Deal for Bus Users' package. Bus operators running

services in the area have also benefitted from the Government's Covid Bus Services Support Grant.

The new operator of East Midlands Railway, Abellio, is bringing a package of more than £600 million investment in improvements to rail services across their area. Leicestershire will also benefit from the Midland Main Line upgrade, which will increase rail capacity and shorten journey times into London as well as and the introduction of new Bi-Mode Trains on the Midland Main Line.

Like all government departments, DfT is engaging with HM Treasury's Comprehensive Spending Review process to agree a financial settlement which will enable the department to deliver on the Government's priorities over the coming years.

■ **Shipping: Carbon Emissions**

Gavin Robinson:

[104102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to support decarbonisation of the maritime sector.

Robert Courts:

The Clean Maritime Plan, published in July 2019, is the environmental route map of the Maritime 2050 Strategy, outlining the UK's pathway to zero carbon emissions in domestic maritime. In launching the Clean Maritime Plan, the UK became one of the first countries to publish a strategy on domestic action to reduce shipping emissions following the agreement of the International Maritime Organization's initial IMO strategy on the Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships. Government has continued to make good progress in implementing the commitments in the Clean Maritime Plan.

At the end of March 2020, the Government published a document "Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge" kicking off our work on preparing a Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which will include further details of the Government plans regarding the decarbonisation of the maritime sector. Following extensive consultation, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan will be published later this year.

■ **Shipping: Exhaust Emissions**

Wes Streeting:

[102126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of jobs that would be created through the provision of funding for maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

In 2019, the Department published the Clean Maritime Plan, which noted the potential for clean economic growth in the UK as a result of the transition to zero emission shipping.

Alongside the Plan, the Department published an assessment of the potential economic opportunities from low and zero emission shipping. While this does not

estimate the number of potential new jobs that could be created through the decarbonisation of the maritime sector, it identifies a large potential global market for the elements of alternative maritime fuel production technologies in which the UK has a particular competitive advantage (for example, upfront design), which could result in economic benefits to the UK of around £360–£510 million per year by the middle of the century.

Maritime UK has published its views that investment in maritime decarbonisation could in future create more than 15 thousand jobs as well as tens of thousands of jobs when considering the wider supply chain ^[1]. Industry research estimates that in 2017 the UK maritime sector as a whole directly supported more than 220 thousand jobs for UK employees ^[2].

^[1]<https://www.maritimeuk.org/spending-review/bid/>

^[2]https://www.maritimeuk.org/documents/429/Maritime_UK_-_state_of_the_maritime_nation_report_2019_D17mVSQ.pdf

Wes Streeting:**[102127]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on coastal communities of providing Government funding for maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

In 2019, alongside the Clean Maritime Plan, the Department published an assessment which identified that low and zero emissions shipping could result in potential economic benefits to the UK of around £360-£510 million per year by the middle of the century.

Maritime UK has published its views that investment in maritime decarbonisation could in future create jobs in all four nations of the United Kingdom, particularly in coastal communities with a tradition of maritime economic activity, including shipbuilding^[1].

Industry research estimates that in 2017 the UK maritime sector as a whole directly supported more than 220 thousand jobs for UK employees^[2].

^[1]<https://www.maritimeuk.org/spending-review/bid/>

^[2]https://www.maritimeuk.org/documents/429/Maritime_UK_-_state_of_the_maritime_nation_report_2019_D17mVSQ.pdf

■ Travel: Quarantine**Sarah Olney:****[104149]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting people from covid-19 quarantine rules who due to contractual obligations must travel fortnightly to the EU.

Robert Courts:

There is an exemption for people who live in the UK but work in another country and travel between the UK and country of work at least once a week. It is for the individual to assess whether they qualify for an exemption and to ensure they can evidence the criteria as required for the exemption. As with all measures, this list of exemptions remains under regular review.

The full list of exemptions is available on gov.uk at the link below: full list here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules/coronavirus-covid-19-travellers-exempt-from-uk-border-rules

Travelup**Stephen Farry:****[102210]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of TravelUp proposals to (a) utilise trusts to protect customers' funds and (b) bring forward an airline insolvency Bill.

Robert Courts:

The Department has been clear that airlines and travel agents should not deny consumers their legal right to a refund if it is requested, and that the refund should be processed in a timely manner. COVID-19 has highlighted a number of challenges, and we will be working with the regulator and industry to learn lessons and make changes that are pragmatic and sensible.

Airline insolvency is a highly complex and technical policy area. The Government has considered the recommendations of the Airline Insolvency Review to identify the reforms needed to ensure a strong level of consumer protection and value for money for the taxpayer.

The Government is also mindful of the need to consider the challenges faced by the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19. We are keeping under review the scope and timing of any future reforms in this policy area.

TREASURY**[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:****[907786]**

What fiscal steps he is taking to support food supply chains during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The government has provided unprecedented levels of support for workers and businesses across the food supply chain to protect against the current economic emergency.

This includes the Dairy and Fisheries Response Funds provided to support our farmers and fisherman, the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme to back our pubs and

restaurants, and the Job Support Scheme to protect jobs and livelihoods right across the hospitality sector.

Rushanara Ali:

[\[907787\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to help prevent the fraudulent use of Government schemes to provide financial support for people and businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC, and the Government more generally, take the risk of fraud arising from the use of COVID-19 support schemes very seriously. Accordingly the Government has established a ministerial board, chaired jointly by ministers from the Cabinet Office and Home Office. This board has set direction on the fraud response, with work coordinated by the Government's Counter-Fraud Function. COVID-19 schemes have been assessed for fraud risk and appropriate controls have been designed and implemented. Departments are working together to share intelligence, and to identify and investigate cases of suspected fraud.

Robert Halfon:

[\[907789\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on additional financial support in helping to close the disadvantage attainment gap.

Steve Barclay:

I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State on Education policy. We are committed to ensuring no child, whatever their background, falls behind as a result of this pandemic. Our £1 billion catch-up plan includes £350 million for a National Tutoring Programme targeted at disadvantaged children. We have also provided over £2.4 billion of Pupil Premium funding this year for the most disadvantaged.

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[907790\]](#)

What plans he has to provide additional fiscal support to families during the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

This Government is committed to doing whatever it takes to support families through the Covid-19 pandemic. That is why we have put in place an unprecedented package of support – including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and the Job Support Scheme. In addition to these measures, the Government has introduced over £9bn of temporary welfare support – all helping to protect incomes, jobs, and support those most in need.

■ Amusement Arcades: Coronavirus

Gordon Henderson:

[\[102770\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide support to (a) seaside and (b) high street arcades; and if he will extend the reduction in the rate of VAT to 5 per cent to include that sector.

Jesse Norman:

The Government initially cut the rate of VAT applied to hospitality, accommodation and attractions, from 20 per cent to 5 per cent, for a period of six months to 12 January 2021. The Government has extended this relief, and it will now end on 31 March 2021. The reduced rate aims to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses in the affected sectors and will help protect 2.4 million jobs.

Any business providing relevant hospitality, accommodation or attractions is able to benefit from the relief, wherever the business is located in the UK. Further information on this is available on GOV.UK. This policy will cost over £3 billion, and while some businesses in some sectors are disappointed, a boundary for eligibility had to be drawn.

■ Beer: Small Businesses**John Healey:**[\[104033\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2020 to Question 100891, how many and what proportion of brewers produce (a) less than 2,100 hectolitres per year and (b) between 2,100 and 5,000 hectolitres per year.

Kemi Badenoch:

Further information about small breweries will be published with the technical consultation on Small Brewers Relief this Autumn.

■ Business: Loans**Bim Afolami:**[\[102911\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the likely combined effect on lending to UK businesses of the partial reintroduction of crown preference (secondary preferential creditor status) from 1 December 2020 and the amount of deferred VAT under the Deferral Scheme for VAT.

Bim Afolami:[\[102912\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate his Department has made of the expected additional returns to the Exchequer as a result of the introduction of secondary preferential creditor status in conjunction with the Deferral Scheme for VAT.

Bim Afolami:[\[102913\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the likely effect on business insolvencies of reintroducing secondary preferential creditor status in December 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The recent legislative change gives HMRC second preferential creditor status for certain taxes. This change is designed to ensure that when a business enters insolvency, more of the taxes paid in good faith by its employees and customers, but held temporarily by the business, go to fund public services as intended, rather than be distributed to other creditors.

This change is not expected to have a significant impact on financial institutions, the lending market or wider economy. This measure is forecast to raise up to £220 million a year. To put this into perspective, bank lending to small and medium-sized businesses alone in 2019 was £57 billion.

This reform will have no direct impact on VAT deferral as it only applies to businesses that become insolvent. Like HMRC's Time to Pay scheme, the VAT deferral supports businesses with their cashflow pressures, making them less likely to be insolvent.

■ Children: Day Care

Claire Hanna:

[\[104204\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if people whose working hours are reduced to less than 16 hours per week during the covid-19 outbreak after 31 October 2020 will be able to access the childcare element of working tax credits.

Steve Barclay:

At the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, HMRC changed regulations to ease the Working Tax Credit hours requirements and treat claimants as if they were working their normal hours. This meant that claimants whose hours dropped below the requirements, including the 16 hours per week for a single adult with one or more children, could remain on Working Tax Credit. This easement was tied to the length of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and is set to expire on 31 October.

We will shortly lay legislation to implement an additional easement for the length of the Job Support Scheme. This will ensure claimants whose hours reduce due to the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have access to Working Tax Credit and its childcare element.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Jim McMahon:

[\[103594\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reducing Government wage subsidies from 80 per cent to 67 per cent during the covid-19 outbreak; and what assessment he has made of the effect of implementing that reduction on people on the minimum wage.

Steve Barclay:

Overall levels of support have been generous by international standards, including compared to countries like Germany and France, or Ireland where eligibility criteria means many companies don't even qualify for support.

The government has always been clear that paying 80% of normal pay through CJRS, supporting 9.6 million jobs at a level far higher than almost anywhere in the world, is simply not sustainable.

The new Job Support Scheme (JSS) will support businesses that need it most; protecting jobs in businesses facing lower demand over the winter due to Covid-19 and helping them prepare for recovery. Where the Government has had to go further

on health restrictions and close business premises in some areas, the Job Support Scheme is being expanded to protect jobs and help businesses reopen more quickly once those restrictions are lifted. The scheme will cover businesses that are legally required to close their premises as a direct result of Coronavirus restrictions set by one or more of the four governments in the UK.

For low income households, Universal Credit provides further income protection. A working household on the Universal Credit taper will see their UC award increase by 63p for every £1 they lose in earnings (and for those households that also pay income tax and NICs, the impact on their overall income will be even smaller).

Companies can of course top up employees' wages, and the JSS forms just one part of a wider package of government support for individuals, including rental support, mortgage holidays, and extra funding for the welfare safety net.

■ Debts: Coronavirus

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[104140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to protect people who have accrued debt as a result of the covid-19 outbreak from losing their homes.

John Glen:

For mortgage payers, the Government has worked with mortgage lenders and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to ensure the financial sector provides access to mortgage payment holidays. In addition, support for Mortgage Interest provides qualifying borrowers who cannot afford their mortgage interest with financial help, enabling them to stay in their homes.

The Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support for tenants. This includes providing nearly £1 billion of additional support for private renters claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit by increasing the Local Housing Allowance rate in 2020-21. The Government paused possession proceedings over the summer and now, to ensure that renters served notice can stay in their homes over winter, has extended notice periods to six months in all but the most egregious cases. And there will be no enforcement of evictions in areas of local lockdown, where access to premises is restricted, or over the Christmas period in England and Wales.

To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, the budget for free debt advice in England has been increased to over £100 million this financial year. And from May 2021 the Breathing Space scheme will offer people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Stephen Farry:

[\[102215\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional financial support to people of working age who were employed or self-employed before the start of the covid-19 outbreak but who have since

been unable to work as a result of having underlying health conditions that make them vulnerable to covid-19 infection.

Jesse Norman:

Individuals with underlying health conditions have access to the unprecedented package of support for individuals that the Government has introduced. This includes the introduction of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Job Support Scheme, and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

For those on low incomes or unable to work, the Government has injected a further £9.3 billion into the welfare system and has made several changes to support the most vulnerable. These changes include: a £20 per week increase to the UC standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a relaxation of the UC minimum income floor for all self-employed claimants. In addition, those with a health condition which prevents them from working or preparing for work may be entitled to an extra amount of Universal Credit.

Since 1 August, the Government has relaxed national advice for workers who are clinically extremely vulnerable. The advice is the same as for the clinically vulnerable; to work from home where possible. However, if they are unable to work from home, they will be able to return, provided their workplace is COVID-safe.

Alex Norris:

[104179]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support he plans to provide to clinically extremely vulnerable people who are unable to return to work because of the safety concerns after the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

From 1 August the Government has relaxed national advice for the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), bringing it in line with the advice to those who are clinically vulnerable. The advice is still to stay at home as much as possible. However, if they are unable to work from home, they will be able to return to work, provided their workplace is COVID-safe. It is important that this group continue to take careful precautions, and employers should do all they can to enable them to work from home where this is possible, including moving them to another role or adjusting their work patterns if required.

To support this guidance, the CEV will continue to have access to an unprecedented package of financial support after the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ends. To keep employees attached to the workforce even if they are unable to work their usual hours, the Government will be introducing a new Job Support Scheme from 1 November, which will support firms facing reduced demand with wage costs incurred from 1 November 2020. In order to protect jobs, the Government has also expanded the JSS for businesses legally required to temporarily close their premises as a direct result of coronavirus restrictions. The Government will provide those employers with a grant for employees unable to work, covering two thirds of their usual wages and subject to a cap.

For clinically extremely vulnerable individuals who are on low incomes or who are out of work, the Government has injected a further £9.3 billion into the welfare system according to OBR estimates. Changes include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants.

■ **Financial Services: Advisory Services**

Peter Gibson:

[\[102169\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on the effect of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme levy on client-focused independent financial advisers.

John Glen:

The Treasury and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) both share the objective to ensure that the market for financial advice works well and are in regular discussions with one another about relevant developments in the market. We are aware of concerns about the effect of the increased Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) levy on financial advisers. We are working closely with the FCA, who are monitoring the issue and engaging with the financial advice sector to understand their concerns.

■ **Fiscal Policy: Coronavirus**

Stephen Farry:

[\[102217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of applying Modern Monetary Theory principles to his fiscal policies when responding to the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

In responding to Covid-19 outbreak the government has announced unprecedented support for families, businesses, and self-employed people. The actions taken have been necessary to help limit any long-term economic scarring and to ensure the economy can recover quickly once the pandemic is over.

The government is committed to delivering support within the existing macroeconomic framework, which is essential for ensuring the UK's economic credibility. The government's immediate response to COVID-19 will continue to be funded by additional borrowing, through the government's normal debt management operations.

■ **Funerals: Pre-payment**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[104060\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the outcome of the consultation on the pre-paid funeral plan sector.

John Glen:

As part of the Budget, the Chancellor published the government's response to its consultation on the pre-paid funeral plan sector. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-pre-paid-funeral-plans-consultation-on-a-policy-proposal>

■ Job Retention Bonus**Stephen Farry:****[102213]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, prior to taking his decision to introduce the Job Retention Bonus, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of allocating the funding assigned to that Bonus to either (a) reducing the level of employer contribution to the Job Support Scheme or (b) providing sector-specific job support schemes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The combination of the Job Retention Bonus (JRB) and the Job Support Scheme (JSS) will help to protect jobs. The JRB helps with employers' costs: for the average claim, the JRB will subsidise about 20% of the employment costs from November to January. For employees at the lower earnings limit, it will subsidise about 60% of employment costs.

■ Pensions: Uprating**Jonathan Edwards:****[104084]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has undertaken of the effect that changing the calculation formula for Retail Price Index will have on private pension income.

John Glen:

The Retail Prices Index (RPI) is a measure of inflation with a number of shortcomings. To address these shortcomings, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) has made a proposal to reform RPI by bringing the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI. Owing to the use of RPI in specific index-linked gilts, prior to 2030 the Chancellor's consent to this proposal is required before it can be implemented.

At the Budget in March, the government and UKSA launched a consultation to consider whether UKSA's proposal should be implemented at a date other than 2030, and, if so, when between 2025 and 2030. The consultation closed for responses on 21 August. As part of the consultation, the government has sought views on the broader impacts of the proposed reform of RPI.

The government and UKSA will respond to the consultation in the autumn.

■ Public Expenditure: Coronavirus

Gerald Jones:

[\[104131\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish all Departmental budget adjustments in response to the covid-19 outbreak, in full, so that there is transparency and clarity of consequential funding to allow devolved Administrations to plan their response to the covid-19 outbreak effectively.

Steve Barclay:

The Treasury regularly updates parliament on funding for measures in response to Covid-19. All adjustments to departmental budgets since Main Estimates will be published at Supplementary Estimates in the winter, in the usual way.

In July the Treasury announced an unprecedented guarantee that the DAs would receive at least £12.7 billion in additional resource funding this year to help them respond to Covid-19. The Treasury has subsequently uplifted that by £1.3 billion, to at least £14 billion. This gives the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive the certainty to ensure they can plan for Covid-19 response in the months ahead.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Hospitality Industry

Angela Crawley:

[\[103566\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme for self-employed people who rely on the hospitality sector for their income.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Grant Extension provides crucial support for the self-employed, including those in the hospitality sector. It is targeted at those who are currently actively trading but are facing reduced demand due to COVID-19, in order to help them continue trading in the forthcoming winter months.

The Government understands that some businesses and sectors will be affected by COVID-19 to a greater extent than others. The SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed. Those not eligible for the SEISS Grant Extension may still be eligible for other elements of the unprecedented financial support available.

The Government has temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor for the duration of the pandemic so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, the self-employed have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

■ Taxation: Coronavirus**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[101960\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a windfall tax on organisations that have gained financially during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government keeps the UK tax system under constant review to ensure that it provides a fair and sustainable basis for funding our [vital] public services.

■ VAT: Coronavirus**Bim Afolami:**[\[102910\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the expected number of returns to the Exchequer of the level of deferred VAT payments under the Deferral Scheme for VAT.

Jesse Norman:

As part of the Government's support for businesses during COVID-19, businesses were given the option to defer their VAT payments between 20 March and 30 June in order to manage their cash flow through the initial stages of the pandemic.

Approximately 500,000 businesses deferred £30 billion in VAT. Approximately £16 billion of VAT was received into the Exchequer covering the deferral period, as some businesses continued to pay VAT as normal.

WALES**■ Iron and Steel: Wales****Matt Western:**[\[104159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps the Government is taking to support the steel industry in Wales.

Simon Hart:

We recognise that global economic conditions continue to be challenging for the steel industry and are committed to supporting a productive, vibrant and modern steel sector in the UK. That is why we recently worked to reach an agreement with Celsa which will save hundreds of highly-skilled Welsh jobs.

The Government has put together a far-reaching package of support to help businesses through the coronavirus pandemic. We continue to regularly engage with the steel sector about support mechanisms, especially in dealing with the economic impact of Covid-19.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equal Pay: Disclosure of Information

Stella Creasy:

[\[102068\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if the Government will reinstate gender pay gap reporting in 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

In recognition of the unprecedented uncertainty and pressure facing employers due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission suspended enforcement of the gender pay gap reporting deadlines for the 2019/20 reporting year.

Although enforcement was suspended, no changes have been made to the legislation. Employers are still able to report their gender pay gaps for the reporting year 2019/20 but face no enforcement action for doing so late or for not doing so at all.

■ Equality Act 2010

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[96951\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress her Department has made on bringing section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 into force.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[96952\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with representatives of (a) political parties and (b) civil society groups on the enactment of section 106 of the Equality Act 2010.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government keeps section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 under review but has no current plans for it to be commenced. We encourage political parties to lead the way in improving diverse electoral representation through their selection of candidates and we are happy to engage political parties and civil society groups on how best those responsibilities can be fulfilled.

■ Gay Conversion Therapy

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[93718\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the 2018 LGBT+ Action Plan, what assessment he has made of non-legislative options to prohibit promoting, offering or conducting conversion therapy.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[93719\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to support victims of conversion therapy.

Kemi Badenoch:

We have been thoroughly considering both legislative and non-legislative options to stop this out-dated and harmful practice, and support victims. My officials are working at pace on the matter, and we will outline plans to end conversion therapy practices once we have completed this work. We know that a whole society approach will be needed to truly end conversion therapy and we will continue to engage key stakeholders to stop this abhorrent practice.

■ Pregnancy and Maternity (Redundancy Protection) Bill

Owen Thompson: [\[95141\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the Pregnancy and Maternity (Redundancy Protection) Bill.

Owen Thompson: [\[95143\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the differential treatment of maternity allowance in the calculation of universal credit awards.

Kemi Badenoch:

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

The Government is determined to do more to ensure pregnant women and new mothers are not disproportionately affected by redundancy. The Government has committed to extend the statutory redundancy protection which a mother currently enjoys while on maternity leave, shared parental leave or adoption leave for a period for six months following a return to work. BEIS will bring these measures forward as soon as there is an appropriate opportunity.

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Helen Hayes: [\[91777\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent discussions has she had with the Department for Work and Pensions on the equality impact of the current statutory sick pay rate.

Kemi Badenoch:

The responsibility for equalities impact assessments lies with departments, who take this responsibility very seriously. Impact assessments are kept under review and my colleagues are fully aware of their equality duties.

In this particular instance, the Department for Work and Pensions published a consultation Health is everyone's business in July 2019 in which they sought views on the rate of statutory sick pay. A response will be published later this year (2020).

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment Schemes: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[102226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people that will be retrained by Government schemes after the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made of the number of people who will be retrained by Government schemes after the end of the Job Retention Scheme.

We have a range of schemes available to support individuals to gain the skills they need to find work as the economy recovers from the Coronavirus crisis. We are establishing bespoke opportunities, working with employers and training providers to support claimants to fill job vacancies and pivot into new careers.

DWP are increasing participation in our sector-based work academy programmes including in priority areas, such as construction, infrastructure and social care. And, following announcements made by the Chancellor in July on the Government's Plan for Jobs, the Department for Education is delivering a range of incentives to employers so that more people can boost their skills by taking on an apprenticeship or traineeship. Additional investment in the National Careers Service will also help more people access the support they need to retrain.

■ Severe Disability Premium

Ruth Jones:

[\[102927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on disabled people of the decision to convert the severe disability premium transitional payment into a transitional element.

Justin Tomlinson:

SDP transitional payments are part of the wider transitional protection framework. It had always been the intention to convert SDP transitional payments in this way as soon as we had developed the capability to do so safely and effectively. The aim is to create fairness between those former SDP recipients who have moved or will move to UC via natural migration and those who will move to UC later under managed migration, as well as to create a single, consistent system of transitional protection.

When the SDP transitional payment is converted to a transitional element, the additional money received by claimants will be the same amount. It will then be subject to change in the same way as transitional protection for those claimants moved to UC under managed migration. This moves these claimants towards the same level of financial entitlement as new UC claimants in the same position.

■ Social Security Benefits: Children

Rushanara Ali: [\[103525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of families with children affected by the benefit cap.

Mims Davies:

The available information on the number of households, receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who were affected by the Benefit Cap, by Family Type, 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>

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Stephen Farry: [\[102216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of reforming the welfare system in response to the (a) economic and (b) social challenges arising as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made of reforming the Welfare system.

Universal Credit has stood up to the challenge of the COVID-19, whereas the previous legacy benefit system would have buckled under the pressure. Millions more are able to access welfare which is fairer and more generous than the legacy benefit system. It is a modern, flexible, personalised benefit responding effectively to economic conditions. It replaces six outdated and complex benefits with one – helping to simplify the benefits system, providing support in times of need and making work pay.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Rushanara Ali: [\[103528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her plans are for the future of face-to-face assessments for welfare payments.

Justin Tomlinson:

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, remains in place, and is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance.

We continue to do telephone-based assessments, and as usual also undertake paper-based assessments where possible. Any re-introduction of face-to-face assessments would involve additional Covid-related safety measures, and guidance

for claimants and assessment providers to ensure compliance with the relevant public health guidance.

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[101977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to extend the £20 uplift to universal credit.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[103425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on (a) extending the £20 uplift to universal credit and working tax credit beyond April 2021 and (b) extending that uplift to people on legacy benefits.

Will Quince:

The Government introduced a package of temporary welfare measures worth around £9.3 billion this year to help with the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the £20 weekly increase to the Universal Credit Standard Allowance rates as a temporary measure for the 20/21 tax year.

Future decisions on spending will be made at the next appropriate fiscal event, and Parliament will be updated accordingly.

Claire Hanna:

[\[104205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to extend eligibility for the childcare element of universal credit to parents and guardians in the event that they lose employment as a result of covid-19 restrictions after 31 October 2020.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit claimants who cease employment and have pre-existing childcare arrangements, will be eligible for reimbursement of up to 85% of their childcare costs as part of their Universal Credit award for the assessment period in which they cease work and the subsequent assessment period.

If Universal Credit claimants are on the Job Support Scheme and satisfy both the work condition and childcare costs condition they are eligible to continue to have up to 85% (subject to the maximum limits) of their childcare costs reimbursed if:

- they have a contract of employment and are still being paid;
- childcare is being provided during that assessment period.

Help with upfront childcare costs for starting work is available through a non-repayable Flexible Support Fund (FSF) award for eligible UC claimants up to the limits set. This does not apply for claimants already in work. We have issued guidance to Work Coaches in Jobcentres to ensure that eligible claimants who require help with upfront childcare costs in order to start work are directed to the governments FSF. The FSF received an additional £150m this financial year to help

support UC claimants to move closer to, or in to, work. Budgeting advances are also available to eligible UC claimants who require help with upfront costs, repayable over the following 12 months.

In addition, UC claimants who lose their employment may be entitled to request a change of circumstances advance. This advance is available if a claimant's award is likely to significantly increase with their next payment to address any short-term costs that arise in the meantime. Change of circumstances advances can be repaid over a maximum of six months, with a three month deferral available in exceptional circumstances.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):
[\[HCWS528\]](#)

Today, I am announcing new initiatives the Vaccine Taskforce has invested in to ensure that a successful COVID-19 vaccine is available as soon as possible.

I can inform the House that we are establishing human challenge trials for possible COVID-19 vaccines in the UK.

In human challenge studies, the vaccine is given to a small number of healthy adult volunteers, who are then exposed to the virus. Medics and scientists then closely monitor the effect to see exactly how the vaccine works and identify any side effects. These studies are conducted under strict health and safety conditions – the safety of all volunteers is paramount.

The first stage of this project will be delivered by a partnership between Imperial College London, the Royal Free London Hospital's specialist and secure research unit in London and industry-leading clinical company hVIVO, which has pioneered viral human challenge models. The aim will be to discover the smallest amount of virus it takes to cause a person to develop COVID-19. This is known as a virus characterisation study and will be backed by £33.6m of government investment. If approved by regulators and the ethics committee, the studies would start in January with results expected by May 2021.

I can also announce that the Government is investing £19.7m in Public Health England (PHE) to expand their state-of-the-art laboratories at Porton Down.

This will allow PHE to run crucial tests on blood samples taken from participants of the COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials to monitor the effectiveness of the vaccines. These tests are essential in supporting the development and regulatory approval of vaccine candidates. Scientists at PHE's laboratory in Porton Down have been working on developing this testing capability since the start of the pandemic. The investment in these world-leading facilities and expertise will enable scientists to provide critical testing support for vaccine trials taking place in the UK. It will also ensure that the UK has access to a centralised laboratory to test the samples. This will give us a greater understanding of how potential vaccines work and compare against one another.

The funding announced today for these ground-breaking studies marks an important next step in building on our understanding of the virus and accelerating the development of our most promising vaccines.

■ Energy Default Tariff (Price) Cap Conditions for Effective Competition Decision 2020

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):

[[HCWS524](#)]

I am today announcing that the price cap on standard variable and default energy tariffs will remain in place for 2021.

The independent energy regulator, Ofgem, has carried out an assessment into whether the conditions are in place for effective competition in domestic supply contracts. Ofgem have been transparent in how they made their assessment. As required by the legislation, Ofgem have made a recommendation as to whether the price cap should be extended. The Government values the expertise and insight of Ofgem, and I have considered that report and recommendation in reaching my decision.

As set out in the relevant legislation, the price cap can be extended for a year at a time up to the end of 2023 at the latest.

While there have been some improvements across the market in recent years, such as increased consumer engagement, rising switching levels and progress with the smart meter rollout, there is still more to do to ensure consumers will not face unfair prices in its absence.

More than half of energy consumers are still on standard variable or default tariffs, where in the absence of the cap they would likely be paying excessive charges for their energy use.

Extending the cap means that 11 million households will continue to be protected from overcharging in the energy market. The cap will continue to safeguard these consumers, while other initiatives such as faster switching, the smart meter rollout and consumer engagement programs continue to contribute to a more competitive market.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee**

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): **[[HCWS525](#)]**

The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee met on 19 October 2020 in London, with delegations attending in person and by video conference.

The meeting was co-chaired by the UK Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, and attended by the alternate Joint Committee co-chairs; the First Minister and deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive; and Member State representatives.

The Committee undertook a stocktake of Specialised Committee activity since the last meeting on 28 September. The Committee also updated on implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, with particular focus on the Northern Ireland Protocol and citizens' rights.

The UK reiterated its commitment to upholding obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all respects. The UK

further emphasised commitment to EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU, ensuring they have their rights under the Withdrawal Agreement protected.

The Committee adopted the citizens' rights joint report on residency and agreed to its publication.

The UK reiterated its commitment to implementing the Protocol in full so the people of Northern Ireland can be given the fundamental legal assurances they need, and will not face the damaging prospect of the unmitigated defaults of the Protocol under any circumstances.

The Committee considered the remaining WAJC tasks during the rest of the transition period.

The UK took the opportunity provided by this meeting to underline its commitment to continued constructive engagement with the EU through Joint Committee processes.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Report on Exercise on Pandemic preparedness

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

[\[HCWS526\]](#)

Today, I am publishing the report into Exercise Cygnus.

Exercise Cygnus was a national exercise that took place in 2016. It looked at how well prepared the UK was to respond to a serious flu pandemic. The aim was to test systems to the extreme, to identify strengths and weaknesses in the UK's response plans, which would then inform improvements in our resilience.

The Department of Health and Social Care (known as the Department of Health at the time) 12 other Government departments, NHS England, Public Health England, local public services, several prisons, and staff from the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments took part in the exercise. Overall, it involved more than 950 people and culminated in a 3-day national level tier 1 exercise in October 2016.

Exercise Cygnus was not designed to consider other potential pandemics, or to identify what action could be taken to prevent widespread transmission.

The report was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care and produced independently by Public Health England.

The government accepted all 22 recommendations from the report and has acted on each to improve pandemic response plans. For example, developing a free-standing Pandemic Influenza Bill. This meant the Government was ready with legislative proposals that could rapidly be tailored to form the basis of what became the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Many of these workstreams have provided a good foundation during the current COVID-19 pandemic, helping speed up our response and save lives. I will deposit copies of the report in the libraries of both Houses and it will be available on gov.uk.

JUSTICE**■ Parole Reform****The Minister of State for Justice (Lucy Frazer):****[[HCWS527](#)]**

Protecting the public from harm is the first duty of any government. The parole system is one of the key mechanisms for keeping the public safe by ensuring that dangerous criminals are not released when they still pose a danger to the public. As such, it is essential that this system is as robust, effective and transparent as possible. The government is determined to address fully the transparency and confidence issues highlighted by the John Worboys case, and also to make proactive improvements to the way that the end-to-end parole system works. We want to ensure that the public is not only properly protected by a robust and effective system for assessing the risks presented by the most serious offenders, but also that it understands and has confidence in that process and the decisions taken.

Over the last two years, we have worked hard to improve the public understanding and confidence in the Parole Board. Today I am pleased to launch a Root and Branch Review of the parole system, as committed to in our manifesto. Moving beyond looking solely at the Parole Board itself, this review will ensure that the entire system delivers in the most effective way possible its primary function of keeping the public safe by releasing offenders only when it is safe to do so.

This Root and Branch Review will be concluded by summer 2021, by which point a final report will be published summarising the findings and next steps. Terms of reference have today been published online, explaining that it will consider:

- the effectiveness of the reforms we have implemented since 2018;
- whether the Parole Board for England & Wales, as currently constituted, remains the most effective model for making independent judicial decisions about the continued detention of prisoners;
- how best to improve the public's understanding and confidence in the parole system; and
- measures to further improve the openness and transparency of the parole process.

In support of this, I am today launching a public consultation – the first step in our review – that will explore options for increasing the transparency of the parole system. The consultation seeks views on the possibility of allowing victims to observe parole hearings and on whether the media and wider public should also be given greater access to hearings where it is appropriate to do so. The consultation will be open until 1 December 2020 and I anticipate publishing our response before the end of the year.

The Root and Branch Review will build upon the programme of reform, already delivered last year, which amended the Parole Board Rules to increase transparency, and to improve the way victims are engaged with. For example, we now have a system where victims and others are provided with summaries explaining the reasons for the Parole

Board's decisions, and a new reconsideration mechanism which allows applications to be made for decisions to be looked at again if they are thought to be legally flawed.

Concurrently, the Tailored Review of the Parole Board has been underway, the outcome of which is also being published today. The Tailored review was undertaken in accordance with the Cabinet Office requirement that all public bodies are reviewed at least once each parliament. This Review focused predominantly on operational changes within the current legislative framework, making recommendations to further improve collaboration within the parole system to ensure that cases progress in a timely manner, and highlighted existing legal powers that the Parole Board can use to compel the production of evidence and the attendance of witnesses. I commend the recommendations to the Board, which have the potential once implemented to bring real improvements to the parole system

Together with the significant reforms we set out in the Sentencing White Paper on 16 September, I am confident that the measures outlined above and the wider examination of the parole system we are now launching, will continue to keep the public safe, as well as ensure that the most serious offenders spend time in prison that properly reflects the gravity of their crimes.