



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 October 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 21 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Crown Prosecution Service

Ellie Reeves: [\[103604\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, when the HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate report on the Victim Communication and Liaison scheme will be published.

Michael Ellis:

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate's report on the Crown Prosecution Service's Victim Communication and Liaison scheme will be published 22nd October 2020.

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Standards

Ellie Reeves: [\[103603\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what the compliance rate was for the Area Assurance Programme in (a) 2020, (b) 2019, (c) 2018, (d) 2017, (e) 2016 and (f) 2015.

Michael Ellis:

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPSP) commenced the Area Assurance Programme (AAP) in 2016 and completed the programme in 2018. HMCPSP assessed each CPS Area's compliance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors and these results are included in the individual AAP reports available on the HMCPSP website. Therefore, figures were published by Area and by year. In October 2019, HMCPSP published a composite report of all the AAP inspection findings; the overall CPS Area compliance rate with the Code for Crown Prosecutors was 95.1%.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Companies: Fraud

Chi Onwurah: [\[102792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to consult on the introduction of a UK equivalent to the US Sarbanes-Oxley Act 2002.

Chi Onwurah: [\[102793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Financial Reporting Council on the potential scope of a UK equivalent to the US Sarbanes-Oxley Act 2002; and if he will publish his strategy for audit reform.

Paul Scully:

The Independent Review of the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) recommended that consideration be given to the case for a strengthened internal control framework, learning any relevant lessons from operation of the Sarbanes-Oxley regime in the US. Sir Donald Brydon's review of the quality and effectiveness of audit also made suggestions for enhancing the role of the board and the auditor in a strengthened internal control system.

The Government will publish and seek views on its proposals on audit reform in due course, including in response to these particular recommendations. The Government has been working closely with the FRC in developing these proposals.

Green Homes Grant Scheme**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[102865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the level of demand for grants under the Green Homes scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Green Homes Grant opened to applications on the 30 September 2020. As of 16:00 on 20 October 2020, 20,903 grant applications have been received, reflecting the high levels of consumer interest there are in the scheme. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[102866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been allocated in the form of vouchers under the Green Homes Grant scheme to date.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As of 16:00 on 20 October 2020, the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme had received 20,903 grant applications. Applications are currently being processed and checked for compliance with the scheme rules.

Groceries Code Adjudicator: Developing Countries**Gareth Thomas:** [\[102655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he will plans to extend the Groceries Supply Code of Practice to include developing country suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Developing country suppliers are protected by the Groceries Supply Code of Practice where they are directly supplying UK supermarkets covered by the Code. These suppliers are supported by the work of the Groceries Code Adjudicator, who ensures they are treated lawfully and fairly, as required by the Code.

■ Package Holidays

Mike Amesbury:

[\[102921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the need to educate consumers of the financial risks when booking travel that is not covered by the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[102922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Covid-19 outbreak, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing greater clarity to consumers of the financial risks entailed with booking DIY travel outside of the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring consumers are able to make well-informed decisions. Package travel providers are required by law to provide consumers with clear information upfront about their booking, including details of any associated financial protection. Consumers can obtain advice about general consumer rights from the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 113, which is funded by the Department.

There are six categories governing the circumstances in which travel services are classified as a package falling under the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 (PTRs). The PTRs have a broad scope intended to cover modern methods of booking package holidays. Further guidance on this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/package-holidays-complying-with-regulations-guidance-for-businesses>.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[102697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he plans to provide to mobile hairdressers, who cannot enter residences and therefore operate while the covid-19 restrictions are in place.

Paul Scully:

Mobile hairdressers and other close contact services can operate in other people's homes as long as they apply the COVID-secure guidelines for working in other people's homes and the specific guidance for close contact services. Both guides can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

As part of the Government's response to the pandemic, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced a host of measures to help businesses, including loans, tax deferrals and cash grants.

There is particular support for smaller businesses and the self-employed to help bolster the existing package of support available. For example, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme enables small businesses quicker access to finance, where they can

borrow between £2,000 and £50,000 with no repayments due for a year, and no interest charged during that time either.

■ Public Houses: Closures

Sir David Evennett:

[\[102689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of pubs that have closed in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency, (b) Bexley Borough, (c) London and (d) England in each of the last 10 years.

Paul Scully:

The ONS data below shows the overall number of public houses and bars in Bexleyheath and Crayford, Bexley Borough, London and England in each year from 2011 to 2020. Numbers of business closures specifically (VAT de-registrations) are not available at this level of industrial and geographical detail.

Number of Public House and Bar Local Units

DATE	BEXLEYHEATH AND		LONDON*	ENGLAND
	CRAYFORD	BEXLEY		
2011	95	40	3,795	36,455
2012	95	40	3,795	35,900
2013	95	35	3,685	34,670
2014	85	35	3,635	34,255
2015	90	40	3,690	34,215
2016	90	40	3,630	33,585
2017	95	40	3,545	33,045
2018	90	35	3,560	32,960
2019	85	35	3,550	33,305
2020	85	35	3,590	33,125

Source: ONS Business Counts. *Series break due to London geographical boundary change in 2016

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus

Sir David Evennett:

[\[102690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Government support provided to pubs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

We regularly engage with the industry to understand the challenges that pubs are facing. We have provided a range of business support which pubs have been able to take advantage of, including a one-year business rates holiday, business support grants and government-backed loans. Recently, further support has been announced such as the Job Support Scheme and its extension and the Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Birth Rate

Jim Shannon:

[\[103516\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the birth rate was in each month since January 2020 to date.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ103516 [PQ103516.pdf]

■ Private Companies: Contracts

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[103434\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what criteria is used by Government Departments when granting public contracts to private companies.

Julia Lopez:

Public sector purchasing authorities are required to purchase products and services in accordance with public procurement legislation. Against this background, UK public procurement policy is to award contracts on the basis of value for money, which means the optimum combination of cost and quality over the lifetime of the project.

DEFENCE■ **Aviation: Training**

James Gray: [\[104673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's policy is on providing live flight experiences to all members of the RAF Air Cadets.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence is committed to providing live flying opportunities to Royal Air Force Air Cadets and Combined Cadet Force (Royal Air Force) cadets and aims to provide each cadet with one 20-minute flight per year, subject to them meeting the necessary medical requirements.

James Gray: [\[104678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the Project TELUM training sites will be located.

James Heappey:

The training sites that will be utilised under Project TELUM have yet to be confirmed. However, given that the project is to replace and enhance an existing capability, it is likely that they will mirror current locations. These are:

Flying Station Aldergrove

RAF Benson

Boscombe Down Airfield

RAF Cosford

RAF Cranwell

Glasgow Airport

Leuchars Station

RAF Leeming

St Athan airfield

RAF Wittering

RAF Woodvale

AAC Middle Wallop

RNAS Yeovilton

James Gray: [\[104683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the RAF Air Cadets are trained through Air Experience Flights each year.

James Heappey:

The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Data on the number of individuals undertaking flights is not held centrally, however, the number of flying hours flown by cadets is recorded and can be found in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	HOURS FLOWN
2014-15	10,144
2015-16	10,649
2016-17	10,268
2017-18	9,102
2018-19	9,360

Up to three cadets can complete a flight during one hour, depending on several factors that may include but are not limited to, an individual's fitness to fly and weather conditions.

James Gray:

[\[104685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gender ratio is of Air Cadets who receive an Air Experience Flight; and what that ratio was at the start of the current Air Experience Flight contract.

James Heappey:

Royal Air Force Air Cadets does not collate information regarding the gender of cadets who participate in Air Experience Flights.

■ Ministry of Defence: Civil Proceedings

John Healey:

[\[102679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civil claims were brought against his Department under the Human Rights Act 1998 in (a) 2000 and (b) 2009.

John Healey:

[\[102680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civil claims were brought against his Department under the Human Rights Act 1998 from 2010 to 2020.

Johnny Mercer:

The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. To locate, retrieve and extract the information requested would involve wide-ranging searches of a number of databases and liaison with the Government Legal Department.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Artificial Intelligence: Racial Discrimination**

Chi Onwurah: [\[102810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 96062 on Twitter: Racial Discrimination, what steps the Government is taking to tackle racial bias in algorithms.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As set out in the National Data Strategy, we can harness data in efforts to tackle bias and exclusion. The use of algorithms has the potential to improve the quality and speed of decision-making, but there are also risks of human-introduced bias, discriminatory outcomes or unsafe applications, which must be mitigated if we are to harness their benefits. We have commissioned the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation to review the potential for bias in algorithms and we will review the Centre's recommendations once their report is published.

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[102949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make it his policy to increase the £750 million covid-19 support package for frontline charities announced in April 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The £750 million package offered unprecedented support to allow charities and social enterprises to continue their vital work in our national effort to fight coronavirus. This funding will continue to support this work over the winter.

We are not able to replace every pound of funding charities would have received this year, and many organisations will need to assess what measures they need to take. Information on the wider measures government has made available and details on how to access the support can be found on gov.uk. The Charity Commission has also published guidance on gov.uk, which sets out how charities can get support for their staff, advice on use of reserves, and other potential issues.

We will continue to work with the charity and social enterprise sectors to assess emerging needs and how we can best support them during the COVID-19 pandemic and through recovery.

■ Culture: Battersea

Marsha De Cordova: [\[103622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to allocate additional funding to the culture and arts sector in Battersea constituency.

Caroline Dinenge:

On 12 October, we announced £257 million of funding awarded to 1,385 arts organisations through the Culture Recovery Fund. Eight organisations based in Battersea received over £2.2 million of funding.

There will be further announcements about hundreds more allocations in the coming weeks as we provide additional financial support through the Culture Recovery Fund to assist the UK's incredible culture, heritage, arts and creative industries.

In addition, Arts Council England recently reopened the National Lottery Project Fund programme with a budget of £77.9 million which will be available until April 2021 for organisations across the country. This programme will support independent organisations, creative practitioners and freelancers.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Ms Nusrat Ghani:****[104754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to make an assessment of the implications for his guidance on holding live events and festivals of the ability of venues to accommodate people on the basis of the rule of six.

Caroline Dinenge:

The Government recognises that the pandemic presents a significant challenge to the live entertainment industry.

As part of the Government's roadmap to get the performing arts and live entertainment sectors back up and running, venues and organisations are able to put on live performances in front of a socially-distanced audience in line with the latest [Covid secure guidance](#).

Venues and events such as theatres, concert halls and other entertainment venues that are already able to host more than six people, and are COVID-secure in line with the relevant guidance, will continue to be able to do so. Groups within an event must follow restrictions set out in Local Covid Alert levels. In line with the Performing Arts guidance, there cannot be any 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](#)).

In Medium Local Covid Alert Level areas it is [against the law](#) to gather in groups of more than six people within a venue or event, unless everyone is from the same household or support bubble. In High and Very High areas, it is against the law to gather indoors in groups which do not consist only of the same household and support bubble.

Venues and events located in very high alert level areas should check the [specific rules for their areas](#).

■ Football: Coronavirus**Julie Elliott:**[\[103515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the proposals made in FIFPro's report of 14 October 2020 entitled Covid-19 Recovery and Resilience recommendations.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to supporting sport clubs and helping their recovery through the pandemic. That is why the Government provided an unprecedented financial support package, which many football clubs benefited from.

We have noted the report. We will continue to utilise a whole range of resources whilst we analyse how best to support the sport economy during these difficult times, and will work closely with the sector, including professional athletes representative bodies.

■ Gaming Machines: Coronavirus**Gordon Henderson:**[\[102771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to provide support to seaside and high street arcades during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Like other businesses, seaside and high street arcades have been able to access the Government's £300 billion package of support measures, which has included a business rates holiday, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. In addition, a new Job Support Scheme (JSS) will be introduced from 1 November to protect viable jobs in businesses which are facing lower demand over the winter months due to coronavirus. On 9 October, the Chancellor announced that JSS will be expanded to protect jobs and support businesses required to close their doors as a result of coronavirus restrictions.

The department has also worked closely with industry representatives on developing guidance to ensure that the sector could reopen in a Covid secure way. We will continue to keep this guidance under review with the industry.

■ Internet: Advertising**Chris Elmore:**[\[104143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Competition and Markets Authority's market study on Online Platforms and Digital Advertising.

Chris Elmore:[\[104144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the market study by the Competition and Markets Authority on Online Platforms and Digital Advertising, published in July 2020, whether the Government plans to implement a new

pro-competition regulatory regime to tackle the market power of online platform companies.

Chris Elmore:

[\[104145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the market study by the Competition and Markets Authority on Online Platforms and Digital Advertising, published in July 2020, whether the Government plans to set up a Digital Markets Unit to (a) enforce a code of conduct to ensure that online platforms with a position of market power do not engage in exploitative or exclusionary practices or those likely to reduce trust and transparency and (b) impose fines if necessary.

Caroline Dinenge:

Dynamic and competitive digital markets are key to creating a world-leading digital economy that works for businesses, consumers and society as a whole. The Government is grateful to the Competition and Markets Authority for their market study and is carefully considering their recommendations. A response will be published in due course. The Government has accepted, in principle, the six strategic recommendations from the Furman Review for unlocking competition in digital markets.

■ **Music: Coronavirus**

Ben Everitt:

[\[105598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what further support will be made available to grassroots music venues who were unsuccessful in their bid for funding from the Culture Recovery Fund.

Caroline Dinenge:

We will analyse the impact of the funds we have already announced. We are continuing to meet with live events stakeholders to provide support and guidance for grassroots music venues to re-open and stage live events.

The Secretary of State announced an unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the cultural sector which will benefit the live events sector by providing support to venues and many other cultural organisations to stay open and continue operating. £333 million was awarded to 1973 arts organisations which had applied for grants less than £1 million from Arts Council England. Funded organisations included venues, festivals, theatres, museums and cultural organisations. Over the coming weeks further Culture Recovery Fund awards will be announced - including grants over £1 million, and the Capital Kickstart and Repayable Finance programmes.

The Chancellor has announced the Winter Economy Plan to protect jobs and support businesses over the coming months, once the existing Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme come to end. We are also offering businesses who face a drop in demand for their services and possible cash flow issues generous terms for the repayment of deferred taxes and government-backed loans.

We continue to engage with the sector to discuss the on-going challenges facing grassroots music venues.

■ Rugby: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[R] [\[102940\]](#)

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

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government recognises the impact that Covid-19 is having on the sporting sector and our multi-billion-pound package of business support has enabled many of our sports clubs to survive. But we know that the decision not to reopen stadia to spectators on 1 October will have economic consequences for sports and clubs across the country who relied on those fans for income, including professional rugby union teams.

I meet regularly with representatives from rugby union, and we will continue to engage directly with both the RFU and with Premiership Rugby as part of this process.

The safety and security of players and spectators remains of paramount importance. 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. Ministers and officials will continue to engage with the RFU and Premiership Rugby as part of this process.

EDUCATION

■ Children: ICT

Ian Lavery:

[\[101015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops, iPads and 4G routers were provided to children in Wansbeck constituency (a) in total and (b) by school.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has invested over £160 million to support remote education and access to online social care.

As part of this, the Department for Education has delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers, during the summer term, for disadvantaged children in Year 10, children receiving support from a social worker and care leavers. A breakdown of how many devices were delivered to each local authority or academy trust, including in Wansbeck, which is covered by

Northumberland County Council, can be found 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 laptops and tablets delivered in the summer term 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. Local authorities and academy trusts were responsible for distributing the devices. The Department does not hold data on which schools the devices were distributed to.

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

■ **Counselling: Higher Education**

Sarah Olney:

[104148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase the accessibility of counselling and support services for students in higher education.

Michelle Donelan:

Protecting the mental health of higher education students is a priority for this government and we continue to work closely with the higher education sector to promote good practice in mental health and wellbeing.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has overall policy responsibility for young people's mental health and we continue to work closely with them to take significant steps to support the mental health and wellbeing support for young people in higher education settings.

DHSC is committed, through the NHS Long Term Plan, to investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year into mental health services by 2023-24. This will see an additional 345,000 children and young people, and adults, able to access support through NHS-funded services.

Higher education providers as autonomous bodies, independent from government, are responsible for their own decisions about how best to support their students. Whilst it is for providers to identify and address the needs of their student body, many providers have boosted their existing welfare and counselling services to ensure support services can be accessed, this is particularly important for those students having to self-isolate or who are affected by local restrictions.

The government has worked closely with Universities UK to embed the Step Change programme within the higher education sector. The strategic framework calls on higher education leaders to adopt mental health as a strategic priority and embed good mental health practices beyond student service teams. The government expects all providers to engage actively with the guidance.

Student Space, funded with £3 million from the Office for Students, provides dedicated support services through a collaborative online platform to help students access vital mental health and wellbeing resources. The platform bridges gaps in support arising from the COVID-19 outbreak and is designed to work alongside existing services.

In addition, higher education providers have been asked to prioritise the mental health and wellbeing of students, enabling them to use funding worth up to £23 million per month from April to July this year and £256 million for the academic year 2020-21, starting from August, to go towards student hardship funds and mental health support.

The government has provided over £9 million to leading mental health charities to help them expand and reach those most in need. Students struggling with their mental health can also access support via the NHS and online resources from Public Health England, alongside support from the mental health charity Mind.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[\[104688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to amend his Department's policies on school and college accountability, including performance tables and data for the 2020-21 academic year, in response to the disruption to education caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has been clear that no school or college will be judged on data based on qualifications achieved in 2020. The Department continues to talk to school and college leaders about possible approaches to the use of 2021 educational performance data and further details on accountability arrangements for the 2020/21 academic year will follow shortly.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Gareth Thomas:

[\[102653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy for schools to be compensated for the full costs incurred from purchasing free school meal vouchers direct from a retailer other than Edenred; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

We are 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 could not be met from their budgets.

Schools have been eligible to claim for costs including support for free school meals for eligible children who were not in school, where schools were not using the national voucher scheme.

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. We are assessing all other claims, which will be paid later in the autumn if approved.

There will be a further opportunity in the autumn for schools to claim for exceptional costs that fell between March to July, in the same approved categories as for the first window. Schools will be able to use this second window to claim for any costs in the approved categories, including for support for free school meals eligible children where not using the national voucher scheme, which they did not claim during the first window. Schools will also be able to claim in the autumn for costs relating to the summer holidays that are not covered by the COVID-19 Summer Food Fund.

■ Home Education

Caroline Lucas:

[\[103472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are currently being schooled at home on a permanent basis because they are not permitted to attend school for medical or other reasons; if he will make it his policy to provide Free School Meal vouchers to families of children who would qualify for FSM support if their children were permitted to attend school.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not hold information on the number of children who are currently being schooled at home on a permanent basis because they are not permitted to attend school for medical or other reasons.

If a child is attending alternative provision in the form of home tuition and is currently a registered pupil at a school maintained by a local authority, the local authority has an obligation to provide free school meals to any child who is eligible for and has submitted a claim for free school meals.

■ Home Education: Coronavirus

Stephen Hammond:

[\[100334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020 restricts children from gathering in groups of more than six for home-schooling; and if he will publish guidance on gatherings for home-schooling.

Nick Gibb:

Guidance on protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings, during the COVID-19 outbreak was updated on 28 September 2020. This guidance also applies to home education and can be viewed 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>.

Parents, including guardians and foster carers, who have chosen to home educate their own child may wish to have their children attend group activities either in out-of-school settings or in the homes of others who have chosen to home educate. They will though need to take account of the Department's, 'Elective home education; guidance for parents', which is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elective-home-education>.

Where a child who is home educated takes part in a group activity at the home of others who have chosen to home educate, the host should, as far as possible, follow the published guidance and also the guidance on working safely during coronavirus in other people's homes which can be viewed here:

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

This applies only to group activities which have the principal purpose of education and should not be used to justify purely social activities beyond those recommended under the government's general guidance on social distancing.

Multiple groups of 15 plus staff can use the same shared space, if that is necessary, with distancing between the groups. Where this is the case the other protective measures, within the guidance for providers, will be even more important to minimise the risk of infection and transmission of the virus. Where possible, those attending out-of-school settings should also practice social distancing in line with the government's current staying alert and safe (social distancing) guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020, permits gatherings that are reasonably necessary for purposes of education or training.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Daisy Cooper:

[102935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy for children to be permitted to miss a day of school to celebrate (a) Eid and (b) Yom Kippur without that absence affecting their attendance records.

Nick Gibb:

A parent of a compulsory school-aged child who is registered at a school has a legal duty to secure that child's regular attendance. The law recognises that there are certain circumstances in which a parent cannot be guilty of not securing their child's regular attendance at school, and religious observance is one of those circumstances.

The law also specifies how attendance should be recorded. Where a pupil of compulsory school age is unable to attend school on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong, the pupil's absence must be recorded as an authorised absence.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Derek Thomas:

[\[102891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to Head Teachers to help ensure that the expectation on pupils to wear a face covering does not exclude those pupils who have a good reason not to wear one.

Nick Gibb:

Schools and colleges have the discretion to require the use of face coverings for staff, visitors and pupils in schools for children in Year 7 and above in communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed.

When an area moves to a local COVID-19 alert level of high or very high, in settings where pupils in Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas, where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. This does not apply to children in primary schools and in early years settings where the risks to children are lower.

As set out in our guidance on GOV.UK, some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings, and we expect adults and pupils to be sensitive to those needs. No one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with school leaders on providing financial support for expenses incurred by schools as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Ministers and officials continue to engage regularly with school leaders and their representatives on a wide range of issues around COVID-19, including discussions in relation to costs faced by schools at this time.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[104749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) pupils and (b) teachers attending (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in each (A) region and (B) local authority area in the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will publish that data on a monthly basis.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[104750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) pupils and (b) teachers absent from (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii)

special schools in each (A) i) region and (B) local authority area in the latest period for which information is available; and if he will publish that data on a monthly basis.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[104751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) special schools that are currently closed due to covid-19 in each (i) region and (ii) local authority area in the latest period for which information is available; and if he will publish that information on a monthly basis.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will place pupil attendance and school closure statistics for 15 October in the Libraries of both Houses. It should be noted that these statistics are for schools who have submitted a response in the education settings status form only. This data can be viewed in the attached table.

While the official statistics series for this data applies an adjustment for non-responding schools, data at more local levels, including at regional and local authority levels, is based only on the data from responding schools. We are currently looking at the quality of the teacher attendance data with a view to publishing as part of the official statistics series.

Attachments:

1. 104749 104750 104751 Table [104749 104750 104751_Table_of_attendance_in_schools.xls]

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Jon Trickett: [\[104035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of state schools paying for externally provided mental health support for students.

Jon Trickett: [\[104036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the capacity of schools to meet demand for students mental health support through internal resources.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not collect central information on the details of school expenditure, including whether they pay for externally provided mental health support for students. Schools and colleges have the freedom to decide what support to offer pupils based on their particular needs, drawing on evidence available on effective practice.

We are currently providing the biggest increase to schools funding in a decade. School budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in the 2021-22 financial year and £7.1 billion in the 2022-23 financial year, compared to the 2019-20 financial year. We recognise that local authorities' costs in providing for

those with the most complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have increased. We have increased high needs funding for children and young people with the most complex SEND, from £5 billion in 2013 to over £7 billion in 2020-21 financial year, and it will continue to rise to £8 billion in the 2021-22 financial year. This increase means that in the 2021-22 financial year, every local authority will attract an increase of at least 8% per head of population, with some authorities seeing increases of up to 12%.

Schools are best placed to make decisions on how best to spend their funding to support their pupils, and we do not set restrictions on how much is spent on mental health provision. We know that there has been an increased need to focus on mental health and wellbeing as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Getting children and young people back into school and college is key to their wellbeing. We have worked hard to ensure that all pupils and learners were able to return to a full high-quality education programme in September. Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, with £650 million shared across schools over the 2020/21 academic year, is supporting education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place.

To ensure that staff were equipped to support wellbeing as children and young people returned to schools and colleges, we made it a central part of our guidance both on remote education and on the return to school. We supported this with a range of training and materials, including webinars which have been accessed by thousands of education staff and accelerating training on how to teach about mental health as part of the new relationships, sex and health curriculum, so that all pupils can benefit from this long-term requirement.

To continue this support we have invested in £8 million in the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The programme is funding expert advisers in every area of England to train and support schools and colleges during the autumn and spring terms. More information about the programme is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wellbeing-for-education-return-grant-s31-grant-determination-letter>.

Of course, schools and colleges are not mental health professionals, so access to specialist mental health support is more important than ever during the COVID-19 outbreak. All NHS mental health trusts have ensured that there are 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages. We have also provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities, including charities such as Young Minds to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

To increase support further in the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams linked to schools

and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

■ Union Learning Fund

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[104714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussion he has had with (a) training providers, (b) Sector Skills Councils and (c) further education representative organisations on the decision to terminate the Union Learning Fund.

Gillian Keegan:

The government's commitment to the Union Learning Fund has never been open-ended and the current funding was due to cease in April 2021. We have made no commitment to funding beyond this date and have always been clear any future funding would depend on the government's Spending Review. The decision not to renew funding after April 2021 has been communicated at this stage in the Spending Review process in order to give a greater period of notice.

As part of our expanded commitment to skills development through the National Skills Fund and Lifetime Skills Guarantee I can confirm all the money will be invested in skills and retraining that will be fully accessible to everyone.

■ Unionlearn

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[104713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when (a) he and (b) the Under-Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills last discussed the Unionlearn service with the Trades Union Congress prior to 7 October 2020.

Gillian Keegan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has not met with the Trade Union Congress specifically to discuss Unionlearn, though regularly engages with unions to discuss a variety of matters related to his role.

I met with Frances O'Grady on 12 October to discuss our decision in relation to Unionlearn, and our expanded commitment to skills development through the National Skills Fund and Lifetime Skills Guarantee. I can confirm as part of that commitment all the money will be invested in skills and retraining that will be fully accessible to everyone.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Daniel Zeichner: [\[102845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support he plans to make available for farmers and land managers prior to the roll out of the

Environmental Land Management scheme in 2024 to enable the delivery of environmental public goods.

Victoria Prentis:

We will continue to offer an improved and simplified Countryside Stewardship scheme until 2024. We continue to see a sustained high level of engagement with the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and it provides a stepping stone to the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. From next year, as well as supporting farmers through schemes including a farming resilience fund and sustainable productivity programme, we will be testing and piloting ELM. We are considering what elements of ELM we could make available as part of the transition to the full rollout of ELM in 2024, which could include incentives for sustainable farming. We are currently working up these proposals in more detail.

■ **Animal Products: Trade**

Luke Pollard:

[\[102926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish a response to the consultation on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies that closed in February 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the publication of the Government response to the recent consultation and call for evidence on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies. However, we are continuing to work on this important area and we will publish a response as soon as we are able to do so.

■ **Environmental Land Management Scheme**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[102843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish (a) the contribution of the Environmental land Management scheme to the six goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and (b) other details on the priorities of that scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

ELM is being designed to contribute towards a range of national environmental priorities that relate to the goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan and other Government commitments including Net Zero. More details on the priorities for the ELM scheme, including the contribution that ELM will make to delivering the goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan, will be published in due course.

■ **Flood Control**

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to reduce flood risk to communities that experienced flooding in the last 12 months.

Rebecca Pow:

This government is acting to drive down flood risk from every angle. In March 2020, we announced a record £5.2 billion investment to build 2,000 new flood defences over the next 6 years. This investment will better protect 336,000 properties from flooding and coastal erosion. The government also announced a £120 million package to repair assets damaged as a result of last winter's flooding – recognising the importance that maintenance of assets has on ensuring our network of defences are effective in a changing climate.

The government published a long-term Policy Statement in July setting out our ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The Policy Statement outlines five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions which we will take to accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change. These actions will help to reduce the likelihood of flooding and coastal erosion and ensure that we are better prepared to reduce impacts when flooding happens.

In July, we announced an additional £170 million to accelerate the building of 22 flood schemes across the country. In addition to our investment in the flood and coastal defences we are also investing £200 million between 2021 and 2027 to support 25 local areas – urban, rural and coastal – to test innovative actions to improve resilience to flooding and coastal erosion.

Following the flooding events in November 2019 and February 2020, the Environment Agency (EA) has carried out approximately 20,000 post-incident inspections. These inspections are now complete and the results have been used to plan projects for the EA's recovery programme that will deliver asset repairs. The EA are making sure that any flood defences and equipment damaged during last winter's floods are either fixed or will have robust contingency plans, such as temporary defences, in place by 31 October.

■ Floods: Insurance**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[102743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the level of access to insurance for households affected by 2019-20 winter floods.

Rebecca Pow:

The 2019-20 winter floods impacted communities across the country both in November 2019 and February 2020. The November 2019 flooding mainly impacted South Yorkshire, in particular Doncaster where over 760 households and businesses were severely affected.

Flood Re is a joint government and industry initiative launched in 2016 to improve the availability and affordability of flood insurance for households at high flood risk. In

2019/20 Flood Re provided cover for over 196,000 household policies. More than 300,000 properties have benefitted since the scheme's launch.

Flood Re is available through more than 85 insurance brands representing 94% of the home insurance market.

Research has found that before the introduction of Flood Re, only 9% of householders who had made prior flood claims could get quotes from two or more insurers, with 0% being able to get quotes from five or more. Since May 2019, 99% of households with prior flood claims can now receive quotes from five or more insurers. Four out of five householders with a prior flood claim saw price reductions of over 50%.

In December 2019, the Government commissioned an independent review into the affordability and availability of insurance in Doncaster. The review, led by Amanda Blanc, will be fully considered by Ministers and published later this year.

■ Marine Protected Areas

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[102946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to protect Marine Protected Areas.

Rebecca Pow:

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

We have essentially completed building our comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas, with 177 sites covering 40% of English waters. All Marine Protected Areas are protected through the planning and licensing regime to ensure activities such as offshore developments do not cause damage. For fishing, good progress has been made to protect sites in the inshore area with over 90 marine protected areas now with 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 properly 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. As part of the Environment Bill targets work, we are developing a target requiring that our Marine Protected Areas are effectively protected so that they achieve their conservation objectives.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Armed Conflict: West Africa****Fiona Bruce:**[\[104717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what criteria the Government plans to use to make an assessment of the effectiveness of the fight against West Africa's Islamist insurgency; and what steps the Government is taking to provide social and economic support to that region after that conflict ends.

James Duddridge:

The Government condemns all acts of terrorism committed by extremist groups, including Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM). We are committed to working with West African countries and our international partners to support the fight against Islamist insurgencies in West Africa. We consider a wide range of factors when assessing the effectiveness of the fight against these groups, including reporting from our staff in country and information from international partners.

We provide a comprehensive package of security and stabilisation support across West Africa to tackle the immediate impact and long-term drivers of conflict, and to support local communities. Examples of this support include: a contribution of £2 million in 2019-20 and a further £3 million in 2020-21 to the Lake Chad Basin Regional Stabilisation Facility, to strengthen community security, provide basic services and support livelihoods; and our adaptive social protection programme in the Sahel, which has helped over 92,000 vulnerable households across the Sahel adapt and build their resilience to climate change, a key driver of instability.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[102727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the living conditions for Rohingya refugees living in refugee camps on the island of Bhasan Char.

Nigel Adams:

The UK continues to stress to the Government of Bangladesh that a UN protection mission should be urgently able to assess the humanitarian situation of the 306 refugees currently on Bhasan Char. So far, the UN have not been given the opportunity to visit Bhasan Char, and we have been unable to make a thorough assessment of living conditions. We are extremely concerned by the recent reports of alleged sexual assaults and other forms of mistreatment on Bhasan Char and are monitoring developments closely.

The UK supports the UN position that independent, full and detailed protection and technical assessments are needed to evaluate the safety and sustainability of living on Bhasan Char before any large-scale relocation of refugees is considered. Until

such assessments are conducted, Rohingya people can best be supported in Cox's Bazar camps where the UN humanitarian operation is already in place.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on enabling access to refugee camps on the island of Bhasan Char for a UN humanitarian visit.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to stress to the Government of Bangladesh that any relocation of refugees to Bhasan Char island must be voluntary, safe, dignified and in accordance with international humanitarian principles and standards. The recent reports of alleged sexual assaults and other forms of mistreatment on Bhasan Char are extremely concerning and we are monitoring developments there closely. We continue to underline to the Government of Bangladesh that a UN protection mission should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity for the 306 refugees taken to Bhasan Char from boats in the Bay of Bengal in May. The UK fully supports the UN's position that independent, full and detailed technical and protection assessments are needed to evaluate the safety and sustainability of living on Bhasan Char before any large-scale relocation of refugees is considered.

The then Development Secretary raised the issue of Bhasan Char in a letter to Foreign Minister Momen in August this year. The Minister for South Asia, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, has discussed Bhasan Char several times with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. The British High Commissioner in Dhaka has also spoken with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser about Bhasan Char in June and, most recently, with Foreign Secretary Momen in October.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on alleged incidents of (a) physical and (b) sexual assault of Rohingya refugees by officials that government on the island of Bhasan Char.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to stress to the Government of Bangladesh that any relocation of refugees to Bhasan Char island must be voluntary, safe, dignified and in accordance with international humanitarian principles and standards. The recent reports of alleged sexual assaults and other forms of mistreatment on Bhasan Char are extremely concerning and we are monitoring developments there closely. We continue to underline to the Government of Bangladesh that a UN protection mission should be urgently undertaken for the 306 refugees taken to Bhasan Char from boats in the Bay of Bengal in May. The UK fully supports the UN's position that independent, full and detailed technical and protection assessments are needed to evaluate the safety and sustainability of living on Bhasan Char before large-scale relocation of refugees is considered.

The then Development Secretary raised the issue of Bhasan Char in a letter to Foreign Minister Momen in August. The Minister for South Asia, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, has discussed Bhasan Char several times with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. The British High Commissioner in Dhaka has also spoken with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser about Bhasan Char in June and, most recently with Foreign Secretary Momen in October. The allegations of physical and sexual assault of Rohingya refugees were also raised in a meeting between the British High Commissioner, other Ambassadors and Bangladesh officials in October.

■ Developing Countries: Fossil Fuels

Matt Western:

[\[104158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure funding from the public purse is not spent on support for fossil fuel projects in the global south.

James Duddridge:

Fossil fuels account for two thirds of global greenhouse gas emissions. The science is clear that the world is off track to meet the Paris Agreement temperature goals and we must reduce emissions if we are to avoid dangerous climate change.

Countries need reliable and sustainable supplies of energy if they are to tackle poverty effectively by growing their economies, creating jobs, and delivering essential services, and UK support for energy is increasingly invested in renewables. Since 2011, the UK has provided 33 million people with improved access to clean energy, avoided 31 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and installed 2,000 MW of clean energy capacity.

The UK was the first major economy in the world to make a legally binding net zero commitment. The UK will continue to lead by example through aligning our Official Development Assistance with the Paris Agreement temperature goals, including our support for energy. The UK keeps its balance of support for overseas projects under constant review to ensure alignment with government priorities, including on climate change.

■ Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to eliminate (a) child, (b) early and (c) forced marriage and (d) female genital mutilation.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a global leader in efforts to eliminate Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The UK invested £39 million in the UN and civil society programmes to end child marriage between 2015 and 2020 and also tackles child marriage through

programmes to promote gender equality and girls' education. These actions have contributed to a 15% reduction of global prevalence of child marriage over the last decade, averting 25 million child marriages. 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.

The UK's dedicated Forced Marriage Unit continues to lead efforts to combat forced marriage in the UK and provides dedicated support to victims and those at-risk. Since 2008, 2,605 Forced Marriage Protection Orders were issued related to marriages undertaken or planning in the UK and overseas.

The UK continues to lead the world in our support to the Africa-led movement to end FGM. Since 2013, the UK has supported over 10,000 communities to pledge to abandon FGM. In 2018 we announced a further £50 million for investments to galvanise leadership at the grassroots level in Africa, improve data quality and systems, support the UN and WHO, and to expand our programme in Sudan, which helped the country take steps to ban FGM this year.

■ Females: Human Trafficking

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to eliminate (a) trafficking, (b) exploitation and (c) other forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a global leader in efforts to eliminate trafficking, exploitation and violence against women and girls (VAWG) in all its forms. We have committed over £200 million in UK aid to tackle human trafficking and modern slavery by reducing vulnerability to exploitation and addressing the environments that allow human trafficking to thrive. For example, the £13 million "Work in Freedom" programme is working to reduce vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour of women and girls across migration pathways leading to the care sector and textiles, clothing, leather and footwear industries of South Asia and the Arab States.

In September 2020, FCDO launched the tender for our new £67.5 million programme to scale up effective interventions to prevent VAWG across development and humanitarian contexts - in homes, schools, workplaces and communities. 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 gender based violence (GBV) and will use this to drive more concerted, coordinated and scaled-up global action across the international system to prevent GBV in all its forms. Since 2018, the Government has taken concerted action to prevent abuse by aid workers in both public and private spheres and to improve the response when it happens. We introduced enhanced safeguarding standards and regularly assess partners against them. We created Project Soteria with INTERPOL to strengthen vetting of aid workers and information sharing among law enforcement

agencies. Last month the Government published a safeguarding strategy covering all UK aid spend which builds on commitments made at the 2018 London Safeguarding Summit.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Overseas Aid

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Wendy Morton:

The UK continues to be a progressive champion of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes documents of their review conferences.

The UK works with partners to provide quality and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and protect and progress sexual and reproductive rights: from tackling HIV, to family planning, maternal and newborn health, to supporting efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, and supporting safe abortion services.

At the recent United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting celebrating twenty-five years since Beijing, the Foreign Secretary outlined the UK's ambition for gender equality. The UK, along with 81 Member States joined a statement reconfirming our unwavering commitment to championing sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender equality. The UK remains committed to ensuring services are prioritised and rights are protected during the COVID-19 response to protect the significant gains made to date.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

Wendy Morton:

The UK continues to be a progressive champion of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes documents of their review conferences.

The UK works with partners to provide quality and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and protect and progress sexual and reproductive rights:

from tackling HIV, to family planning, maternal and newborn health, to supporting efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, and supporting safe abortion services.

At the recent United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting celebrating twenty-five years since Beijing, the Foreign Secretary outlined the UK's ambition for gender equality. The UK, along with 81 Member States joined a statement reconfirming our unwavering commitment to championing sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender equality. The UK remains committed to ensuring services are prioritised and rights are protected during the COVID-19 response to protect the significant gains made to date.

■ **Humanitarian Aid: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon:

[\[102815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support to UK charities in receipt of (a) development and (b) humanitarian funding working with marginalised communities on (i) treating and (ii) stopping the spread of covid 19 internationally.

Wendy Morton:

It is absolutely in Britain's interest to use ODA to make the world a healthier, safer and more prosperous place. The UK has so far pledged up to £774 million of UK aid towards the global COVID-19 response. We have allocated almost £68 million directly to international and UK-based charities who play a critical role to support vulnerable communities in dealing with the impact of the virus.

One of the ways in which we are providing funding is through our Rapid Response Facility, which is supporting the work of charities in numerous Fragile and Conflict Affected States to reduce the spread of the pandemic, protect vulnerable and marginalised communities, provide livelihood support, assist those with disabilities, and address gender-based violence.

■ **Jagtar Singh Johal**

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[102947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representation his Department has to the Indian Government on the detention of Jagtar Singh Johal; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) mental and (b) physical support available to Jagtar Singh Johal during that detention.

Nigel Adams:

We regularly make representations on Mr Johal's case to the Government of India. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, most recently raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian High Commissioner to the UK and the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, on 23 September and 28 July respectively. We monitor Mr Johal's health and welfare through regular consular visits or, during the Covid-19

pandemic, phone calls, and raise any concerns with local authorities in line with our public guidance set out in Support for British Nationals Abroad: A Guide.

■ Marie Stopes International: Abortion

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[102665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding from the public purse has been allocated to Marie Stopes International over the last five years for spending overseas (a) in total and (b) on the provision of abortion.

Wendy Morton:

(a) From January 2015 to December 2019 FCDO allocated a total of £240 million to Marie Stopes International (MSI), broken down as follows:

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
£38,808,563	£42,970,672	£47,347,033	£62,344,791	£48,686,615

Comparable figures beyond December 2019 are not yet available.

(b) As FCDO takes an integrated approach to our programming on sexual and reproductive health and rights, it is not possible to give a specific figure for our funding to MSI for the provision of safe abortion services.

■ Middle East: Overseas Aid

David Linden: [\[103611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the College of Policing has received through the Integrated Activity Fund to deliver activities to bodies based in, or working in (a) Saudi Arabia, (b) Bahrain, (c) Kuwait, (d) Oman, (e) Qatar and (f) the United Arab Emirates.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: The College of Policing only received Integrated Activity Fund funding for activities in Bahrain. I refer the Honourable Member to my answer of June 19 to question 58024 and 58028.

■ Nigeria: Military Aid

Fiona Bruce: [\[104715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress there has been on using British armed forces to train and support counter-terrorism squads in Nigeria.

James Duddridge:

For over a decade, terrorist groups, including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, have caused immense suffering to local communities in North East Nigeria. Since 2015, UK military personnel have provided training to Nigerian military personnel on topics including human rights compliance, countering improvised

explosive devices and first aid. Many of those trained have been deployed on operations to tackle the terrorist threat in North East Nigeria. The UK Government has also provided training to the Nigerian authorities on responding to terrorist attacks, bomb scene management and improving aviation security. We remain committed to helping Nigeria and its neighbours tackle the threat of terrorism.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[104716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of deploying British armed forces to join a UN peacekeeping mission against Boko Haram in Nigeria similar to that of the deployment of armed forces in Mali.

James Duddridge:

There is no UN peacekeeping mission in Nigeria. The UK has no plans to make representations to the UN Security Council on the deployment of peacekeeping forces to Nigeria as we do not assess their deployment to be the most effective way to tackle the conflict with Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, and create long-term stability. In North East Nigeria, the UK provides a comprehensive package of security, humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to help Nigeria tackle the threat from these terrorist groups, and support affected communities. We work closely with the UN, including through our support to the UN Development Programme Stabilisation Facility in North East Nigeria and our support to the work of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

UN peacekeeping is not suited to mounting offensive operations against terrorist networks. The UK troops deploying to MINUSMA, the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, will help the mission fulfil its mandated tasks, including protection of civilians and support towards implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement.

■ Offences against Children: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[102750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to include child protection through (a) services which identify children at risk of violence, reporting and referral mechanisms and (b) supporting children who have experienced violence in its response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is committed to protecting vulnerable children and helping them to grow up free from violence through COVID-19 and beyond. 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. This includes supporting a systems approach to child protection that ensures people, policies and services are working together to prevent harm from happening and to respond effectively when incidences occur.

The FCDO is working with international partners to ensure that child protection is prioritised and integrated into the multi-sectoral response to COVID-19. We have

provided £20 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support the continuity of essential social services for children, including maintaining and adapting prevention and response services for children affected by violence during COVID-19. FCDO is also adapting our child protection programming to respond to COVID-19. For example, our Children on the Move programme, which is improving the child protection system for children migrating in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, has established hotline services for children affected by the pandemic and increased the capacity of social workers with protective equipment to continue their roles in protecting children.

■ Overseas Aid

Jim Shannon: [\[102814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the £2.9 billion projected reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget on (a) donor partners and (b) marginalised communities in receipt of support funded by UK ODA.

James Cleverly:

The UK's Official Development Assistance in 2020 remains prioritised on areas including poverty reduction for the 'bottom billion'. Where necessary, donor partners are involved in discussions about any important funding changes to specific development programmes. We will continue to prioritise the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including the needs of women and girls, people with disabilities, and vulnerable and at-risk groups.

David Linden: [\[103610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many applications for funding from the Integrated Activity Fund over £50,000 were approved in financial year 2019-20; what the value was of each of those applications; and which Department or Minister requested that funding.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: 20 applications over £50,000 were approved in 2019/20. The Integrated Activity Fund expenditure for that year was £12.4 million.

■ South Asia: Climate Change

Gareth Thomas: [\[102654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further funding he plans to provide to help tackle climate change in (a) India, (b) Pakistan, (c) Nepal and (d) Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh have been important recipients of UK climate change finance, from FCDO and other government departments, since the launch of the International Climate Fund (ICF). While the Spending Review is ongoing, I cannot comment on future assistance levels at this level of detail. However, we have made a

commitment to double total ICF funding over the next five years as part of the UK's international leadership on tackling climate change. This is vital to meeting the global Sustainable Development Goals. Evidence of the impacts of climate change on the poorest people is clear and growing, with South Asia among the most vulnerable regions globally. It is also in the UK's national interest. Climate change, if unchecked and poorly managed, is very likely to contribute to growing instability, migratory pressures, humanitarian crises and water insecurity in South Asia as in other regions.

We are also working actively with these and other countries at the diplomatic and policy level to push for increased ambition and international cooperation on reducing emissions, protecting the poorest and most vulnerable from the impacts of climate change, and protecting the natural environment. This includes partnership with all four countries to increase climate action at the UN climate change Conference of Parties (COP26) to be held in Glasgow next year. We will be stepping up engagement as we get closer to COP26, including around the climate Ambition Summit to be held in December this year.

■ **UNRWA: Finance**

Christian Wakeford:

[\[103668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 October 2020 to Question 91204 on UNRWA: Finance, how much funding the UK has allocated to the UN Relief and Works Agency in 2020.

James Cleverly:

The UK has allocated £51 million for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for 2020.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Arthritis**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[96962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of (a) women and (b) men who have been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in each year since 2010.

Helen Whately:

This data is not held.

■ **Autoimmune Diseases**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[102072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of UK adults diagnosed with an immune-mediated inflammatory condition have achieved their NICE-recommended treatment target within each of the last five years.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: The data requested is not centrally held.

■ **Cancer: Health Services****Sara Britcliffe:**[\[103657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that funding from the public purse is allocated to support the provision of adequate NHS staffing levels to (a) diagnose and (b) treat patients with cancer in the (i) short and (ii) long term.

Helen Whately:

‘We are the NHS: People Plan for 2020/2021 – action for us all’ sets out actions to support transformation across the whole National Health Service, including the following commitment on the cancer workforce:

In 2021, Health Education England is prioritising the training of 400 clinical endoscopists and 450 reporting radiographers. Training grants are being offered for 350 nurses to become cancer nurse specialists and chemotherapy nurses, training 58 biomedical scientists, developing an advanced clinical practice qualification in oncology, and extending cancer support-worker training.

The 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review will set out the Government’s spending plans for health and social care for future years. The Government will set out the results of the Spending Review in due course.

■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus****Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[103436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that care homes are prepared for a second wave of covid-19 ahead of winter 2020-21.

Helen Whately:

The Adult Social Care Winter Plan published on 18 September sets out the actions we are taking at a national level to support those who provide and receive care. It also outlines the actions every local area (local authorities and National Health Service partners) and every care provider must be taking right now to protect residents and staff in care homes.

Our commitments in The Adult Social Care Winter Plan includes:

- Continuing to engage with local authorities, care providers, people with care and support needs, and their families and carers to understand their needs and provide support;
- Provide £546 million through the Infection Control Fund, set up in May, which has now been extended until March 2021, to help the care sector restrict the movement of staff between care homes to stop the spread of the virus;

- We will support care homes and domiciliary care providers by providing free PPE for their Covid-19 needs until March 2021;
- Making the flu vaccine available for free to all health and care staff, personal assistants, and unpaid carers; and
- Introducing tightened measures which will enable residents and their loved ones to have safe visits to care homes.

Working together will ensure that high-quality, safe and timely care is provided to everyone who needs it, whilst protecting people who need care especially those who are older or living with underlying health conditions who may be more vulnerable to the virus, their carers and the social care workforce from COVID-19.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Rosie Duffield:

[\[101301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to enable residents of care settings to safely visit their family members.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 October 2020]: Since the start of this pandemic, we have been working closely with the sector and public health experts to put in place guidance and support for adult social care, including for visits.

We know how important it is for residents in care settings to be able to spend time with their loved ones, including to make visits outside of the care home setting. Guidance to local areas and care providers on visits out of a care home, for example to a family home, is being developed and will be published shortly.

This will supplement our existing guidance on visiting arrangements into care homes – that supports care homes to develop their visiting policies based on a local dynamic risk assessment, led by the relevant Director of Public Health.

■ Coronavirus

Mick Whitley:

[\[90253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to produce guidance for (a) GPs and (b) other health professionals on the long term health effects of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: In August 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement released 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.

The National Health Service and the 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.

On 5 October, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network announced they will work with the Royal College of General Practitioners to develop a guideline on persistent effects of COVID-19 on patients.

The research currently underway will continue to inform future NHS service design and provision.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Sarah Champion: [\[67663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce a threshold for regional covid-19 cases to trigger the implementation of a local lockdown.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[69640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the metrics that would trigger a local lockdown due to covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 July 2020]: There are currently no plans to use a hard threshold as a trigger for implementing local lockdowns. A wide range of qualitative and quantitative information are used to monitor the incidence of COVID-19 nationally and in local areas, and to understand progress made in tackling outbreaks. These are reviewed every day and are considered in light of both the changing national picture and on-the-ground reporting on how situations are being managed.

Taken together these inform the decision made about which local Alert Level is appropriate for everyone.

Julian Sturdy: [\[97567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what process his Department is reviewing the effectiveness of each covid-19 protective measure enacted by the Government.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Where the Department has used secondary legislation to put in place measures to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, those Regulations stipulate that a review of these measures must take place within 28 days. In making a decision on how to proceed, we comply with our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 (particularly the Public Sector Equality Duty) and the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, Part 1 of the National Health Service Act 2006 and the Family Test. We keep the situation under continuous review, to consider whether the measures contained in the Regulations are still a necessary component of an effective response.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments

Ruth Cadbury: [\[92784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of treatment for people with long term symptoms of covid-19.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[92785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequate treatment of people suffering from the long term health effects of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service and the 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 NHS is working to expand access to COVID-19 rehabilitation treatments for those who have survived the virus but still have problems with breathing, mental health problems or other longer-term complications. As part of this, in July the NHS launched the Your COVID Recovery service, a personalised programme to support the recovery of people who have been in hospital or suffered at home with the virus. The Seacole Centre in Surrey has also recently opened to provide rehabilitative care to those recovering from the virus.

A major United Kingdom research study into the long-term health impacts of COVID-19 on hospitalised patients has been launched, which will inform future NHS service design and provision.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Annual Reports

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[100399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department's annual report and accounts 2019-20 will be published.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The Department intends to lay its 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts by the end of November 2020.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Private Finance Initiative

Alan Brown: [\[99034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Edward Argar:

HM Treasury and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) publish a joint dataset listing all active Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects, including those held

by the National Health Service. This data includes the dates when each PFI contract was signed and began operations, the length of the contract, and annual Unitary Charge payments.

Each NHS PFI contract includes building maintenance services as a minimum. Other services provided as part of the PFI contract vary depending on the requirements and circumstances of each NHS trust or foundation trust and are subject to change over time. NHS PFI contracts are held directly by individual NHS trusts and foundation trusts, not the Department.

The latest HM Treasury/IPA data on PFI contracts was published in May 2019 and is available on the GOV.UK website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-finance-initiative-and-private-finance-2-projects-2018-summary-data>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: VAT

Karin Smyth:

[97623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a formal response to the proposals from HM Treasury on Reform to VAT refund rules.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: The Department will respond to the proposals in line with the HM Treasury deadline of 19 November 2020 and is currently talking to its arm's length bodies and the wider National Health Service to assess any impact of the changes. HM Treasury will publish the outcomes of the responses they receive in due course.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Caroline Lucas:

[94383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 85002, tabled on 4 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on Care Homes: Visits.

Caroline Lucas:

[94384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 85003, tabled on 4 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on Care Homes: Visits.

Helen Whately:

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

■ DNACPR Decisions: Care Homes

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[102699\]](#)

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 recommendations of the August 2020 report of the Queen's Nursing Institute, which called for an inquiry into the blanket application of Do Not Resuscitate orders in care homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department is aware of the Queen's Nursing Institute report. There were 163 responses to the survey with 16 reporting some changes to standard Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) practice. Work is underway by NHS England and NHS Improvement to consider the responses and discuss the findings at a local level.

The Department has asked the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to review how DNACPR decisions were used during the COVID-19 pandemic, building on concerns that the CQC reported earlier in the year. Interim findings are expected to be reported later this year with a final report in early 2021.

■ Domestic Accidents: Safety Measures

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[103458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to local ambulance services and community teams for fall prevention work.

Edward Argar:

We are committed to providing high quality care in the most appropriate setting and recognise the important role that a range of community health services providers play in achieving this. Clinical commissioning groups commission most of the hospital and community NHS services in the local areas for which they are responsible. This includes fall prevention work, which will be commissioned based on the needs of the population they serve, and it is for local commissioners to take swift action where these services fall short.

■ Epilepsy: Cannabis

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[91580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of continuing observational trials for medical cannabis for families with severely epileptic children; and if he will he make a statement.

Edward Argar:

Observational studies would not provide robust evidence to inform future commissioning decisions and would delay a more useful and scientific study. The best course of action is to develop evidence via safe and robust clinical trials supported by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR).

A programme of two randomised controlled clinical trial are being developed by the NIHR. These trials will be critical in ensuring that evidence for cannabis-based medicinal products can be developed to plan future National Health Service commissioning decisions for the many hundreds of patients in the United Kingdom with refractory epilepsy. Industry also needs to step up and invest in robust clinical trials to improve understanding of how patients might benefit from these products.

■ Gout

Jim Shannon:

[97577]

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

Helen Whately:

This data is not held in the format requested. The 'Hospital Admitted Patient Care Activity' reports from NHS Digital identify the total number of admissions to hospital from 2011/12 to 2019/20 where gout was the primary reason for admission. These reports also include figures on instances in which gout appeared as either a primary or secondary diagnosis (i.e. where it was present but may not have been the main reason for the admission). It is important to note that these are counts of episodes, not patients, so a patient may appear more than once in the figures if they have had multiple episodes. The reports are available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-admitted-patient-care-activity>

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Derek Twigg:

[96773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2020 to Question 81543 on Coronavirus: Health services, what the current level of restoration of NHS services is by region, in the latest period for which data is available.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Local providers have been asked to produce plans for how they will meet the key actions outlined in the phase 3 guidance issued by NHS England at the end of July. The ambition is to recover elective services in October to 90% of last year's levels for admissions and 100% for outpatients.

The National Health Service and the Department will monitor progress against this and latest regional waiting times, activity and operational performance data is collected and published on the NHS England website at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/rtt-data-2020-21/>

■ Heart Diseases: Consultants

Henry Smith:

[\[102033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequate future supply of cardiologists to work in the NHS.

Helen Whately:

As at June 2020, the number of doctors of all grades in the specialties of cardiology and paediatric cardiology in England was 3,600 full time equivalent. Of these, 1,589 were consultants. This is an increase of 1,168, of which 646 are consultants, since 2010. The specialty is popular, with a 96% to 100% fill rate for training posts every year.

We have increased the number of medical school places by 1,500 over the last three years and have more medical students in training than at any other time in National Health Service history. As part of this record expansion, we opened five new medical schools across the country. This will ensure a significant further increase in the supply of doctors, including a larger pipeline for cardiologists, in coming years.

■ Hospitals: Parking

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[99786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the Government has made on abolishing hospital car parking charges for disabled people.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: The Government is committed to ending unfair hospital car parking charges by making parking free for those in greatest need, including disabled people, with rollout having commenced in some trusts from April and in others on a rolling basis throughout the course of this year, subject to the constraints imposed by the pandemic.

These new requirements are being mandated through the NHS Standard Contract, to make car parking more consistent across England. The 2020/21 contract asked the National Health Service in England to do all it can to implement them from April 2020 and requires it to do so from January 2021.

■ Medical Equipment

Emily Thornberry:

[\[98181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what products are contained in his Department's centralised stock build of fast-moving medical devices and clinical consumables; and what volume of each of those products was held in the stock on (a) 31 October 2019 and (b) 1 October 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 6 October 2020]: The Government and the Department has maintained arrangements through NHS Supply Chain to build up a Centralised Stock

Build (CSB) of fast-moving Medical Devices and Clinical Consumables (MDCC) to mitigate against the potential for disruptions in supply at the end of transition period.

This activity is based on stock builds undertaken for European Union Exit in 2019 and accounts for additional supply resilience measures activated in response to COVID-19. The CSB aims to provide six weeks stock cover across a range of MDCC products that have an EU touchpoint.

■ Medical Treatments: Coronavirus

Mr William Wragg: [\[103550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the potential effectiveness of cotrimoxazole in the treatment of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: The Department is considering carefully all available evidence around the potential of different drugs for use in treating COVID-19, including from clinical trials in the United Kingdom and overseas. NHS England, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the National Institute for Health Research Innovation Observatory are working together through the RAPID-C19 oversight group as part of a multi-agency approach to ensure any products deemed safe and effective in clinical trials to treat COVID-19 can rapidly be brought into wider use across the National Health Service in the UK.

There are currently no UK clinical trials investigating cotrimoxazole in the treatment of COVID-19; however, we are aware of two Phase II trials using this product running in Bangladesh and Greece. These studies have not yet reported results.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron: [\[91576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 6 July 2020 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay and follow up correspondence of 6 August and 28 August on the learning disabilities extra support campaign.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: I replied to the hon. Member's letter on 2 October 2020.

■ Mental Health Services

Scott Benton: [\[102945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the increased replacement of in-person consultations with telemedicine appointments on patients with mental health conditions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with colleagues across Health Education England, Public Health England, Care Quality Commission, NHSX and the Department to bring together local and national intelligence of the impact of digital and remote working during the COVID-19 outbreak. This will include consideration of patients with mental health conditions.

Sir Charles Walker:**[96807]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of evidence-based talking therapies other than cognitive behavioural therapy in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services throughout England; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In addition to cognitive behavioural therapy, the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme provides the following National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved therapies: guided and non-guided self-help through a book or a computer, counselling for depression, psychoeducational peer support, behavioural activation (high and low intensity), eye movement desensitisation reprocessing, interpersonal psychotherapy, mindfulness, collaborative care, couples therapy for depression, brief psychodynamic psychotherapy, structured physical activity, applied relaxation and ante/post-natal counselling.

NHS Digital publishes annual reports on the IAPT programme and this includes a therapy-based outcome analysis, detailing all the therapies available through IAPT services. The latest report can be found at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/psychological-therapies-annual-reports-on-the-use-of-iapt-services/annual-report-2018-19>

■ NHS: Property**Karin Smyth:****[100455]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to NHS trusts on the process for authorising the transfer to local ownership of NHS properties currently owned and managed by NHS Property Services.

Edward Argar:

The guidance for National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts on requesting transfer of estate in the ownership of the NHS Property Companies (which includes NHS Property Services) is published on the Government website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/requesting-transfers-of-estate-owned-by-nhs-property-companies>

■ Patients: Health Services**Anne Marie Morris:****[99617]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mechanisms his Department has in place to assess and include patient feedback and experiences in the health and care policy decision-making process.

Edward Argar:

Policy makers in the Department are guided in their work by the Civil Service Professional Development Framework for policy professionals which was published in 2019 and can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851078/Policy_Profession_Standards_AUG19.pdf

The Framework sets out the requirement for policy professionals to take into account genuine user needs when developing their policy, understand the impact for end users and use a range of tools and techniques to gather evidence and test policy solutions. The Department also has a policy improvement team which provides specific guidance and support on all aspects of the Framework to policy makers including how to engage and consult with a wide range of stakeholders including service users.

■ Protective Clothing**Dame Diana Johnson:****[103459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of units of personal protective equipment in stockpile for use in (a) Hull and East Yorkshire and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

Since 25 February, the Department has distributed over 4 billion PPE items for use by health and social care services in England. We have over 32 billion PPE items on order and are building a stockpile equivalent to approximately four months PPE usage at COVID-19 usage levels.

As set out in our PPE Strategy, which was published on 28 September, we are confident in managing demand for PPE arising from any second spike and from the winter period.

The operational process to build stockpiles is supported by a range of detailed operational and management data. We are working with those data flows to produce figures that could be published as official statistics; making the information available in a fully validated and clear way that aids understanding.

■ Sodium Valproate: Prescriptions

Caroline Nokes:

[\[102056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October to Question 96854, when the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will establish a registry of all women and girls of childbearing in receipt of prescriptions for sodium valproate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is working with NHS Digital to develop a registry to monitor the use of valproate and compliance with the current regulatory position, and to monitor any children born to women on valproate. Completion of the first stage of the registry which will provide information on all women currently prescribed valproate in England is planned by the end of the year.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants

Emma Hardy:

[\[97693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis was for the omission of rectopexy mesh from the specialist removal guidelines for the proposed specialised mesh removal centres.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The NHS England specialised mesh removal centres were introduced in response to the recommendations set out in the Mesh Oversight Group Report, published in 2017. The centres are for women with complications resulting from mesh inserted for urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse. These services are specifically linked to specialised gynaecological treatment.

The main reason to perform a rectopexy is to correct and repair a rectal prolapse which is therefore outside the scope of the services that the specialised mesh removal centres can offer.

HOME OFFICE

■ British Nationality: Assessments

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[104188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the revised Life in the UK test will (a) include a history of Britain's colonial past and (b) include important colonial figures and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[104189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that people (a) from disadvantaged backgrounds and (b) who do not speak English as a first language are supported to pass the Life in the UK immigration test.

Kevin Foster:

When the Life in the UK handbook is next reviewed the Home Office will consider all feedback on what should be covered in it.

All those required to pass the Life in the UK test are also required to demonstrate knowledge of spoken English language at a level equivalent to B1 or above on the Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR). The Home Office continues to work with the handbook and test provider to ensure the test is accessible to all candidates who meet that level of language proficiency.

Coronavirus: Quarantine**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[103432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) British and (b) foreign travellers have been fined for breaching quarantine rules following arrival to England from a non-exempt country in the last six months.

Kit Malthouse:

On 30 September, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published its latest report on the police use of Covid-19 enforcement notices issued under all emergency health protections. The data covers up to the 21 September and shows that 38 fines had been issued to individuals who have contravened the International Travel regulations by failing to self-isolate after arriving in England from a country on the UK government list. These were issued across 14 forces. The data does not specify the nationality of the recipient of a fine and this information is not held by the Home Office.

Forensic Science**Jane Hunt:**[\[103658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Recommendation 21 of the Third Report of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee's report, Forensic science and the criminal justice system: a blueprint for change, published on 1 May 2020, HL Paper 333, what recent discussions she has had with forensic science stakeholders on the potential merits of establishing a Forensic Science Institute; and what the outcome of those discussions was.

Kit Malthouse:

My officials have been working closely with colleagues across Government as well as the forensic science sector to ensure that policing and the CJS benefits from advances in science and technology by developing and implementing new forensic techniques more coherently. The Home Office and the Ministry of Justice have strengthened further our working relationship with UKRI as we work with them and other strategic partners including providing funding for the police-led Forensic Capability Network to develop and set the research priorities for forensic science research and development.

The Forensic Capability Network have been working with user communities to identify what they need from the research system, and what changes are needed as well as interrogating existing links and resources to understand the extent to which the current system is ready to meet user needs. The Forensic Capability Network is actively identifying, the connections, infrastructures, or programmes in order to develop, support and coordinate research for the justice system.

A Science for the Justice System Advisory Group has also been established, working with a UKRI project to devise options for future mechanisms to effectively and efficiently coordinate forensic science in the UK. Initial consultation with key stakeholders has identified common areas of research need, and mapping of relevant UKRI investments has also been undertaken to support ongoing development of funding and coordination options to ensure research can better meet different forms of user need.

Considerations of the case for a National Institute are ongoing, but we consider work in progress to represent a significant step in the right direction and will continue to monitor progress at the Criminal Justice Board (CJB) Forensics Sub-Group.

■ **Fraud: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher:

[102841]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to (a) prevent, (b) protect people from and (c) warn people about scams related to the covid-19 outbreak.

James Brokenshire:

The Government is aware that fraudsters are exploiting the pandemic to commit opportunistic crimes such as fraud. Along with partners in law enforcement, the public sector and the private and third sectors, we have been implementing measures to ensure the public has the protection and advice needed to shield themselves from these crimes.

This has included working alongside the National Cyber Security Centre to establish a new Suspicious Email Reporting Service. This service allows the public to report potential scams safely and effectively. To date, this has already led to over 13,000 scams being thwarted and taken down. Members of the public can forward suspicious emails to this address: report@phishing.gov.uk

However, law enforcement cannot do this alone. In addition, the public should be well-informed on the steps they can take to guard against becoming the victim of crime. That is why we have launched a gov.uk page that contains easy-to-follow steps for people to spot potential frauds and the steps they can take to avoid them. It also signposts advice and support to those who may unfortunately have fallen victim. This page can currently be found here:

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

■ Immigration: Married People

Christian Wakeford:

[\[103669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons a UK citizen living in the UK is charged a fee for the citizenship applications process to bring their non-UK citizen spouse to the UK and a EU citizen living in the UK is able to bring their spouse to the UK through the settled status scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The Immigration Act 2014 gives the Home Office statutory powers to set fees for applications for entry or residence documentation issued under our domestic Immigration Rules and fees currently charged to non-EU citizens, including the dependants of British citizens, take into account wider factors within primary legislation.

At the end of the transition period, we will introduce a new fairer immigration system. This new points-based immigration system, to be implemented from 1 January 2021, will focus on the skills migrants possess and the contribution they can make to the UK, not where their passport comes from. Our intention is to align the immigration arrangements for newly arriving EU citizens with those for migrants from the rest of the world, including in respect of family reunion. Further details of the new system will be set out in due course.

The EU Settlement Scheme reflects our obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement with the EU in relation to EU citizens resident in the UK by the end of the transition period and their family members. British nationals living in the UK are not exercising free movement rights and therefore need to sponsor family members under the UK's immigration rules.

■ Retail Trade: Abuse and Violence

Gareth Thomas:

[\[103411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle violence and abuse experienced by shop workers; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

Last year the Home Office ran a call for evidence, to understand further the issue of violence and abuse toward shop workers and the measures which may help prevent these crimes. The Government published a response to the Call for Evidence on Violence and Abuse Toward Shop Staff in July. Action the Government is taking to reduce violence and abuse experienced by shop workers is set out in the response, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence>

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr David Davis:

[\[102670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the compliance rate for travel quarantine rules.

Kit Malthouse:

A robust system is in place for ensuring the compliance of those who should be self-isolating after travelling to the country. In the vast majority of cases, the public are complying with these measures. However, where we cannot confirm this is the case, referrals are made to the police who will follow up with the individuals directly.

On 30 September, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) published its latest report on the police use of Covid-19 enforcement notices issued under all emergency health protections. The report showed that up to 22 September, 4,114 case referrals from public health authorities were accepted by police forces in England and Wales relating to the isolation status of a member of the public following travel, under the International Travel Regulations. Of these, 3,216 cases investigated by officers found the individual to be complying with the regulations, with no further action being necessary.

In addition, in the period from 8 June to 14 October, 18 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) have been issued by Border Force for failure by individuals to provide information at the border.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence

Steve McCabe:

[\[102664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions hon. Members have waited longer than 20 working days for a response to their enquiry from her Department in the last (a) three and (b) six months.

James Brokenshire:

Over the last three months the Department has replied to 10,079 letters from hon. Members. Of these, 3,471 (34%) have been replied to in over 20 days.

Over the last six months the Department has replied to 21,204 letters from hon. Members. Of these 7,179 (34%) have been replied to in over 20 days.

Performance has been impacted by a very significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, alongside the need for Ministers and officials to instigate a remote process for drafting and signing correspondence during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. An action plan is currently in place to clear backlogs and drive up performance.

■ Visas: British National (Overseas)**Owen Thompson:**[\[103579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that known human rights abusers in Hong Kong do not benefit from the bespoke immigration route being developed for British Nationals (Overseas) passport holders from Hong Kong.

Kevin Foster:

Consistent with the Immigration Rules, we will refuse applicants for the Hong Kong BN(O) Visa from those who have serious criminal convictions, have been otherwise engaged in behaviour which the UK Government deems not conducive to the public good, or are subject to other general grounds for refusal.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Safety****Mike Amesbury:**[\[102923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department will take to ensure that any baseline for standards in the Building Safety Bill includes (a) a property and (b) a life safety baseline to ensure that individuals can escape but also have a property to return to following a peril event.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Bill will establish a new, more stringent regime for higher-risk buildings, both in design and construction and for the building in use. It will also drive improvements in building safety and performance standards in all buildings, driving culture change and incentivising compliance. The Bill will ensure that building safety standards are effectively enforced but the standards are not set out in the Bill itself.

A technical review of Approved Document B (fire safety) of the building regulations is underway. The scope of fire protection requirements will be considered as part of the review, including whether it should be extended to the protection of property in addition to life safety. Details of the review are set out at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877365/Technical_review_of_Approved_Document_B_workplan.pdf.

■ Commonhold and Leasehold: Reform**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[102767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to respond to the Law Commission's three reports on reforming residential leasehold and commonhold, published on 21 July 2020.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. We are working with the Law Commission to

make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and cheaper – and to reinvigorate Commonhold to provide consumers with a choice of tenure and the Right to Manage to help empower those that wish to, to take on management responsibilities for their properties

In January this year the Law Commission published the first of four reports, on the valuation aspects of enfranchisement, and on 21 July a further three reports on the remaining aspects of enfranchisement as well as Commonhold and Right to Manage. We will consider all their recommendations carefully and respond in due course.

Details can be found here: <https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/residential-leasehold-and-commonhold/> .

■ Housing: Construction Methods

Mike Amesbury:

[\[102924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department will take to expand the evidence base to increase its understanding of modern methods of construction technologies and their effect on functional design for people who will live in homes subject to those construction technologies.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of houses and that requires a modern construction industry. Building more homes using modern methods of construction, including offsite and smart techniques, is a key part of this.

We are always looking to expand our evidence base across all of our policy areas, especially ones with new, ever improving technologies such as modern methods of construction (MMC). We will continue to work with industry to further our understanding of construction technologies as well as use our own metrics in our programmes. For example, the new Affordable Homes Programme funding has a minimum target for MMC, which will be reviewed annually and increased as market conditions allow. We will also be commissioning a research project on the risks associated with modular construction.

■ Landlords

James Murray:

[\[104197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) entries, (b) offences, (c) landlords, and (d) letting agents are currently included in his Department's rogue landlord database.

James Murray:

[\[104198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many entries were added to his Department's rogue landlord database in each month since April 2018.

James Murray:

[\[104199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to make the database of rogue landlords and property agents introduced in April 2018 publicly accessible.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government intends to continue to develop and implement measures to widen access to and expand the scope of the database of rogue landlords and property agents. We will also give greater powers to drive improvements in standards, and empower tenants to make an informed choice about who they rent from. We intend to bring forward this legislation as part of the Renters Reform Bill.

■ Permitted Development Rights: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[104771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development and Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 to apply to temporary structures beyond 31 December 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

These time-limited measures were introduced to support businesses and communities during the COVID-19 crisis. We continue to keep temporary rights under review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Strategic Trade Advisory Group and Trade Union Advisory Group

Emily Thornberry:

[\[104702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the members of her Department's (a) new Trade Union Advisory Group and (b) expanded Strategic Trade Advisory Group, announced on 16 October 2020.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[104703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the terms of reference for her Department's (a) new Trade Union Advisory Group and (b) expanded Strategic Trade Advisory Group, announced on 16 October 2020.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[104704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the members of her Department's (a) Trade Union Advisory Group and (b) Strategic Trade Advisory Group have been required to sign non-disclosure agreements as a condition of their participation in those groups.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Membership of the expanded Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG) and current members of the new Trade Union advisory group were published on GOV.UK on 16th October.

Terms of reference are for the members themselves, but agendas and summaries of STAG meetings will be made public. The Rt Hon. Lady will appreciate that confidentiality agreements facilitate sensitive discussions by creating a secure framework for sharing privileged information with external stakeholders. Whilst signing a confidentiality agreement is a prerequisite for becoming a member of the STAG, it is not a prerequisite for becoming a member of the Trade Union advisory group. For the avoidance of doubt, being party to a confidentiality agreement does not prevent anyone from discussing general trade policy matters with others.

Trade Agreements: Côte d'Ivoire**Emily Thornberry:**[\[104065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the legal text of the UK-Cote d'Ivoire continuity trade agreement.

Greg Hands:

The Agreement text will be laid in the libraries of both Houses alongside an accompanying Explanatory Memorandum and a Parliamentary Report. They will also be published on the gov.uk website. This is part of the UK's established treaty ratification process.

Emily Thornberry:[\[104066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether provisions have been made on the protection of human rights in the UK-Cote d'Ivoire continuity trade agreement beyond those in the EU-Cote d'Ivoire Economic Partnership Agreement.

Emily Thornberry:[\[104067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether provisions have been made on the environment, climate change and sustainability in the UK-Cote d'Ivoire continuity trade agreement beyond those in the EU-Cote d'Ivoire Economic Partnership Agreement.

Emily Thornberry:[\[104068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether provisions have been made on the protection of workers' rights and International Labour Organisation standards in the UK-Cote d'Ivoire continuity trade agreement beyond those in the EU-Cote d'Ivoire Economic Partnership Agreement.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Côte d'Ivoire bilateral Agreement replicates, as far as possible, the effects of our existing Agreement with Côte d'Ivoire. It replicates the objectives that applied to the EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and confirms that the same essential

and fundamental elements will underpin the UK EPA, including human rights, democratic principles, good governance and the rule of law.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Proceedings: Veterans

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 83722 on Remand in Custody: Veterans, what the £5.7m funding for support for veterans within the criminal justice system has been spent on; and what time period that funding is planned for.

Lucy Frazer:

In 2015, 14 grants worth £4.6 million were awarded to support projects working with former service personnel with the aim of reducing re-offending. In 2018, seven continuation grants worth £1,101,308 were subsequently awarded to some existing grant holders.

The programme has been externally evaluated by RAND Europe, with publication due at the end of October 2020.

Information on these grants is available at - <https://covenantfund.org.uk/ex-forces-in-the-criminal-justice-system-projects-weve-funded/>

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) training and (b) processes are in place to ensure that courts take account of issues in the lives of veterans for the purposes of the (a) operation of liaison and diversion schemes and (b) sentencing decisions.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to increase rates of disclosure by armed services veterans of their histories of service and related issues at the (a) liaison and diversion stage, (b) sentencing stage and (c) other stages of the court process.

Lucy Frazer:

NHS England Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services place clinical staff at police stations and courts across England to provide assessments and referrals to treatment and support. Offenders, including veterans, may be diverted away from the criminal justice system altogether, away from charge, or to a community sentence with a treatment requirement. L&D services can support individuals with a range of vulnerabilities including those with mental health issues, substance misuse issues and learning disabilities.

Information on previous military service is also asked at first contact with probation, typically in court, and during screening on entry to custody.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Neil Coyle:

[\[102821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many appeals to EU Settlement Scheme decisions have (a) been made and (b) been successful in reversing a decision made by his Department.

Alex Chalk:

The EU Settlement Scheme is administered by the Home Office with a statutory right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal - Immigration and Asylum Chamber (FtTIAC).

From commencement of the statutory appeal right on 31 January 2020 to 30 June 2020, the most recent date for published tribunal statistics, there have been 57 appeals lodged with the FtTIAC against decisions made under the EU Settlement Scheme.

Seven appeals have been rejected, with the remainder awaiting determination by the tribunal.

■ Pre-sentence Reports

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 9 October 2020 to Question 98201 on Pre-sentence Reports, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the (a) higher proportion of Oral Reports and (b) lower proportion of Standard Delivery Reports for adult females relative to adult males.

Lucy Frazer:

Subject to the requirements of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, it is for the judiciary to decide whether or not a pre-sentence report should be commissioned.

The type of report the court decides to request may vary for a number of reasons, but the seriousness of the offence and possible risk to the public are likely to be key factors. Standard Delivery Reports are mainly used by the Crown Court when considering a public protection sentence. The higher proportion of Standard Delivery Reports on adult males when compared with adult females is consistent with the fact that a high percentage of violent and sexual offences are committed by male offenders.

■ Prison Officers: Crimes of Violence

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[102662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the trends in the number of assaults on prison officers since the publication of the Hutton report on Public Service Pensions in 2011.

Lucy Frazer:

The level of violence in prisons is high and any assault against our hardworking prison staff is unacceptable. We are addressing this by giving all staff the tools and training they need to help reduce violence.

While violence fell in 2012, the year after the Hutton report, this steadily rose until 2019, but has now begin to level off – with a decrease by 15% in the last four quarters.

The causes of violence are complicated. The increase in the use of psychoactive substances in prisons since 2013 has been a significant factor in the previous increase in violence.

We have made significant investment to boost staff numbers and recruited more than 4,000 additional prison officers between October 2016 and December 2019. This has given us the capacity to implement the key worker role, allowing staff dedicated time to provide support to individual prisoners, helping us to deal with emerging threats and improve safety.

We work closely with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to bring those guilty of assaulting staff to justice. Additionally, as outlined in our Sentencing White Paper we will double the maximum sentence for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to two years.

We are also giving officers PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to make their jobs safer and are spending £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars. This will fund tough new measures including x-ray body scanners, baggage scanners and phone-blocking technology.

■ Prison Officers: Retirement**Sir Gary Streeter:**[\[102661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to review the retirement age for prison officers.

Lucy Frazer:

We highly value our hardworking prison staff and offer access to medical professionals and an employee assistance programme to ensure continued physical and mental wellbeing. There are currently no plans to review the retirement age of prison officers.

■ Prisoners**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[102725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of automatically providing contact details for local support workers on phones supplied to prisoners.

Lucy Frazer:

We work with offenders to support their rehabilitation, including signposting them to relevant services. Basic mobile telephones have been purchased as a temporary measure in order to maintain contact with offenders in the community who do not have access to a phone of their own, while they adhere to social distancing measures. The telephones are only capable of voice communication and text communication and do not have internet access.

We have considered the possibility of adding contact details to telephones, but have concluded that doing so would not be operationally practicable. The information would not be exhaustive and could not be easily updated. In addition, it would be labour intensive to provide information via this method.

Sarah Champion:[\[104736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what factors are considered when categorising an offender in prison as low risk.

Sarah Champion:[\[104737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which agency determines whether an offender in prison is categorised as low risk.

Sarah Champion:[\[104738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he retains the right to overrule a determination that an offender be transferred to an open prison.

Lucy Frazer:

In producing an assessment of the likelihood that a prisoner will reoffend and of the harm which would result from any reoffending, offender managers in HM Prison and Probation Service will use approved and accredited assessment tools, notably the Offender Assessment System (OASys).

When assessing a prisoner's risk of harm and risk of reoffending, offender managers have regard to the prisoner's static and dynamic risk factors. A static risk factor is usually a feature of the prisoner's past – such as his/her previous offending, the nature of his/her upbringing or how well s/he did at school. A dynamic risk factor may vary or be susceptible to change – such as alcohol abuse, drug taking or negative peer pressure. In order to assess a prisoner as low risk of harm and low risk of reoffending, offender managers would need to be satisfied that, based on the available evidence, the risk indicators do not point to medium or high risk. When assessing a prisoner's suitability for open conditions, offender managers need also be satisfied that the prisoner presents a low risk of abscondment.

In the case of determinate sentence prisoners, the Prison Governor takes the decision as to whether to transfer a prisoner to open conditions, having regard to a comprehensive assessment of current risk, including the risk of abscond or other breach of the trust afforded by open conditions

In the case of indeterminate sentence offenders, other than where a prisoner has made demonstrably exceptional progress, the decision for a move to open conditions is taken by officials on behalf of the Secretary of State, following advice from the Parole Board. The Secretary of State does have discretion to reject a recommendation from the Parole Board, but because the Board undertakes a full and thorough risk assessment, the policy since 2008 has been to accept the Board's recommendation other than in exceptional circumstances.

Consequently, officials will accept a Parole Board recommendation, except where the recommendation goes against the recommendations of the report writers without explaining why, or is based on inaccurate information. Officials will also reject a recommendation if they consider that the Secretary of State does not have a wholly persuasive case for transferring the prisoner to open conditions at the current time.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the definition is of settled accommodation for the purposes of recording the accommodation circumstance of prisoners released from custody.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been released into (a) settled accommodation, (b) bail/probation accommodation, (c) rough sleeping, (d) other homeless circumstances, (e) other unsettled accommodation and (f) unknown accommodation circumstances in (i) each region in England and (ii) Wales, since 23 March 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

"Settled accommodation" is defined as:

(i) any accommodation that provides a permanent independent housing solution including as owner occupier; tenant in a tenancy available for a minimum 3 month period; living as part of a family where the Applicable Person is able to reside in that home permanently and is able to return to that home; living with a friend with a bedroom available for the Applicable Person's use and access to domestic facilities; a caravan or boat that is viewed by the Applicable Person as his permanent home; (ii) supported housing provided by an accredited housing agency that is provided for a minimum 3 month period and includes support for the Applicable Person in relation to moving to a permanent independent housing solution Statistics for the definition of settled accommodation can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904935/accommodation-201920.ods

While some data for the period after 31 March 2020 has been released ahead of publication (in recognition of the public interest in making information available in relation to the operation of the additional accommodation support scheme, which

ended on 31 August), it is not possible, without incurring disproportionate cost, to provide the detailed breakdown requested for the period specified, ahead of the planned publication schedule. The statistics with associated breakdowns requested are officially scheduled for release in July 2021.

We recognise that accommodation is a key priority, as it is often the first step in an individual's resettlement journey. We continue to work with councils and charities to secure suitable accommodation, while investigating long-term solutions to prevent homelessness and help offenders turn their backs on crime.

■ Prisoners: Veterans

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison staff have had Veterans in Custody Scheme training, in each prison in England and Wales.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether prison staff who have had Veterans in Custody Scheme training in England and Wales are able to access (a) protected working time for work with veterans in custody and (b) additional pay for their work with veterans in custody.

Lucy Frazer:

We do not hold details on the number of prison staff trained in the Veterans in Custody Scheme. Specialist training is available to all staff, developed externally by the Probation Institute and military charities, focusing on the particular needs of veterans.

Prison governors have responsibility for coordinating activities in prisons and are responsible for creating a safe rehabilitative environment for all those in their care. This includes running a Veterans in Custody Scheme where there is an identified need.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisons in England and Wales use history of service in the armed services as a criterion for the placement of prisoners within their accommodation.

Lucy Frazer:

All prisoners, including former service personnel are individually assessed to ensure categorisation to a prison providing an appropriate level of security. HMPPS is committed to ensuring, where practicable, that prisoners are accommodated as close as possible to their resettlement communities and families.

There are areas of good practice with former service personnel voluntarily being placed in prisons, such as at HMP Parc and HMP Berwyn, where new prisoners are helped to settle in to the early stages of their sentence through their location on the induction wing. However, there will be former service personnel with differing

sentence lengths and offence type who may not necessarily be suitable for co-location with their peers.

■ Prisons

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[102718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to expansion works at HMPs Guys Marsh, Rye Hill, Stocken and High Down, announced on 12 October 2020, what estimate he has made of the effect of expansion on access to (a) outdoor, (b) activity and (c) workshop space per prisoner at each of those prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

As well as adding extra capacity, these expansions will also include development to address the impact on prison regime, the need for purposeful activity (including workshop space), and outside space resulting from the increased prisoner numbers.

The proposed development at HMP High Down will create a new workshop building, freeing up space in the main areas of the prison where workshops are currently situated to create new capacity for 90 additional prisoners.

We are working with Governors and other partners to develop plans that will deliver the appropriate level of regime and other support services necessary to manage the increases in population at those sites.

■ Prisons: Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[102764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his most recent estimate is of the number of (a) drug and (b) alcohol-dependent prisoners in the prison population in England and Wales.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government is committed to addressing substance misuse in prisons and therefore reducing reoffending from this cohort. NHS England/ Improvement are responsible for commissioning health services, including substance misuse treatment, in prisons and data on treatment in prisons is collected by Public Health England through the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System. We are working with health and justice partners through the National Partnership Agreement for Prison Healthcare in England 2018 to 2021 to address substance misuse in prisons.

The latest publication of Offender Needs in the *Identified needs of offenders in Custody and the Community from Offender Assessment System (OASys)* publication with data as at June 2018, found that 45% of offenders in custody with a full OASys assessment had a drugs misuse need and 17% assessed had an alcohol misuse need. It should be noted that not all offenders have ever been assessed and, for those who have been assessed, only the most recent full (termed Layer 3) assessment is retained, which includes a criminogenic need assessment.

■ Prisons: Video Conferencing

Alex Cunningham:

[104726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisons in England and Wales do not have a prison video link system.

Lucy Frazer:

Currently, 108 custodial establishments in England and Wales (89% of the total) have access to a fixed prison video link system. Work is in hand to increase videoconferencing capacity in prisons including to equip the remaining 14 establishments with video links by the end of this financial year, subject to any unforeseen impacts of Covid-19. The scoping visits as part of this work have confirmed the figures here, which differ from the response given to PQ 101003.

■ Reoffenders

Ms Lyn Brown:

[102715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the reoffending rate is of people released from prison for (a) each region in England and (b) Wales.

Lucy Frazer:

Proven reoffending rates broken down by prison establishment are at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/872396/prison-youth-accomm-probation-data-tool-jan18-mar18.xlsx.

However, due to data quality issues adult prisons data is only available until September 2015. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of this information, with the aim that we can resume production of this in future.

Latest available figures on overall proven reoffending rates for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, or received a caution broken down by region are at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861986/Geographical_data_tool_apr06_mar18.xlsx

■ War Memorials: Vandalism

Gavin Robinson:

[104739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress the Government has made in bringing forward legislative proposals to ensure that people who desecrate war memorials are subject to appropriate sanctions.

Alex Chalk:

Any vandalism or attack on property should be met with the full force of the law. Attacking any memorial is an insult, and this is particularly true of a war memorial commemorating those who have given their lives fighting for our freedom.

The Government is currently reviewing the law in this area to ensure that where memorials are damaged or desecrated the courts are able to sentence appropriately at every level for this particular type of offending.

■ Young Offenders: Care Leavers and Children in Care

Peter Kyle:

[102887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of young people convicted for (a) drugs offences, (b) robbery and (c) violence against the person were (i) looked after children and (ii) care leavers in each of the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on people convicted of offences, including the age ranges of those convicted, up to December 2019, which is available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888664/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

Use the 'age range' variable in the data tool to filter.

The Department for Education has published information on offending by looked after children in England, for years ending March 2017 to 2019. This is available in Table I1 of the National Tables: children looked after in England including adoption 2018 to 2019, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850322/Children_looked_after_in_England_2019_National_Tables.xlsx

Furthermore, a recent publication of experimental statistics provides some information on the assessed care status of sentenced children. This is available in Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System, England and Wales, April 2018 to March 2019, here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/887644/assessing-needs-of-sentenced-children-youth-justice-system.pdf

Centrally held information by the Ministry of Justice does not include whether a defendant was a looked after child or a care leaver. This information may be held on court record but can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Youth Offending Teams: Speech and Language Therapy

Peter Kyle:

[104132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the (a) number and (b) type of concerns measured by youth offending teams using the AssetPlus assessment tool, during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the Youth Justice Board (YJB) has actively monitored a range of existing and new sources of information to evaluate the impact on children coming into contact with Youth Offending Teams. AssetPlus data is included in the oversight of YOT performance, and to protect vulnerable children and sustain best outcomes for children under COVID-19 restrictions.

The YJB plan to publish updated and additional data from AssetPlus again as Experimental Statistics under the Code of Practice [COP] for statistics in January 2021. The forthcoming publication will cover up to 31st March 2020 and will not focus specifically on the COVID-19 period.

Note that experimental statistics are a subset of newly developed or innovative official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are developed under the guidance of the Head of Profession for Statistics and published to involve users and stakeholders in the assessment of their suitability and quality at an early stage. [‘Regulatory Guidance Experimental statistics – official statistics in development’, <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Regulatory-Guidance-Experimental-Statistics-2019.pdf>].

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Simon Hoare:

[104756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October to Question 102124 on Terrorism: Northern Ireland, if he will publish the (a) community groups, including victim support groups, (b) religious leaders, (c) academics and (d) representatives of civic society met by Ministers and officials; and on what dates those meetings took place.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government is committed to publishing details of ministers’ meetings with external organisations, including those listed, on a quarterly basis. Publications for the Northern Ireland Office can be found on Gov.UK.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[102868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) merits of recent requests to provide covid-19 testing at airports and (b) potential merits of allocating funding to airport management companies to enable them to provide that service.

Robert Courts:

The Government is actively working on the practicalities of using testing to release people from self-isolation earlier than 14 days. The Global Travel Taskforce is working at pace to consider how testing, technology and innovation can drive a recovery for international travel and tourism, without adding to infection risk or infringing on our overall NHS test capacity.

Public Health England prepared a paper on the effectiveness of 'double testing' travellers coming to the UK. The paper is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phe-investigation-into-the-effectiveness-of-double-testing-travellers-incoming-to-the-uk-for-signs-of-covid-19-17-june-2020>.

■ Bus Services: Coronavirus

Selaine Saxby:

[102961]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support the bus and coach industries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

On 8 August, the Department for Transport announced funding at up to £27.3 million per week to support the bus sector, through the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme, until a time when the funding is no longer needed. CBSSG Restart funding also covers costs for essential PPE such as hand sanitiser and protective screens for drivers' cabs.

This is in addition to the £397 million the Government announced on 3 April 2020 so that England's buses will continue to serve those who rely on them, and the £254 million announced on 23 May to support services returning to 100% service levels.

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

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

The Department of Education (DfE) has announced over £70 million to local transport authorities to provide dedicated, additional capacity in our transport system, helping students journey to and from their schools and colleges whilst social distancing reduces the capacity of existing public transport. This has been provided in two tranches that were announced on 8 August date and 14 October and will provide additional capacity to the end of the autumn term.

Selaine Saxby:

[102962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to provide support to bus and coach industries to mitigate the effects of covid-19 outbreak on those industries.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is working closely with representatives from the bus and coach industries through the Confederation of Passenger Transport, and colleagues in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and other Government Departments, to discuss the concerns of the coach and bus industries in England and review our approach to mitigating the effects of covid-19 on these industries.

The Department has published [Safer Travel Guidance for Operators](#) which helps transport organisations in England understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers.

On 8 August, the Department announced funding at up to £27.3 million per week to support the bus sector, through the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) Restart scheme, until a time when the funding is no longer needed. CBSSG Restart funding also covers costs for essential PPE such as hand sanitiser and protective screens for drivers' cabs. This is in addition to the £397 million the Government announced on 3 April 2020 so that England's buses will continue to serve those who rely on them, and the £254 million announced on 23 May to support services returning to 100% service levels.

On 31 July 2020, the Department announced that a further exemption from Public Service Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) until 31 July 2021. Whilst many coach operators are PSVAR-compliant, we understand the COVID-19 outbreak may have constrained some operators' ability to invest in PSVAR-compliant vehicles. This further exemption enables operators to redirect their revenue streams to those areas most needed for the immediate future.

The Department of Education (DfE) has announced over £70 million to local transport authorities to provide dedicated, additional capacity in our transport system, helping students journey to and from their schools and colleges whilst social distancing reduces the capacity of existing public transport. This has been provided in two tranches that were announced on 8 August date and 14 October and will provide additional capacity to the end of the autumn term.

■ **Coronavirus Act 2020**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[102860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many regulations he has brought forward under provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 since the passing of that Act.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State for Transport has not brought forward any regulations under the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

■ **Driving Licences: Northern Ireland**

Paul Girvan:

[\[103606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether grandfathered driving rights driving licenses issued by the Driver and Vehicle Agency Northern Ireland are recognised if that driver transfers to a DVLA license.

Rachel Maclean:

Driving entitlements held as grandfather rights on licences issued in Northern Ireland before 1997 are recognised when those licences are exchanged for a GB licence.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[102857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2020 to Question 57396 on Driving Tests: Coronavirus, what consultation he has undertaken on whether to bring forward amending legislation to allow (a) refunds of theory test fees and (b) applicants to resit the test free of charge where a theory test certificate expired during the covid-19 outbreak resulting in a candidate being unable to sit their practical test.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of the theory test certificate is set in legislation and the Government has decided not to lay further legislation to extend it; therefore, no consultation has been undertaken.

The main reason the two-year validity of a theory test certificate is in place is to ensure a candidate's theoretical knowledge of driving remains current. Extending the validity would erode that assurance. It is important that road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date as learners prepare to take their practical test. Learners will therefore need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency realises this will affect and disappoint some learners.

Kirsten Oswald:[\[102858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2020 to Question 57396 on Driving Tests: Coronavirus, what estimate he has made of the number of theory test certificates that will expire during the six months following the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 without the candidate being able to sit their practical test within the required timescale.

Rachel Maclean:

The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into effect on 25 March 2020. Around 118,000 theory test pass certificates were due to expire by the end of September 2020.

However, on average 14,000 candidates let their certificate expire each month in the normal course of events.

Kirsten Oswald:[\[102859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2020 to Question 57396 on answered on 17 June 2020 on Driving Tests: Coronavirus, what estimate he has made of the cost to his Department of providing (a) refunds of theory test fees or (b) a free replacement test where a candidate's theory test certificate expires during the six months following the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 without the candidate being able to sit their practical test within the required timescale.

Rachel Maclean:

No estimate has been made of the cost of refunding theory test fees as this is expressly forbidden by the Road Traffic Act 1988 section 91 (except in limited cases not relevant here). The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) pays its contractor, Pearson, per theory test delivered.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 came into effect on 25 March 2020. Around 118,000 theory test pass certificates were due to expire by the end of September 2020. However, on average 14,000 candidates let their certificate expire each month in the normal course of events.

If candidates were exempted from having to pay for one-retest, then the DVSA would have incurred costs of up to £1.5m if all of the 118,000 learners chose to retake the theory test. In addition, applications for a re-test would need to have been validated and systems amended to remove the requirement for payment in these cases. No estimate was made of these additional costs to the DVSA. The fee for any practical test booking was refunded on expiry of the candidates' theory test certificate.

■ **Electric Scooters**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[103626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what safeguards are in place to ensure that e-scooters used on roads and highways have been legally approved.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is running trials of rental e-scooters to assess their impacts when used on the road and cycle lanes. All e-scooters used in the trials must have approval from the Department – all other e-scooters remain illegal. We have set high standards, which includes having suitable lighting and braking, and passing stability tests designed to replicate use on uneven road surfaces.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[102965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with industry representatives on (a) converting petrol-fuelled modern cars and (b) retrofitting petrol-fuelled classic cars to run on hydrogen.

Rachel Maclean:

Ministers have had no recent direct calls from industry or discussions on the conversion from petrol to hydrogen for either modern and classic cars.

■ **Railway Network: Nature Conservation**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[102854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is Network Rail's policy to implement the recommendations of the (a) Varley Review and (b) Network Rail Vegetation Management Review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail welcomed John Varley's independent report on its approach to vegetation management and set out how it would respond to the review's recommendations when it was published.

In its Environmental Sustainability Strategy published in September 2020 Network Rail commits to exceeding the review's recommendation to achieve no net loss of biodiversity across the network by 2024 and net gain by 2040, instead achieving biodiversity net gain by 2035. Further details will be set out in the forthcoming biodiversity action plan.

TREASURY

■ Banks and Building Societies: Coronavirus

Karen Bradley:

[R] [\[102785\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report entitled Coronavirus Survey Report, published by the APPG on Challenger Banks and Building Societies, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the recommendations in that report; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the crucial role of challenger banks and building societies in providing customers with more choice on the high street and is committed to maintaining competition in financial services.

HM Treasury officials have consistently engaged with regulators and representatives from the building society and challenger bank sectors on issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have regularly engaged with representatives from the building society sector through the Consumer Finance Forum and Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, which are bringing financial services and consumer group representatives together to discuss how to best support people through this period.

The Government recognises that the COVID-19 crisis has been difficult for many organisations, including challenger banks and building societies.

That is why in April 2020, I wrote to thank frontline staff for their efforts to continue to provide essential services to their members.

We have considered the Coronavirus Survey Report produced by the APPG on Challenger Banks and Building Societies and thank the APPG for taking the time to produce the report. The Government remains committed to ensuring that challenger institutions have an appropriate environment to grow and offer more robust competition to the established players. The government will continue working with the regulators to ensure the UK has a highly competitive banking sector, working in the interests of all consumers and businesses right across the country. We will continue to work closely with challenger institutions and building societies as we consider the next steps in our economic recovery

■ Banks: Closures

Grahame Morris:

[\[104718\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce a banking service standard to prohibit the closure of the last bank branch in a community.

Grahame Morris:

[\[104719\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to protect community access to banking facilities for vulnerable people unable to use online banking.

John Glen:

The decision to maintain a presence on the high street is a commercial one for the management team of a bank and Government does not intervene in those decisions.

The retail financial landscape is changing, as more consumers and businesses opt for the convenience, security, and speed of digital payments and digital banking. Banking service providers need to balance customer interests, market competition, and other commercial factors when considering their strategy.

However, the Government also firmly believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered, and mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have access to over-the-counter banking services if they wish to use them. That's why the Government supports the industry's Access to Banking Standard which helps customers to understand the options they have locally to continue to access banking services, including specialist assistance for customers who need more help.

Alternative options include the Post Office, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

In September 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published guidance setting out their expectation of firms when they are deciding whether and how to reduce their physical branches or the number of free to use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and other relevant branch services and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is done in a way that treats customers fairly.

Further to this, the FCA recently consulted on guidance for firms' on the fair treatment of vulnerable customers, including those who are digitally excluded or have low digital skills. This consultation closed on 30 September and the FCA are currently considering the responses.

Protecting vulnerable consumers is a key priority for the FCA. While many firms have made significant progress in how they treat vulnerable consumers, HM Treasury and the FCA want to see the fair treatment of vulnerable consumers being taken seriously by all firms so that such customers receive consistently fair treatment. HM Treasury

continues to work with firms and the FCA to ensure that the needs of vulnerable customers are met.

■ Beer: Small Businesses

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[102950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to provide additional financial support to small breweries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is supporting small breweries through its unprecedented coronavirus economic response. This includes the job support scheme, job retention bonus, VAT deferral and repayment scheme and the bounce back loans scheme.

■ Building Societies: Coronavirus

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102783\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on UK building societies; and if he will make a statement.

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102784\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the UK Credit Union sector; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the vital role of credit unions in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders. The Government also recognises the important role played by building societies in supporting their local communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, I wrote to building society and credit union trade bodies to thank frontline staff for their efforts to continue to provide essential services to their members.

HM Treasury has regularly engaged with regulators and representatives from the building society and credit union sectors to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I have engaged with representatives from both sectors through the Consumer Finance Forum and Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, which are bringing financial services and consumer group representatives together to discuss how to best support people through this period. I also attended a roundtable of building society chief executives hosted by the Building Societies Association in July 2020, to discuss experiences of COVID-19 and future priorities. HM Treasury officials have also been engaging with the Building Society Association on a regular basis to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and discuss the application of relevant measures to the sector.

Fair4All Finance, the independent body set up by Government to distribute dormant assets funding to support financial inclusion, has also set up a £5 million resilience fund to support credit unions and community development finance institutions in England.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage and Hydrogen

Alexander Stafford:

[\[102964\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's support for (a) Carbon capture and storage and (b) Hydrogen technologies.

Kemi Badenoch:

At Spring Budget 2020, the Chancellor committed to spend at least £800m for the deployment of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in the 2020s.

Furthermore, in 2019, the Government announced a £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund to incentivise future private sector investment in low carbon hydrogen, while earlier this year, the Government published a response to a consultation on CCS business models, including for low carbon hydrogen production.

Officials at HMT have been working closely with BEIS officials and key industry stakeholders to understand the type and quantum of support required to advance CCS. This includes engaging in a number of boards with industry, such as the Hydrogen Advisory Council.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[102696\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available to employers whose staff need to self-isolate for a period during which time statutory sick pay would exceed the amount of state aid received by the employer.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to supporting businesses through this time and has announced an unprecedented level of financial support. This includes but is not limited to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Job Support Scheme, business loans, tax deferrals, the Future Fund, and a year-long business rates holiday for all eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Some of these schemes will constitute State Aid, such as the Small Business Grant Scheme and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Rebate Scheme. Businesses eligible for the SSP rebate may claim grants up to a total of €800,000, as provided for under the EU Commission's COVID-19 State Aid Temporary Framework. This is a cumulative amount that must consider other forms of aid received as grants under the Framework. There is a lower grant allowance for agriculture at €100,000 and aquaculture and fisheries at €120,000.

Businesses may also be eligible for business support loans such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS). Under the Temporary Framework, loan schemes are not subject to the €800,000 allowance for grants.

In addition, some support schemes do not constitute State Aid. For example, businesses may be eligible for the CJRS, VAT Deferral, and Time to Pay, among others.

The combination of these and other measures constitutes an unprecedented programme of Government support for businesses to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Help to Save Scheme

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[104701]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Help to Save accounts (a) have been opened and (b) have no deposits; and what steps he is taking to encourage account holders to actively utilise those accounts.

John Glen:

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has published statistics on Help to Save accounts up to July 2020. These statistics show the total number of accounts opened now stands at 222,000 and there are 60,500 accounts that are yet to receive a deposit. The latest publication is available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/help-to-save-statistics.

HMRC has recently issued regional press releases to highlight the advantage of the Help to Save scheme and bonuses available.

All Help to Save customers receive a welcome pack that gives them information on how to maximise the bonus available. They also receive annual statements that update them on their account status. HMRC regularly contacts customers with no deposits to remind them that their account is open and how this affects their future bonus payments.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[102914]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending mortgage holidays beyond 31 October 2020 for people who remain financially affected by the covid-19 restrictions.

John Glen:

Following the Coronavirus outbreak, the Government worked quickly with lenders and financial regulators to give people access to payment holidays on their mortgages. This gives customers a much-needed respite period, where no repayments on these products are due. It was necessary to bring this temporary measure in, in order to

give customers time to smooth out their finances that may have taken a hit by the pandemic.

The FCA published guidance on mortgage payment holidays on 14 September setting out that firms should continue to provide support through tailored forbearance options for those borrowers that are facing ongoing financial difficulties. This could include granting new mortgage payment holidays. As part of this guidance any forbearance granted beyond 31 October will be reflected on the consumer's credit file in the usual manner. As borrowers still requiring assistance after 31 October could be in serious financial distress the FCA believe it is right that lenders are able to understand their financial position in order to lend responsibly.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[102658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for businesses of extending the business rate holiday by six months after April 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

As part of the Government's package to support businesses affected by coronavirus, the Government has provided a business rates holiday for eligible properties in retail, hospitality and leisure, worth £10 billion this year.

As set out in the Call for Evidence for the fundamental review of business rates, the Government anticipates setting out preliminary conclusions from the review on the most pressing areas, including reliefs, in the Autumn, ahead of final conclusions in Spring 2021.

■ **Protective Clothing: VAT**

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[104748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the VAT holiday on personal protective equipment after 31 October 2020, in response to the ongoing covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary zero rate of VAT on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was an extraordinary measure to help affected sectors during the initial shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the global supply of PPE did not meet demand. This measure will come to an end on 31 October, as new measures introduced by the Government will ensure supply of COVID-related PPE to affected sectors from 1 November.

■ Public Houses and Restaurants: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[\[102915\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional support to businesses affected by the 10.00pm curfew on bars and restaurants.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government has had to take the difficult step of introducing restrictions on businesses and individuals to bring the virus under control. It recognises that the necessary restrictions on opening hours for hospitality venues will be disruptive for businesses in the hospitality sector.

The Chancellor recently announced a further package of measures in the Winter Economy Plan, including the Job Support Scheme, which will protect employees working reduced hours, and the extension of business loan schemes. All eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will also pay no business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April 2020. Hospitality businesses have also benefited from a temporary reduction in the VAT rate from 20% to 5% on most hospitality-related activities, which will continue until 31 March 2021.

The Job Support Scheme has been designed to protect viable jobs in businesses experiencing lower demand, covering one-third of an employee's wages, subject to a cap. This will protect the employee's job and support their income during periods of low demand.

Since March, the government has also implemented a range of measures to support commercial property tenants and landlords. The objective of these measures is to preserve tenants' businesses through the COVID-19 lockdown and to give time and space to landlords and tenants to agree reasonable adjustments to rent and lease terms, including terms for the payment of accumulated rent arrears.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[102686\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to allocate funding when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ends to sports clubs to support them in retaining non-playing staff whose services are temporarily surplus to requirements until those clubs can operate on the basis of fans in stadiums.

Kemi Badenoch:

When the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) ends, employers will have access to the Job Support Scheme regardless of whether they previously used CJRS. The JSS, announced in September, is designed to protect jobs in businesses who are facing pressures over the winter months due to Covid-19. The JSS Open which was announced in September, provides a Government grant which covers a portion of all hours not worked by an employee on reduced hours.

The JSS Closed, an expansion to the JSS announced on the 9th October, provides a Government grant for 2/3 of the wages of all employees in businesses forced to close by local lockdowns. In this way, employees remain linked to businesses and employers can quickly scale up activity to any increase in demand.

We have also introduced the Job Retention Bonus. This provides a £1,000 grant for each previously furloughed employee retained in meaningful employment by January 31st.

■ Wirecard: Insolvency

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102777\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that a repeat of the Wirecard collapse could not occur in the UK.

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102778\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the regulatory response to the collapse of Wirecard; and if he will make a statement.

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102779\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the implications of the Wirecard collapse for (a) UK financial regulation and (b) future financial services regulation.

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102780\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to help protect UK-based challenger banks and other financial institutions from the potential future collapse of a payment processor company.

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102781\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to make it easier for UK-based financial institutions to work with multiple payment processors.

Karen Bradley: [R] [\[102782\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the UK challenger banks sector; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The German merchant acquirer Wirecard AG entered administration in June. It has a UK subsidiary, Wirecard UK, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The FCA ensures that payments firms make suitable safeguarding arrangements in compliance with the regulatory requirements as a condition of firms receiving FCA authorisation, protecting client money.

Shortly after the entry into administration of Wirecard AG, the FCA temporarily blocked the distribution of funds from the UK subsidiary, Wirecard UK, to ensure

client monies were properly safeguarded. Wirecard UK is being wound down but the business will continue to trade while alternative arrangements are being made with its card providers.

Payments in the UK have seen rapid change over recent years, including the growth of firms like Wirecard UK. These changes offer exciting opportunities for UK businesses and consumers, with many making payments faster and cheaper. However, and as will always be the case with a rapidly changing technological landscape, they also present new challenges and risks.

Given the pace of change, a HM Treasury led review of the payments landscape was announced in June 2019. A Call for Evidence is the first stage in this review, open until 20 October.

The Government recognises the crucial role of challenger banks in providing customers with more choice and is committed to maintaining competition in financial services. We recognise the COVID-19 crisis has been difficult for many firms, including challenger banks, and we continue to engage regularly with the sector to understand how firms are being impacted.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Selaine Saxby:

[\[907859\]](#)

What discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring public health communications on covid-19 reach communities throughout the UK.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has made a substantial effort to ensure that public health communications on COVID-19 reach everyone in the UK. This includes messaging in well over 600 publications and using trusted community voices to share vital communications through community channels.

Important health guidance is also available in alternative formats, including Easy Read, British Sign Language and Audio. This can be accessed via the Public Health England Campaign Resource Centre for health bodies, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to access, tailor, share and use.

In July, I also wrote to Ministerial colleagues urging them to make every effort to communicate public health messages to all local residents, through a diverse range of media and other channels.

Emma Hardy:

[\[907863\]](#)

What steps she is taking to help tackle race inequality in the workplace.

Kemi Badenoch:

In July, the Government launched the independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which is looking at outcomes across the country, with a focus on employment, enterprise, education, health and the criminal justice system.

Led by the evidence, the Commission will consider the causes of persistent disparities and barriers different groups face, and make recommendations for further action.

Their work will be crucial in informing and improving the national conversation on race. The Commission will aim to provide its report to the Prime Minister at the end of the year.

Rosie Cooper:[\[907864\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to help protect disabled people from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

We are ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to disability benefits and other financial support; the food, medicines and essential goods that they need; as well as accessible communications and updated guidance.

The Department for Work and Pensions are helping disabled people stay in work and enter work through a range of programmes, including Access to Work and Disability Confident, the Work and Health Programme, and the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[102179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to prepare her Department for a rise in (a) unemployment and (b) benefit claims at the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Mims Davies:

The Department has taken swift action in response to the pandemic, supporting millions of families across the country to claim Universal Credit and we stand ready to help those in need.

We are already supporting people into work through our Plan for Jobs and will continue to do so. Kickstart will provide high quality paid work placements for thousands of young people and our new Job Entry Targeted Support and the Job Finding Support Service will provide targeted support for the newly unemployed. We are also doubling the number of Work Coaches across our nationwide network of Jobcentres to ensure claimants have access to personalised support so they can move back into employment.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Disability**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[104177]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 19 March 2020 to Questions 29978, on Department for Work and Pensions: Disability, what the terms of reference are for the review; what progress has been made on it; who is conducting it; and when it will be published.

Mims Davies:

Our plans for an ACAS led review, under an independent chair have been disrupted by the need to put in place an immediate COVID response. We remain committed to undertaking this review and ACAS remains committed to supporting the work. Government Internal Audit Agency is conducting a preparatory review of our internal process, that is due to end in November and will feed into the review process and enable us to best determine the terms of reference.

We have retained since March our focus on supporting all colleagues including those with disabilities, to deliver their best while working with us. COVID has provided a specific context to our ongoing efforts and the need to support and enable all colleagues to work safely from offices and from home - which we have done.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[104178]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answers of 19 March 2020 to Questions 27016 and 27017, on Employment: Disability, whether her Department has (a) noted and (b) made use of Acas and the Equality and Human Rights Commission Guidance for employers to help them avoid claims for disability discrimination against them; whether her staff have been provided with the EHRC guidance entitled: A guide to help employees including disabled staff challenge discrimination at work; and whether her (i) Ministers and (ii) senior staff have been provided with EHRC guidance entitled A guide to help employers understand their responsibilities to provide disabled staff with additional support and workplace adjustments.

Mims Davies:

The Department has noted the ACAS and EHRC guidance available on those organisations' websites; we promote and link to ACAS and EHRC resources from pages on our Intranet, together with a range of internal resources to support both staff and managers but we do not provide specific ACAS or EHRC documents to individual staff.

Our resources are designed to provide information, guidance and tools on the subjects of rights and responsibilities under the Equality Act, disability discrimination and workplace adjustments amongst others.

We make all of these resources, together with tailored support offered by the DWP Workplace Adjustment Team, available to everyone within the department to help them understand how disabled staff are best supported and the Departmental process to obtain workplace adjustments.

■ Local Housing Allowance: Young People

Caroline Lucas:

[\[102027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor on the potential merits of removing the Shared Accommodation Rate exemptions for homeless young people and care leavers under-22 during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

There are currently no plans to remove the existing exemptions from the Shared Accommodation Rate.

The Government remains committed to supporting homeless young people and care leavers and extending the exemptions to the shared accommodation rate by October 2023. The changes will require amendments to legislation as well as local authority and universal credit IT systems therefore they will take time to implement.

In the meantime, for individuals who may require more support and whose circumstances may make it difficult for them to share accommodation, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. We have provided £180m in Discretionary Housing Payment funding to local authorities to support vulnerable claimants with housing costs in England and Wales for 2020/21.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[104764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Government's plans are for how shielding people can access benefits after the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ends.

Justin Tomlinson:

Those who receive a notification that they need to shield will remain eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from their employer, and New Style Employment and Support Allowance, subject to the wider eligibility criteria. Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, for example where they are not eligible for SSP, they may be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marion Fellows:

[\[104753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2020 to Question 102871, what the next steps are for the Green Paper on disability benefits; and what her timetable is for those next steps.

Justin Tomlinson:

We have held a series of events across the country where local disability organisations and disabled people have shared their experiences of DWP services and priorities for future changes. We are continuing this engagement throughout the

Autumn to help shape the Green Paper content and make sure we are addressing the right issues in the health and disability welfare system. This engagement will continue following the publication of the Green Paper.

Given the necessary focus on the departmental response to COVID-19, we are working to a longer timescale than previously anticipated but we remain committed to publishing and will update the House in due course.