



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 04 November 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

■ **Slavery: Prosecutions**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[109379\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutions for offences against children there have been for the offence of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in each year since its enactment.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[109784\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutions for offences against children there have been for human trafficking under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in each year since its enactment.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) maintains a central record of the number of offences in which a prosecution commenced, including offences charged by way of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. This data may be further disaggregated by the child abuse case monitoring flag. The CPS definition of child abuse covers any case where the victim was under 18 years of age at the time of the offence and includes allegations or crimes perpetrated by both adults and under 18s.

Since the Act came into force and up to the end of March 2020, the number of Modern Slavery Act offences flagged as child abuse is as follows:

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Modern Slavery Act 2015 { 1 }	0	0	0	3	0
Modern Slavery Act 2015 { 2 }	1	21	26	5	30

Data Source: CPS Management Information System

There is no indication of the number of individual defendants prosecuted for these offences or the final outcome of the prosecution proceeding or if the charged offence was the substantive charge at the time of finalisation. It is often the case that defendants will be prosecuted for more than one offence in the same set of proceedings.

It is not possible to separately report the nature of, or type of exploitation carried out on victims of modern slavery or trafficking offences other than by manually examining case files at disproportionate cost.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Energy: Meters

Alex Norris:

[\[109582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is prioritising households using legacy prepayment meters for smart meter upgrades; and what steps he is taking to deliver those upgrades.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Smart meters bring significant benefits to prepayment consumers and have been invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Smart prepayment services enable consumers to top-up remotely without leaving home and without needing to reach inaccessible meters. They also allow consumers to track their balance easily so they do not unknowingly run out of credit.

Energy suppliers are installing second generation smart (SMETS2) meters in prepayment mode across Great Britain. The Government has taken a number of steps to ensure that consumers with low incomes or with prepayment meters can benefit from smart meters. For example, the Government put in place an explicit objective for Smart Energy GB (the industry body responsible for leading coordinated consumer engagement) to assist consumers with low incomes or prepayment meters. Establishing partnerships with trusted organisations, including local community groups, to provide training and tailored information on smart metering has helped to raise awareness of smart metering, ensuring that all consumers are able to realise the benefits as soon as practicable.

■ EU Emissions Trading Scheme

Alan Brown:

[\[109484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2020 to question 106396 on what date his Department last had discussions with the Scottish Government on the implementation of a UK emissions trading scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Ministers and officials in BEIS have regular discussions with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive on legislation, governance and operational arrangements for a UK Emissions Trading Scheme. Most recently, officials from BEIS had discussions with officials from the Scottish Government on Friday 30th October 2020 and on Tuesday 27th October 2020.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[109337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) size of venues and (b) type of facility required to host greater numbers and more activities in larger establishments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister addressed the nation on Saturday 31 October setting out new national restrictions. These restrictions will apply nationally for four weeks up to Wednesday 2 December, and will override the current Local Alert Level restrictions.

Some venues will be allowed to remain open for specific exempt activities, like childcare and support groups.

Depending on the venue and which Safer Places guidance applies, new guidance will be shared online at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[109336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a licensing system for responsible venues in the business and hospitality sector to allow for an increase in the number of customers permitted with appropriate social distancing and other safety measures in those venues during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister addressed the nation on Saturday 31 October setting out new national restrictions. These restrictions will apply nationally for four weeks up to Wednesday 2 December, and will override the current Local Alert Level restrictions. Hospitality will be limited to takeaway and delivery. Therefore, no customers are permitted at venues for the time being.

■ Housing: Heating and Insulation**Sarah Olney:** [\[109543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the time required to train an installer of (a) insulation for solid walls and (b) domestic heat pumps.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We understand that an increased number of skilled tradespeople will be required to retrofit homes with energy efficiency and low carbon measures as a result of the Green Homes Grant scheme. Presently, an existing builder could take on skilled people and become certified to install solid wall insulation within 14 days, provided they meet the requirements.

■ Innovation and Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[109344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the upcoming one year Spending Review will provide funding for (a) a UK replacement for Horizon Europe, (b) the new Office for Talent, (c) the new Innovation Expert Group, (d) schemes to promote diversity within STEM and (e) implementing the findings from the R&D tax credits consultation; and what the timeframe is for publishing long term funding strategies for those projects.

Amanda Solloway:

At the 2020 Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's ambitious commitment to increase public spending in research and development to £22 billion by 24/25, putting the UK on track to reach 2.4% of GDP being spent on research and development across the UK economy by 2027.

In order to prioritise the response to Covid-19, and our focus on supporting jobs, the Chancellor and my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister have decided to conduct a one-year Spending Review, setting departments' resource and capital budgets for 2021-22, and Devolved Administrations' block grants for the same period. This Spending Review will be delivered on 25th November.

■ Meters: Isle of Arran

Patricia Gibson:

[\[109462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Data Communications Company has contracts in place for the provision of communications coverage to enable smart meter technology to be installed on the Isle of Arran.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Data Communications Company (DCC), the organisation responsible for the national smart metering infrastructure, has contracts in place for the provision of communications coverage to at least 99.5% of premises across its 'North Region', which covers Scotland.

The DCC is also required by licence conditions to seek to provide communications services to all premises where it is practicable and cost proportionate and is also required to assess opportunities to increase the overall level of communications coverage.

■ Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Land

Sarah Olney:

[\[109544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for land currently held by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) has established a Strategic Land Management Board, comprising members from across the NDA group and wider Government, to consider how to divest or lease NDA land where it becomes surplus to requirements. The Board ensures a consistent and optimal approach is taken when considering options for the reuse of NDA sites, in line with wider commercial and operational objectives for the organisation.

■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus****Daisy Cooper:**[\[109692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether pubs in areas of Tier 3 local covid alert level restrictions, that do not normally serve food, can serve substantial meals by engaging an outside catering contractor.

Paul Scully:

Under the tiered system of Local Alert Levels, that applies until 5 November, pubs and bars in tier 3 (very high) areas can partner with outside caterers or local food businesses to enable them to provide substantial meals alongside alcohol, subject to any conditions to the contrary contained in their licence.

From 5 November, new national restrictions will replace the tiered system of local restrictions. Under these new national restrictions hospitality venues like restaurants, bars and pubs must close, but can still provide takeaway and delivery services.

■ **Remote Working: Coronavirus****Barbara Keeley:**[\[109247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that employers support staff to work from home where possible during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government's safer working guidance is clear that in order to keep the virus under control, it is important that people work safely. In order to help contain the virus, everyone who can work effectively from home must do so. Where people cannot do so (for instance people who work in critical national infrastructure, construction, or manufacturing) they should continue to attend their workplace. This is essential to keeping the country operating and supporting vital sectors and employers. The full guidance is available on gov.uk.

In order to help employers support staff to work from home where possible, ACAS has produced comprehensive guidance on the key employment issues for when people are working at home during the pandemic. This covers practical issues such as pay and insurance, as well as offering training on managing people who work remotely – the link to the relevant section of the ACAS site can be found here <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home>.

There is also a legal framework in place that grants all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service with their employer the statutory Right to Request Flexible Working, where employees can request a change to their hours, working patterns or to work from home. There is supporting guidance currently available online which explains eligibility, as well as the process for both making and receiving requests to work flexibly on GOV.UK – this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>.

Barbara Keeley:

[109248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of employers contravening Government guidance by prohibiting staff from working from home during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Compliance by employers across the nation with the BEIS guidance is high. Across all industries, 97% of UK businesses say they are aware of the government safer workplace guidance ([Business Impact of Covid-19 Survey](#), ONS, October 2020).

Further, the BEIS guidance make it clear that by law, from 28 September employers must not knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work.

■ **Small Businesses: Coronavirus**

Grahame Morris:

[109298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October 2020 to Question 100352 on Small Businesses: Coronavirus, if he will take account of the European Commission's revised framework allowing for an additional provision of €3m funding for businesses materially impacted by the covid-19 outbreak and notify local authorities of that increased provision immediately.

Paul Scully:

On October 13 2020 the European Commission announced a further amendment to its State aid Framework - introducing a new measure to enable greater support to be provided to companies facing a decline in turnover during the eligible period of at least 30% compared to the same period of 2019 due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The UK has notified the European Commission of its intention to take up this new provision and must await approval to do so.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Coronavirus: Death**

Mr Steve Baker:

[109323]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to improve the quality of data on covid-19 deaths both inside

and outside of hospitals with respect to identifying for whom covid-19 was (a) the cause of death, (b) a cofactor and (c) a nosocomial infection; and if he will make a statement.

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 PQ109323 [PQ109323.pdf]

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[109378\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many death certificates has covid-19 been recorded as (a) the primary cause and (b) a contributory factor since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ109378 [PQ109378.pdf]

■ **Procurement Transformation Advisory Panel**

Dan Carden:

[\[109594\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) agendas and (b) minutes of the meetings of the Procurement Transformation Advisory Panel.

Julia Lopez:

The Procurement Transformation Advisory Panel was a group of experts on public procurement, convened by the Cabinet Office to discuss potential proposals for reforming the public procurement regulations. Announcements of procurement policy will be made in the usual way. In line with the practice of successive administrations, such details are not normally disclosed.

DEFENCE

■ **Army: Young People**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[109376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the data recorded in the Joint Personnel Administration system, how many complaints have been made by Junior Soldiers or their parents or guardians about (a) violent behaviour by staff and (b) inappropriate relationships between Junior Soldiers and staff since 1 January 2014.

Johnny Mercer:

Any reports of such behaviour are taken very seriously and investigated thoroughly. Anyone found to be not upholding the high standards that we expect of our personnel will be dealt with accordingly.

YEAR INCIDENT(S) REPORTED	NUMBER OF CASES : A) VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR BY STAFF (INCLUDES ALLEGATIONS OF ASSAULT/BATTERY/ILL- TREATMENT OF SUBORDINATE)	NUMBER OF CASES: B) INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN JUNIOR SOLDIERS AND STAFF
	01 January 2014 – 31 October 2020	60

Notes/Caveats

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest ten. Rounding is used as a means of disclosure control and the preservation of anonymity.
2. Each case relates to one suspect but may include more than one alleged incident and/or victim. One suspect may have more than one case recorded.
3. JPA is a live system which is updated for retrospective complaints/allegations and therefore data can be subject to change.
4. In each case a judgement was made as to whether an allegation constituted violent behaviour.
5. These figures are single service estimates only and are not official statistics produced by Defence Statistics.

■ **Papua: Indonesia****Alex Sobel:**[\[109602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what representations he has made to his Indonesian counterpart on Indonesian military operations in the West Papuan regencies of Nduga, Intan Jaya and Puncak Jaya.

James Heappey:

The Defence Secretary has not made representations to his counterpart on Indonesian military operations in Nduga, Intan Jaya and Puncak Jaya, but the Foreign Secretary discussed Papua with the Indonesian Foreign Minister on 14 October 2020. British officials in Indonesia are monitoring developments closely. The British Government fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, which includes the Papua and West Papua provinces. We urge parties to refrain from violence and respect the rule of law.

■ Shipbuilding

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[110068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the maritime industry in his capacity as Shipbuilding Tsar.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I have regular conversations with maritime industry partners in my capacity as Shipbuilding Tsar as this Government works to reinvigorate the UK's shipbuilding industry.

Additionally, COVID restrictions notwithstanding, I intend to visit a cross-section of the UK shipbuilding sector to discuss how best this Government can work alongside industry partners to deliver our ambitions for an innovative, competitive and thriving enterprise.

Through the Maritime Enterprise Working Group, industry have been working with academia and Government to take forward work to ensure the competitiveness of the sector and set out proposals for how this Government can provide additional support to the shipbuilding enterprise.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband: Kirklees

Tracy Brabin:

[\[109539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to improve internet infrastructure in (a) Batley and Spen constituency and (b) Kirklees local authority area.

Matt Warman:

Good progress has been made in the Batley and Spen constituency, with over 98% of premises able to access superfast broadband according to Thinkbroadband - up from 41% in January 2012. Furthermore, over 68% of premises have access to ultrafast services (greater than 100Mbps) and over 21% have access to gigabit services (1,000Mbps). Virgin Media are currently upgrading their network and the department estimates that over 67% of the constituency will have access to gigabit speeds by the end of 2021.

In the Kirklees metropolitan area, over 98% of premises have access to superfast broadband, which is up from 59% in January 2012. Furthermore, over 72% have access to ultrafast services (greater than 100Mbps) and over 23% have access to gigabit services (1,000Mbps). Virgin Media are currently upgrading their network and the department estimates that over 65% of Kirklees will have access to gigabit speeds by the end of 2021.

For those rural premises in Batley and Spen and wider Kirklees that are still suffering from slow speeds, DCMS runs the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) that

can be used by rural communities across the UK to reduce the cost of installing gigabit-capable connectivity. This provides a voucher worth up to £3,500 for eligible small businesses and vouchers worth up to £1,500 for residents. More details are available here: <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>. To date across West Yorkshire, homes and small businesses have requested 1,133 vouchers totaling £2.8 million, including 30 from constituents in Batley and Spen.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Stephen Timms:

[\[109139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Prime Minister's announcement of 22 September 2020 that conferences and exhibitions will not be permitted for at least another six months, what plans he has to provide support to the exhibitions industry during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

We recognise the events industry's disappointment at the delayed reopening of large business conferences and exhibitions.

We also recognise that the new national restrictions will have a significant impact on jobs and the economy, as well as on mental health and wellbeing. We've confirmed that there will be a package of financial support in place, with the furlough scheme extended for this period of lockdown.

We continue to engage with stakeholders, including through the Tourism Industry Council and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel, to assess how we can best support the sector's safe reopening. The business events pilots we carried out in September will ensure that the correct advice and guidance is put in place to help larger events reopen when it is safe to do so.

■ Government Assistance: Coronavirus

Hilary Benn:

[\[109166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans a further programme of financial support for organisations affected by Tier 2 and Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level restrictions.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 1 November, universal restrictions will be in place for the whole of England from 5 November until 2 December. Given the far reaching implications of this, the Government extended the furlough scheme for the duration of this period and grants for businesses forced to close. Due to this, some of the measures recently announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to support a regional approach will be paused.

■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**Alex Cunningham:**[\[109343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing grants to churches and other places of worship which face potential closure as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Listed places of worship represent some of the nation's finest heritage. The Government recognises the very significant impact that Covid-19 has had on places of worship to continue to operate and on the ability of congregations to maintain them.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has announced significant cross-sector support to deal with the impacts and aid recovery. This includes a £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund announced earlier this year aimed at helping key cultural and heritage organisations, including listed places of worship. The Fund has and will continue to provide grants to cover operating costs, support organisations become financially viable again and finance stalled capital projects. In addition, many places of worship have been eligible for other Covid-19 funding schemes including the emergency grant schemes run by Historic England and the National Lottery earlier this year.

The Government is committed to supporting places of worship and will continue to monitor both the impacts of the pandemic and the wider challenges that places of worship face.

■ Sports: Gender Recognition**Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[109576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to Answer of 22 October to Question 105503, what discussions his Department has had with Sport England on the participation of transgender and non-binary players in contact sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

Officials in my department meet regularly with Sport England to discuss a range of issues related to diversity and inclusion across all sports, including transgender and non-binary participation, and the overarching guidance that Sport England is involved in providing to the grassroots sport sector. These discussions are general and do not focus on specific types of sport, such as contact sport.

■ Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus**Jane Stevenson:**[\[109667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will allow sports stadia in Tier 1 and Tier 2 local covid-19 alert level areas to reopen to spectators.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Prime Minister announced on Saturday 31 October that new National Restrictions will be introduced across England from Thursday 5 November. These new measures will apply nationally for four weeks up to Wednesday 2 December. The restriction on spectators attending stadia will continue during this time.

The government recognises the valuable role of elite sport to the UK. That is why elite sports continue to be able to continue behind closed doors which will both enable vital broadcasting revenue to flow to the sector and whilst also bringing joy to millions of sports fans. The government is also working hard through the Sports Technology and Innovation Group and other initiative to enable the return of fans to stadia as soon as it is safe to do so.

Travel: Small Businesses**Julie Elliott:**[\[109353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the contribution to the economy of small and medium-sized travel companies.

Nigel Huddleston:

Tourism makes a vital contribution to the UK economy, with the industry contributing around £60 billion to the economy each year prior to COVID and directly employing 1.6 million people. The Government has not calculated the specific contribution of small and medium-sized travel companies to the UK tourism sector's overall value.

We recognise that Government measures to control the spread of Covid-19 are significantly impacting travel companies. We continue to engage with travel and tourism stakeholders, including UKInbound and the Association of British Travel Agents, to assess how we can best support the inbound and outbound sector's as well as domestic recovery.

Young People: Video Games**Holly Mumby-Croft:**[\[109762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) protect young people from the effects of addiction to loot boxes in computer games and (b) raise awareness among parents of those effects.

Caroline Dinage:

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

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

The government also continues to work with industry to encourage the use of parental controls that can disable or limit access and spending on video games devices. We welcomed the launch on 3 November 2020 of the games industry's Get Set Go campaign, a continuation of the Get Smart about P.L.A.Y. campaign that launched in January 2020 supporting parents to set up parental controls.

EDUCATION

■ GCSE: Coronavirus

Derek Twigg: [\[109174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he made of the preparedness of pupils to sit their GCSE examinations in 2021 due to the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on educational settings.

Derek Twigg: [\[109175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with headteachers on (a) the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (i) pupil attendance and (ii) teaching time and (b) whether year 11 pupils will be ready to sit their GCSE examinations in 2021; and if he will publish the outcome of those discussions.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has been clear that it is a top priority to keep schools open throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and ensure all pupils benefit from a high quality education.

On 12 October, the Department announced that assessment by examination will be part of a normalised year for Year 11 pupils because examinations are the fairest form of assessment. The Department also announced that the examinations will start on 7 June and end on 2 July for almost all GCSEs. This is three weeks later than the usual start dates from previous years to help teachers and pupils prepare for examinations. The delay and the changes already agreed to what will be assessed in some GCSE subjects, as well as changes that ease the burden of assessment in some subjects at GCSE, will give pupils extra time to study, without causing unnecessary disruption to the usual timetable of the academic year. These changes to the assessment of GCSEs were announced in August, following a public consultation. The outcome of Ofqual's consultation on summer 2021 exams is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-gcse-as-and-a-levels-in-2021>.

The Department, along with Ofqual and exam boards, is engaging extensively with the sector on plans for exams in summer 2021, including with head teachers, principals of further education colleges, trade unions and sector representative

bodies. Engagement with head teachers and their representatives are through a number of different forums and cover a range of issues, including the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on pupils' attendance, teaching time and GCSE examinations in 2021. These engagements will inform our planning for all foreseeable scenarios to safeguard pupils' ability to sit exams and achieve qualifications which allow them to progress to the next stage of their education or employment. We expect to share details of these contingency plans later in the autumn.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron:

[\[109183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 19 August, 17 September and 15 October 2020 regarding his constituent Ms Halton.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response to the letters dated 19 August, 17 September and 15 October 2020, regarding his constituent Ms Halton, has been sent to the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay.

■ **Outdoor Recreation: Coronavirus**

Kate Green:

[\[109342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to outdoor residential centres offering overnight educational visits that are unable to reopen as a result of covid-19 social distancing measures.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's educational visits advice, 'Guidance for full opening: schools', is in line with guidance from Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>, and will be updated to reflect the national restrictions in place from 5 November. In addition to that update, the longer-term position regarding overnight educational visits is being reviewed in November.

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

The Government has made a number of support measures available to UK businesses. More information on business support can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

Information about the extension of the furlough scheme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/furlough-scheme-extended-and-further-economic-support-announced>.

■ Postgraduate Education: Mental Health Services

Colleen Fletcher:

[109393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the mental health and wellbeing of postgraduate students in universities.

Michelle Donelan:

Protecting the mental health of students continues to be a priority for this government. These are difficult times and it is important students can still access the mental health support that they need. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

We expect providers to continue to support their students, which has included moving services online or making services accessible from a distance. We encourage students to stay in touch with their provider's student support and welfare teams, as these services are likely to continue to be an important source of support. Many providers have bolstered their existing mental health services and adapted delivery to means other than face-to-face. Staff at universities and colleges responded quickly to the need to transform mental health and wellbeing services, showing resourcefulness, and there are many examples of good practice.

I wrote to Vice Chancellors in October, outlining that student welfare should remain a priority. I have also convened a working group of representatives from the higher education and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Student Space platform is funded by the Office for Students (OfS), the higher education regulator in England. It bridges gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and is designed to work alongside existing services. It can be accessed at this link: <https://studentspace.org.uk/>. Students struggling with their mental health at this time can also access support via the NHS, to which a link can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>. Support is also available from Public Health England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing>. The mental health charity Mind also have support available at this link: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health/>.

We have worked with the OfS to clarify that universities and other higher education providers can draw upon existing funding from the student premium to increase their hardship funds for students. Students can access this support if they are experiencing particular financial difficulties.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[109689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will set out what further support will be made available to early education and childcare providers during the next six months in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

On 31 October, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced that a national lockdown will start on 5 November and that childcare settings would be able to remain open for the duration. The Prime Minister also confirmed that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will be extended for the duration of the national lockdown. Workers can retain their job and receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

Wider business support schemes are also available. For information on the new national restrictions including the financial support available please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>.

We want to provide security to nurseries and childminders who are open for the children who need them. For the autumn term we are continuing to pay local authorities for the childcare places they usually fund. This means that even if providers are open but caring for fewer children, as a result of low demand from parents or due to public health reasons, they can continue to be funded for the autumn term at broadly the levels they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no COVID-19 outbreak. This gives another term of secure income to nurseries and childminders who are open for the children who need them.

A spending review is currently underway and this will be the opportunity to examine the overall funding for early years. We are presenting the clearest and fullest case that we can for early years.

Specific Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) disapplications are in place for any provider who cannot deliver the EYFS requirements in full due to restrictions imposed through the national lockdown. Further information about the EYFS disapplications is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

Where a child is no longer eligible for 30 hours free childcare when the parent reconfirms (for example, if the parent has a change in employment status), they will enter a grace period where they can retain their childcare for a short period of time. The grace period is intended to ensure children do not need to immediately leave childcare provision should their parents drop out of eligibility, as well as offering stability for the child and childcare provider. Whilst in a grace period, if parents regain eligibility they can reconfirm through the childcare service and the 30 hours free entitlement would continue without a break for their child. If, after the grace period, a

parent has not reconfirmed their eligibility, they can still access the 15 hours universal entitlement for 3- and 4-year olds.

■ Pupil Premium: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[107119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure schools that do not use pupil premium funding to offset income lost as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The pupil premium conditions of grant set out the purpose of the funding. The conditions of grant are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

Pupil premium is provided to help schools improve the outcomes of their pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. School leaders choose how to use the grant to arrange extra support addressing their pupils' needs.

The Department established the Education Endowment Foundation with £137 million to research and share the most effective approaches to improving pupil outcomes. School leaders are encouraged to consult its extensive resources, including its 2019 Pupil Premium Guide, when deciding how to use the grant.

Schools must publish an annual statement explaining their pupil premium strategy, including how much is spent on each activity. School leaders are held to account for their choices through performance tables and inspection.

Each school's pupil premium expenditure is subject to the same rigorous annual auditing requirements as the rest of its funding.

■ Remote Education: Coronavirus

Siobhain McDonagh:

[109149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many devices were available to schools to support remote education requirements as of (a) 20 October 2020 and (b) 24 October 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has invested over £195 million to support remote education and access to online social care, delivering over 220,000 laptops and tablets during the summer term for disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have had access to a digital device.

The Department is adding to this support by making over 340,000 additional laptops and tablets available to support disadvantaged children that might face disruption to their education. Since September, over 100,000 of these have been delivered to schools. On 20 October 2020, schools who had reported disruption to face-to-face

education and been invited to order devices were able to order their full number of allocated devices.

In the context of significant global demand, the Department has updated the number of devices allocated to each school to more accurately align orders with the number of students schools typically have self-isolating, ensuring as many children as possible benefit from receiving a device this term. Original allocations were based on a school's total need, should they fully close.

On 23 October 2020, the Department paused ordering over half-term when children were not reliant on remote education. On Monday 2 November 2020, ordering reopened and schools who had reported disruption to face-to-face education and been invited to order devices were able to order against their revised allocation.

The Department recognises that levels of self-isolation may be higher in different areas of the country and that face-to-face education is being prioritised in all eventualities. Where schools believe they have a strong need for additional devices, they should contact covid.technology@education.gov.uk.

Helen Hayes:

[109509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of schools whose allocation of laptops for remote learning has been reduced since those allocations were first offered earlier in 2020 in (a) Lambeth, (b) Southwark, (c) London and (d) England; and for what reasons those allocations have been so reduced.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has invested over £195 million to support remote education by providing laptops and tablets, internet provision, and online education platforms.

The Department is making over 340,000 laptops and tablets available to help schools support disadvantaged children that do not have their own digital device if they experience disruption to face-to-face education as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Since September 2020, over 100,000 of these devices have been delivered to schools. This is in addition to over 220,000 laptops and tablets delivered during the summer term for disadvantaged Year 10 pupils, children with a social worker and care leavers.

Attendance data suggests most schools have small groups of children self-isolating rather than closing fully. The Department has changed the number of devices allocated to each school to reflect this, which will help deliver devices where and when they are needed as quickly as possible.

This change brings schools' allocations more closely in line with the average size of a pupil group that is self isolating. The Department recognises that levels of self isolation may be higher in different areas of the country and that face-to-face education is being prioritised in all eventualities. Where schools believe they have a strong need for additional devices, they should contact covid.technology@education.gov.uk.

This more targeted approach will mean as many schools and disadvantaged children as possible benefit from receiving a device in the event that their face-to-face education is disrupted.

■ Remote Education: Internet

Esther McVey:

[\[100992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of the availability of strong internet connections for students studying from home during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

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

As part of over £195 million invested in technology to enable access to remote education, over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers have already been delivered during the summer term for disadvantaged children in Year 10, children receiving support from a social worker and care leavers.

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

The 4G wireless routers come with free data for the autumn term and will allow local authorities and academy trusts to support children who may have their face-to-face education and care disrupted because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Local authorities and trusts are responsible for identifying the children who need internet access and providing the routers to them.

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

■ Special Educational Needs: Autism

Olivia Blake:

[\[109758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to ensure that autistic children and young people receive the educational support they need in the event of future school closures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Olivia Blake:

[109759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of autistic children (a) with an Education Health and Care Plan and (b) in receipt of SEN support returned to full-time education during the covid-19 outbreak at the start of autumn term 2020.

Vicky Ford:

The government recognises the significant challenges that the COVID-19 outbreak has presented for autistic children and young people and their families. Supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with autism, continues to be a priority for this government, and their wellbeing has been central to our response throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

The department has been closely monitoring the return to school for children with SEND during the COVID-19 outbreak, through monitoring attendance data and engaging with local authorities where there appear to be issues.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the department is collecting daily attendance data. This is broken down by whether a child or young person has an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan, rather than by individual type of need (including Autism Spectrum Disorder), so that we do not place additional burdens on schools by asking them to provide information on multiple breakdowns of attendance data. Daily attendance of pupils with an EHC plan attending state-funded schools, in the first 2 weeks of the autumn term, is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/8d8096c1-c771-47fa-a19e-e25f18fc2e76>.

As my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, made clear in his statement of 31 October 2020, our priority remains keeping all early years settings, schools and colleges open to all children and young people during the lockdown period commencing from 5 November. Schools and colleges should continue to ensure that autistic children and young people receive the education, therapeutic or specialist support and reasonable adjustments required to enable them to successfully engage with school or college. Published guidance on the full opening of schools is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Also, published guidance for full opening of special schools and other specialist settings provides a framework, approved by Public Health England, that sets out the high-level actions to be taken by schools and colleges. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

The department funds the Autism Education Trust (AET) to deliver training to education professionals and embed good autism practice in schools and colleges across England. The AET has developed a hub of guidance and resources for families, teachers and other professionals that is aimed at supporting children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes guidance for schools on

making appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical strategies for managing increased anxiety, changes in routine and environment and transitions to new settings. This guidance is available at:

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/?s=covid>.

In addition, the whole school SEND consortium, funded by the department, have run training sessions and developed resources for teachers supporting pupils with SEND. Further information about this is available here:

<https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/>.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[109590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase covid-19 testing capacity in and around universities at the end of the 2020 autumn term.

Michelle Donelan:

We have quickly established walk-through sites and deployed mobile test sites so that almost all universities are within 1.5 miles, allowing staff and students to get access to tests should they develop symptoms. Testing capacity is the highest it has ever been and we are seeing significant demand. The department continues to work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), and with sector representatives, to ensure that any students who display symptoms can have quick and easy access to testing.

As part of our ongoing work to develop new testing technology, we are currently piloting the use of lateral flow tests with a number of universities. This is a clinically validated swab antigen test that does not require a laboratory for processing and can turnaround rapid results within an hour at the location of the test. Piloting this technology will help us better understand where to best use it and how it can be operationalised in the real world; to protect those at high risk, find the virus and help enable us to go back to as normal a way of life as possible. They will also form the foundations to delivering mass testing, testing large numbers of people in a short period of time, with test results made available quickly, so that people in environments such as schools, colleges, and universities can be reassured more quickly that they are not infected, or isolate themselves more quickly if they are.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Cats: Tagging

Sir Greg Knight:

[109182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the risks of (a) microchip migration to another location, (b) tumour development at the injection site and (c) other side effects as a result of the microchipping of cats; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government will be issuing a public consultation on compulsory cat microchipping shortly.

It is a requirement of the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 to report adverse reactions to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). Adverse reactions include microchip migration and any negative health reaction the veterinarian considers to be adverse. Adverse reactions to dog microchipping are relatively rare. In 2019, it was reported that out of around 540,000 dogs microchipped that year, around 0.07% of dogs experienced adverse reactions, of which approximately 98% were due to microchip migration and failure of the microchip.

■ Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal**Dan Jarvis:**[\[109361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to make funding available for a free garden waste disposal service for households.

Rebecca Pow:

We have recently consulted on whether households in England generating garden waste should be provided with a free garden waste collection service, as part of proposals to increase consistency in recycling. If introduced, we propose that this would be a minimum fortnightly collection service of a 240-litre capacity container (either a bin or a sack) throughout the growing season. Further capacity or more frequent collections could be charged for by the local authority.

Responses at consultation generated a range of views on a free minimum garden waste collection service. We will therefore give further consideration to the costs and benefits of this measure before making a final decision. We are preparing to consult further on recycling consistency proposals in 2021.

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

Dan Jarvis:[\[109362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many local authorities (a) charge for and (b) offer a free garden waste disposal service; and of those that charge for that service, what the average charge is per household in England.

Rebecca Pow:

As of 2018/19, 319 local authorities in England (98%) collect garden waste. 213 local authorities (65%) charge for garden waste collection as a subscription service, and the remainder of local authorities collecting garden waste provide a free collection service. For local authorities that charge for a garden waste collection service, the

mean average charge per household in England is £43.23 per year (WRAP survey data).

■ Fisheries: Sussex

Peter Kyle: [\[109506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the timeframe is for his Department to consider the Sussex Near Shore Trawling Byelaw proposal submitted by the Marine Management Organisation.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is reviewing the full byelaw package including the results of the byelaw consultation and the evidence set out in the impact assessment in accordance with the statutory guidance on Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority byelaws. An update will be provided when the final consideration process is concluded.

■ Peat

Catherine McKinnell: [\[109347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with garden centres and other retailers selling horticultural items on phasing out the sale of peat-based compost.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[109348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the quantity of peat-based compost sold in garden centres and by other retailers in each of the last three years.

Rebecca Pow:

My officials met with retailers, and other interested parties, at a roundtable on 24 August 2020 to consider the use of peat in the horticultural sector. The roundtable was part of a series of roundtables to discuss the England Peat Strategy. The Government continues to be committed to phasing out the use of peat in horticulture in England, and we will set out plans to speed this up in the England Peat Strategy. We plan on publishing the strategy later this year.

Data on the quantity of peat sold in the UK is only available for 2018 and 2019. The total volume of peat sold in 2018 was 2.11 million m³, and 2.06 million m³ in 2019.

■ Pesticide Residues in Food Expert Committee: Annual Reports

Geraint Davies: [\[109133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food will publish its 2019 annual report.

Victoria Prentis:

The 2019 Annual Report of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food will be published on 4 November 2020 on GOV.UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/expert-committee-on-pesticide-residues-in-food-prif-annual-report>.

■ Recycling

Dan Jarvis:

[109360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the outcome of the second consultation on Consistency in household and business recycling collections in England will be published.

Rebecca Pow:

We will publish the next stage of our proposals for consistency in recycling in household and business recycling in early 2021.

■ Transport: Refrigeration

Geraint Davies:

[109136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to transport refrigeration units emissions, (a) how the Government is measuring levels of those emissions, (b) how often data on those emissions is published and (c) for how long that data been collected.

Rebecca Pow:

Tailpipe emissions from vehicles which power transport refrigeration units are recorded as road traffic emissions in the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. The data for road transport emissions is published annually and has been reported since 1990 onwards. The Government does not estimate emissions from transport refrigeration unit auxiliary engines as the available data are limited.

Defra has commissioned research and is working with industry and sector experts to improve the evidence base on emissions from non-road mobile machinery emissions, including transport refrigeration units. As set out in the Clean Air Strategy, the Government is considering the options to reduce emissions from non-road mobile machinery.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Anooosheh Ashoori

Patrick Grady:

[109461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart to secure the release of Anooosheh Ashoori; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The Government remains extremely concerned about all dual British nationals detained in Iran, including Anooosheh Ashoori. Iran does not recognise dual nationality and therefore does not permit access to British-Iranian detainees. We continue to

urge the Iranian Government immediately to release all British-Iranian nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran to enable them to return to their families in the UK. The welfare of British-Iranian citizens in Iran is also of paramount importance, and we call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to treat all detainees in line with international standards. We have continued to raise the cases of British-Iranian nationals detained in Iran at the most senior levels, and discuss them at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[109524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on the return of the detained British national Anoosheh Ashoori to the UK.

James Cleverly:

The Government remains extremely concerned about all dual British nationals detained in Iran, including Anoosheh Ashoori. Iran does not recognise dual nationality and therefore does not permit access to British-Iranian detainees. We continue to urge the Iranian Government to immediately release all British-Iranian nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran to enable them to return to their families in the UK. The welfare of British-Iranian citizens in Iran is also of paramount importance, and we call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to treat all detainees in line with international standards. We have continued to raise the cases of British-Iranian nationals detained in Iran at the most senior levels, and discuss them at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts.

■ Belarus: Human Rights and Mass Media

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[109197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which (a) media and (b) human rights organisations in Belarus have received funding from the £1.5 million of UK aid allocated to such organisations in September 2020.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office supports the strengthening of civil society and independent media outlets in Belarus. Of the extra £1.5m in additional funds to be spent over two years, we have so far contracted £1m of extra media support this financial year, which is being implemented to ensure that independent media outlets and civil society organisations in Belarus can continue to operate. UK funding will help train journalists, provide support to those who have been detained by the authorities and also help replace equipment that has been destroyed or confiscated. The operating environment for civil society and independent media in Belarus remains difficult and we are unable to disclose details of the specific organisations in receipt of UK aid, as this information could then be used to actively attempt to disrupt support and endanger the safety of their staff.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[109547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to make redundancies in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

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

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[109550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is planning to undertake equality impact assessments of any proposed staffing restructure in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO is committed to putting inclusion, belonging, diversity and respect at its heart, and is working towards its aspiration to be the most inclusive government department. Consistent with this and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>), the FCDO conducts Equality Impact Analysis for all key decisions.

Iran: Detainees

Gavin Robinson: [\[109383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on the (a) welfare and (b) situation of (i) Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and (ii) Anoosheh Ashoori.

James Cleverly:

The Government remains extremely concerned about all dual British nationals detained in Iran, including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori. Iran does not recognise dual nationality and therefore does not permit access to British-Iranian detainees. The safety and security of dual British national detainees in Iran is of paramount importance, and we call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to treat all detainees in line with international standards. We continue to urge the Iranian Government immediately to release all British-Iranian nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran to enable them to return to their families in the UK. We continue to raise these cases at the most senior levels and discuss them at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. We continue to raise Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case at the most senior levels, and discuss it at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts.

■ Myanmar: Elections

Fiona Bruce:

[\[109289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the risk of (a) violations of freedom of religion or belief and (b) a rise in ethno-religious nationalism and intolerance in Myanmar (i) before and (ii) after the forthcoming elections in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is very concerned by the discrimination facing religious minorities in Myanmar, and by reports of hate speech, destruction of places of worship and forced conversions. The Race and Religion Laws and the 1982 Citizenship Law have been used to discriminate against non-Buddhists. The UK continues to raise the issue of freedom of religion or belief with the Myanmar Government. The UK also works with partners and community leaders to improve religious tolerance and social cohesion through facilitating a greater understanding of religious and cultural differences, and promoting dialogue between different communities across Myanmar.

The UK is deeply concerned that the Rohingya and other minorities will be excluded from the upcoming elections. I raised this directly with the Myanmar Minister for International Cooperation in June. The 2020 elections are an important milestone but the transition to democracy will be a long-term process. The UK is clear that universal suffrage for all of Myanmar's communities is a key part of achieving an effective, plural democracy. We will continue to call for elections to be credible and inclusive, allowing individuals of all communities to participate.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[109516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government will take steps to support the implementation of monitoring mechanisms along the line of contact between Azerbaijan and Armenia to mediate the current tensions between both parties.

Wendy Morton:

Any monitoring mechanism should be agreed with both Armenia and Azerbaijan and the OSCE Minsk Group. Although we are not a member of the OSCE Minsk Group, the UK Government continues to support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and Minsk Group Co-Chairs in calling for immediate de-escalation and a return to the negotiating table.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[109517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on (a) providing support to end the blockade of Armenia by (i) Azerbaijan and (ii) Turkey and (b) the policy of isolation towards the Republic of Artsakh.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has not raised the closure of borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey. The UK continues to support the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group to find a solution to the conflict, including the Minsk Principles governing relations between member states.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: Humanitarian Aid**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[109518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to provide humanitarian aid to the Republic of Artsakh.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary announced a new £1 million UK aid package, in response to an appeal by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 30 October. This aid will support people affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including children and those requiring urgent medical attention.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: Politics and Government**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[109515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of formally recognising the Republic of Artsakh.

Wendy Morton:

The OSCE Minsk Group is the international forum through which a peaceful settlement to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan should be reached. We consider that the Basic Principles for a settlement, proposed by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, provide the basis for a reasonable compromise, taking due account of the relevant OSCE principles governing relations between member states including the principle of Azerbaijani territorial integrity. The UK Government has no plans to recognise the Republic of Artsakh outside of any agreement that is reached between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

■ Papua: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**Alex Sobel:**[\[109604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Pacific Islands Forum and Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States request for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit and prepare a report on West Papua, whether the Government plans to support that request.

Nigel Adams:

The UK supports a visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (ONHCR) to Papua. Officials from the British Embassy have discussed the proposed visit of with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and continue to encourage the Indonesian Government to agree dates as soon as possible. The former Minister for Asia and the

Pacific, Heather Wheeler attended the Pacific Island Forum in August 2019, noting the communiqué. It is our longstanding position that we regard Papua and West Papua provinces as being part of Indonesia and consider dialogue on territorial issues in Indonesia as a matter for the Indonesian people.

■ **Poland: Abortion**

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[109746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Polish counterpart on that country's abortion laws.

Wendy Morton:

We are closely monitoring developments in Poland following a ruling on 22 October by its Constitutional Tribunal that laws permitting abortion in certain cases are unconstitutional and the large-scale protests across Poland that this has prompted. It is for each country to establish its own laws on abortion. However, the UK firmly believes that supporting the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, through evidence-based public health interventions, saves lives and supports prosperity. Evidence shows that restricting access to safe abortion does not make abortions less common: it only makes them less safe. The FCDO is a leading voice on gender issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, in multilateral fora such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The British Embassy in Warsaw is active on this agenda and in September ran a workshop for British and Polish NGOs active on women's rights.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Abortion**

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[106898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on second trimester abortion of the finding of the British Medical Journal article, Reconsidering fetal pain, published on 14 January 2020 that pain emerges around 18-20 weeks of gestation.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not set clinical practice. To support clinical practice, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) has considered the issue of fetal pain and awareness in its guideline on 'Fetal Awareness: Review of Research and Recommendations for Practice', published in March 2010.

The Department has brought the article by Dr Stuart W G Derbyshire and John C Bockmann to the attention of the RCOG. It is for the RCOG to consider whether to revise the guidelines, having looked at the available evidence.

■ Abortion: Disability

Mary Glendon:

[\[103511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data the Department holds on selective abortions on grounds of disability in England and Wales from January to June 2020.

Helen Whately:

Under the Abortion Act 1967, a pregnancy may be lawfully terminated by a registered medical practitioner in approved premises, if two medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith, that the abortion is justified under one or more of grounds A to G. Ground E refers to cases where “there is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped”. There can be multiple reasons for an abortion for a fetal abnormality, therefore there can be more than one medical condition mentioned on a HSA4 form.

Selective abortions are abortions where the number of fetuses in the womb is reduced.

There were 55 mentions of medical conditions for selective abortions performed under ground E between January to June 2020, a breakdown of which is available in the attached table .

■ Abortion: Private Sector

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[99517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to investigate the reasons for the annual increase in the number of abortions performed in private clinics.

Helen Whately:

The Department has no specific plans to investigate the reasons for the number of abortions performed in private clinics. However, the Department has commissioned the King’s Fund to undertake a piece of work to provide insights into factors contributing to changing patterns of abortion uptake in England.

Clinical commissioning groups are responsible for commissioning termination of pregnancy services and are increasingly commissioning from the independent sector abortion providers. All independent sector clinics wishing to perform abortions must be approved by the Secretary of State under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 and registered with the Care Quality Commission.

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[99518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have died as a result following abortion carried out in a private clinic in the last five years.

Helen Whately:

Mortality statistics published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that between 2015 and 2019 there was one death where abortion was listed as the underlying cause of death on the death certificate. It is not possible to identify whether this abortion was performed at a National Health Service hospital or at an independent clinic.

The Department is aware of reports of two women who died after seeking abortion treatment earlier this year. Both deaths have been appropriately investigated and in one case investigations are continuing. For the other case, the coroner concluded that there was no evidence to suggest the pregnancy or abortion contributed to the death either directly or indirectly.

Arthritis: Diagnosis**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[105455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps are being taken to improve training for GPs on the early identification of rheumatoid arthritis.

Helen Whately:

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is identified as a key area of clinical knowledge in the Royal College of General Practitioners' Advanced Knowledge Test (AKT) content guide. The AKT is a summative assessment of the knowledge base that underpins general practice in the United Kingdom within the context of the National Health Service and is a key part of GPs' qualifying exams.

Arthritis: Medical Treatments**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[103607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the treatment of arthritis.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: No specific assessment has been made.

Bowel Cancer: Coronavirus**Henry Smith:**[\[104093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on patient survival rates of delayed diagnosis and screening for colorectal cancer as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The UK National Screening Committee is undertaking work to estimate the impact of delays to screening programmes, including cancer screening, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This work is currently in its early stages and the results will be reported as soon they are available.

NHS England and NHS Improvement is working to clear the backlog of bowel cancer screening as quickly as possible. All 64 bowel screening centres are now undertaking diagnostic colonoscopies and sending routine screening invitations. As at 5 October 2020, the number of people who have had a faecal immunochemical test-positive result and are awaiting a diagnostic test has nearly halved in comparison to those waiting in April 2020.

■ **Bowel Cancer: Screening**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[102011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the NHS's ability to clear the backlog of bowel cancer screenings; and how long his Department estimates it will take for waiting times to return to pre-covid-19 levels.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to clear the backlog of bowel cancer screening as quickly as possible. All 64 bowel screening centres are now undertaking diagnostic colonoscopies and sending routine screening invitations.

The time it will take for waiting times to return to pre-COVID-19 levels depends on a variety of factors, including the ongoing impact of COVID-19. However, as at 5 October 2020, the number of people who have had a faecal immunochemical test-positive result and are awaiting a diagnostic test has nearly halved in comparison to those waiting in April 2020.

■ **Breast Cancer: Coronavirus**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[100904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the time it will take to clear the breast screening backlog created by the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 October 2020]: Although NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently unable to provide a time estimate, there has been good progress made in clearing the backlog of appointments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of women waiting to receive a breast screening invitation has decreased from 468,548 women on 1 June 2020 to 32,518 women on 5 October 2020.

All local National Health Service breast screening services are operational and are working to ensure that those still waiting for an invitation will receive one as quickly as possible. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also made funding available to trusts to support the adaptation of mobile breast screening units in order to enhance their safe use and so maximise the number of units available to screen women.

■ Breast Cancer: Health Services**Caroline Lucas:****[102752]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of a national secondary breast cancer audit.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans in place for a dedicated audit into national secondary breast cancer.

The Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership commissions, develops and manages the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme on behalf of NHS England, Wales and other devolved administrations. The programme currently consists of over 30 national clinical audits, six clinical outcome review programmes and the National Joint Registry.

The existing audit of breast cancer in older women does include some sections on women with metastatic breast cancer. The latest audit is available at the following link:

https://www.hqip.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REF212_NABCOP-2020-Annual-Report-V1_high-res_20200702.pdf

Dr Lisa Cameron:**[105411]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on collecting data on secondary breast cancer patients' (a) diagnosis, (b) treatment and (c) access to support.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset, the National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service (NCRAS) is supporting the direct reporting of cancer recurrence data by hospital trusts. Recurrence data collection is also mandated as part of the Cancer Waiting Times Standards.

NCRAS is working closely with cancer charities to improve data collection in this area, looking at how they can help improve completion rates and thus gain a better picture of the burden of recurrence and metastatic disease across the health service. To further support this work NCRAS has been sharing provider-level data on the completeness of recurrence reporting with individual National Health Service trusts since July 2016. The data was last updated in October 2019 and is available on the NCRAS website at the following link:

http://www.ncin.org.uk/cancer_type_and_topic_specific_work/topic_specific_work/recurrence

■ Breast Cancer: Screening**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[101055]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of women unable to attend breast cancer screenings as a result of the effect

of the covid-19 outbreak on that programme in England; and how many of those women are classified as high risk.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 October 2020]: To recover from the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, National Health Service breast screening providers prioritised invitations for key age groups and women at very high risk of breast cancer.

The number of women waiting for a screening invitation decreased from 468,548 on 1 June 2020 to 32,518 on 5 October 2020. In mid-June, 1,936 women defined as high risk were waiting for a screening invitation; as of 5 October 2020, this number decreased to 985. During that time further women have become due for screening. 896,240 women in all categories are awaiting a screening invitation nationally as of 5 October 2020. All services have restarted routine screening and will continue to work to invite these women for a screening appointment.

■ **Buses: Health Services**

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[102048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has with the Secretary of State for Transport on the role of buses in helping to provide access to healthcare.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not met with the Secretary of State for Transport on the role of buses in helping provide access to healthcare.

However, National Health Service organisations already include the utilisation of bus services for patient, visitors and staff as part of their overall strategy along with other transport services to provide access to healthcare. This includes consideration of existing services, as well as the setting up of bus services specifically for the NHS e.g. shuttle buses. Guidance has been provided to the NHS on this in 'Health Technical Memorandum 07-03 NHS car-parking management: environment and sustainability 2015 edition'.

■ **Cancer: Medical Treatments**

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[102084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote routine access to personalised cancer treatments that target specific gene mutations.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement work with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to ensure access to personalised cancer treatments that target specific gene mutations.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are involved in the NICE Topic Selection process to identify treatments which may proceed through the NICE technology appraisal process and include a genomic test as part of the patient pathway. Following NICE recommendation of a treatment that targets specific gene mutations, NHS England and NHS Improvement develop and follow a detailed implementation plan to ensure that genomic testing is available within the appropriate time scale.

Jim Shannon:

[\[106350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding to expedite approval for BAY1895344 to be available for cancer patients through the NHS.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Once a medicine is licensed in the United Kingdom, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based recommendations for the National Health Service on whether new medicines represent an effective use of resources. The NHS in England is legally required to fund medicines recommended through a NICE appraisal, usually within three months of final guidance.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for ensuring new medicines are assessed for quality, safety and efficacy before being licensed and made available for patients. The MHRA is also responsible for regulation of clinical trials in the UK. Authorisation to conduct a Phase I/II trial of BAY 1895344 been granted by the MHRA.

■ Cancer: Mortality Rates

Martyn Day:

[\[99671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) one-year and (b) five-year survival rates for people with sarcoma.

Martyn Day:

[\[99672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the target of diagnosing 75 per cent of cancers early by 2028, what plans he has to ensure that diagnosis rates of sarcomas meet that target.

Jo Churchill:

Improving early diagnosis of cancer is a top priority for the National Health Service, especially to help boost one-year and five-year survival rates in the future. That is why one of the core ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan is to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage 1 or 2 by 2028, which would be up from the current rate of around 50%. The early diagnosis ambition includes rare and less common cancers, such as sarcoma cancer, but individual ambitions have not been set for different tumour types. However, success cannot realistically be achieved without making progress on cancers such as sarcoma.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, priority has been given to those Long Term Plan commitments that also support recovery, such as establishing Rapid Diagnostic Centres (RDCs). As of October 2020, 45 RDCs were live across England.

■ Care Homes

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[104744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the total number of care home beds available in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each year since 2010.

Helen Whately:

The data in the following table is taken from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Annual report for 2010, Archives for 2011-12 and the CQC data tracker for 2013 – 2020. Data is not available for Coventry/ West Midlands in 2010.

Care Home Beds - Capacity

	COVENTRY	WEST MIDLANDS	ENGLAND	
2010	N/A	N/A	459,270	Collection from CQC annual reports
November 2011	1,740	45,852	464,696	Collection from CQC archives
December 2012	1,888	46,598	463,368	Collection from CQC archives
December 2013	1,867	46,795	463,748	Collection from the CQC data tracker
December 2014	2,022	47,363	465,567	Collection from the CQC data tracker
December 2015	2,056	47,408	461,894	Collection from the CQC data tracker
December 2016	1,994	47,324	459,579	Collection from the CQC data tracker
December 2017	2,171	47,961	459,692	Collection from the CQC data tracker

	COVENTRY	WEST MIDLANDS	ENGLAND	
December 2018	2,088	48,172	457,736	Collection from the CQC data tracker
December 2019	2,077	48,505	457,110	Collection from the CQC data tracker
October 2020	2,080	48,562	457,765	Collection from the CQC data tracker

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[91774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the Government's guidance on Admission and care of residents in care homes during Covid-19 does not include guidance for emergency respite care providers.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises the importance of respite provision. The 'Admission and care of residents in care homes during COVID-19' guidance is aimed at care homes. There are different respite care provisions to suit different needs, including short stays in care homes. Where care homes provide respite services, they should continue to follow the advice set out in the 'Admission and care of residents in care homes during COVID-19' guidance.

Emma Hardy:

[\[99087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on (a) the relative risks of covid-19 infection in care homes from (i) staff and (ii) visitors and (b) the effectiveness of measures to reduce risk of covid-19 infection from visitors.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: On 9 October 2020, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies Social Care Working Group published an update paper at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925141/S0780_Social_Care_Working_Group_update_paper.pdf

■ Care Homes: Death**Alex Sobel:** [\[95209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) covid-19 related and (b) non-covid-19 related deaths there were in each providers care homes in each month from February to August 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 September 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[102099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the cost of residential care for the elderly.

Helen Whately:

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

We are committed to bringing forward a plan for social care to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and to find long term solutions for one of the biggest challenges we face as a society.

Future funding for adult social care will be set out at the next Spending Review.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software**Sarah Owen:** [\[97044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of covid-19 have been tracked and traced as a result of the NHS covid-19 app.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: The information requested is not currently held centrally.

■ Contact Tracing: Israel**Jonathan Gullis:** [\[86780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 August 2020 to Question 70524 on Israel: Contact Tracing, what comparative assessment the Government has made of the effectiveness of Israel's track and trace technology.

Helen Whately:

As part of our National Health Service COVID-19 app development process, we maintain an overview of contact tracing apps in development and operation around the world, including Israel's HaMagen app.

■ Coronavirus

John Redwood: [\[106877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who have recovered from covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not currently publish these data as people recover to different levels and in different settings. Not all recovery cases are picked up through data collections.

■ Coronavirus and Influenza: Vaccination

Dr Andrew Murrison: [R] [\[101989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what provision he is making for potentially administering flu and covid-19 vaccinations simultaneously.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service will follow guidance by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and Public Health England on co-administration of flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

Based on current information about the COVID-19 vaccines that are likely to be available, it is expected there will be a recommended interval between seven and 28 days between flu and any successful COVID-19 vaccine, to avoid incorrect attribution of potential side effects. The JCVI keeps all information under review. The NHS, as a result, is planning accordingly for those who are eligible for both flu and COVID-19 vaccines and will ensure appropriate checks are built into patient records, and data systems and that communications are clear about booking COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Justin Madders: [\[92799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out what constitutes a successful contact within the covid-19 test and trace system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: The Test and Trace service, which launched in England on 28 May, identifies people at high risk of having been exposed to the virus through close recent contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and notifies them of the need to self-isolate. This is an important element in controlling the spread of the virus.

When someone who has tested positive shares information with NHS Test and Trace about a close recent contact, there are three possible outcomes as follows:

- Contact tracers successfully reach the individual and notify them of the need to self-isolate;

- Contact tracers are unable to contact the individual because no usable contact details have been provided, for example phone number or email address; and
- Contact tracers attempt to reach the individual, but there is no response to text, email and call reminders.

Since the service launched, 84% of all contacts for whom usable contact details were provided have been reached and notified of the need to self-isolate.

Mike Wood:

[\[96925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number and proportion of covid-19 outbreaks that have been traced to (a) Casino venues and (b) amusement arcades.

Helen Whately:

This information is not held in the format requested.

James Wild:

[\[98291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to require NHS Test and Trace to contact individuals who test positive for covid-19 on a periodic basis to assess whether they are suffering from long covid symptoms.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National Health Service Test and Trace brings together testing, contact tracing and outbreak management into an end-to-end service to help prevent the spread of the virus, protect local communities and save lives. The more rapidly we can identify people who may have been at risk of infection and, if necessary, tell them to self-isolate, the more effectively we can reduce the spread of the virus and maintain transmission at low levels.

Long term COVID-19 refers to symptoms beyond this period of infectivity and the Government, as well as our expert scientific groups, continues to monitor and assess data from a wide variety of sources to better understand the disease course of COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: Death**

Anthony Browne:

[\[103644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the difference between the Public Health England and the World Health Organisation's classification of deaths from covid-19, if he will publish figures for deaths from covid-19 in the UK according to the WHO definition that Covid-19 should be recorded on the medical certificate of cause of death for all decedents where the disease caused, or is assumed to have caused, or contributed to death.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) uses two definitions of a death in a person with COVID-19 in England. Firstly, the total number of deaths of people who received a positive test result for COVID-19 and died within 28 days of the first positive test reported on

or up to the date of death or reporting date. People who died more than 28 days after their first positive test are not included, whether or not COVID-19 was the cause of death. Secondly, the total number of deaths of people who received a positive test result for COVID-19 and either died within 60 days of the first positive test or where COVID-19 was mentioned on their death certificate.

Data for both definitions of a COVID-19 death are available in PHE's National COVID-19 surveillance reports which are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Sarah Olney: [\[68748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the accuracy of the data reported to the public on the number of covid-19 (a) deaths (b) infections and (c) tests carried out.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Test and Trace weekly statistics have been produced in response to developing world events. The Office for Statistics Regulation, on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority, has reviewed them against several important aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics and regards them as consistent with the Code's three pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Marsha De Cordova: [\[68419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of babies born from 1 March 2020 that tested positive for covid-19 were from a BAME background.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 July 2020]: The Department does not hold this data.

■ Coronavirus: Health Services

Gill Furniss: [\[102893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he has given to primary care services on (a) handling and (b) treating people suffering from the long term effects of covid-19.

Rushanara Ali: [\[103520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set up more post-covid 19 clinics to support people who are chronically ill with coronavirus symptoms.

Hilary Benn: [\[104045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units offering treatment for patients suffering from long covid there are in England.

Simon Hoare:

[98724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to (a) increase provision of rehabilitation services for people who have become deconditioned as a result of covid-19 lockdown restrictions and disruption of healthcare services and (b) provide additional provision to meet the needs of people recovering from covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 October 2020]: In July 2020, the National Health Service launched the 'Your COVID Recovery' service to support the recovery of people who have been in hospital or suffered at home with the virus. This is a two-phase endeavour with phase one being available as an open, publicly available site containing general information on all aspects of recovering from COVID-19, including physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Over 100,000 people have used the online service since it was launched in July.

On 7 October the NHS announced £10 million is to be invested this year to help kick start and designate 'long COVID-19' clinics that will be available to all patients in England. Alongside this, new guidance has been commissioned by NHS England from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the clinical case definition of 'long COVID-19'. This will include patients who have had COVID-19 who may not have had a hospital admission or a previous positive test. It will be followed by evidence-based NICE clinical guidelines that will outline the support that 'long COVID-19' patients should receive, enabling NHS doctors, therapists and staff to provide a clear and personalised treatment plan. This will include education materials for general practitioners and other health professionals to help them refer and signpost patients to the right support.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Andrea Jenkyns:

[47366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 tests had results confirmed within 48 hours.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 May 2020]: Information on turnaround times for testing is published for pillars 1 and 2 weekly as part of the NHS Test and Trace statistics at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Helen Hayes:

[52660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which employees of Randox were (a) involved in the negotiations and (b) made representations to the Government on Randox's behalf on the contract to produce covid-19 testing kits.

Helen Whately:

The Department will not name individuals involved in contract negotiations without the express consent of those individuals.

Sir Mark Hendrick:[\[53316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to ensure that Local Resilience Forums receive (a) positive, (b) negative and (c) void covid-19 test results within three hours of those tests being taken.

Rachael Maskell:[\[56061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for local authorities to receive data on all testing of people resident in their area.

Steve Reed:[\[57982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to provide postcode level data on (a) positive and (b) negative covid-19 tests obtained through (i) Pillar 1 and (ii) Pillar 2 testing strands to (A) local resilience forums and (b) local authority Directors of Public Health.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[60760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for the provision of localised data on people that tested positive for covid-19 to (a) local authorities and (b) GPs.

Caroline Lucas:[\[67607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to share real-time postcode level (a) pillar 1 hospital test and (b) pillar 2 community test data on local covid-19 outbreaks with relevant local public health officials and local authority leaders; if he will ensure the publication of that data in a form to enable anonymised comparative analysis with other regions; what steps he is taking to improve the (i) granularity and (ii) timeliness of the data provided to local public health officials for the purpose of preventing local outbreaks of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 June 2020]: All upper tier local authorities have access to record level (including sex, age, occupation and postcode) test and case data. Directors of Public Health are also receiving fully identifiable test, case and contact tracing data where the case data includes, address, postcode, sex, age, NHS Number, occupation, test date, and additional data describing progress through the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing process. Public Health England (PHE) provides access to this data via a secure platform to Directors of Public Health to support them to carry out their outbreak management responsibilities. This data is currently updated on a daily basis.

PHE began providing record level positive test data, including postcodes, to local authorities (including Directors of Public Health) on 24 June.

Caroline Lucas:

[53364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) create and (b) publish a testing pathway that enables local health leaders to track where individual tests are being sent; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

All upper tier local authorities have access to record level testing data including sex, age, occupation and postcode.

We also publish public dashboards at a national, regional and local authority level and the Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) map, which allows individuals to type in a postcode to find their MSOA and see how many cases there are in small areas of around 7,000 people.

Data on the seven day average for the number of people with coronavirus identified through a National Health Service laboratory (pillar 1) or from commercial swab testing (pillar 2) back to March 2020 is available as part of the NHS Digital Progression Dashboard to Upper Tier Local Authority Level and is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/dashboards/progression>

Rachael Maskell:

[53499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time is between a swab being taken at (a) hospital, (b) care homes and (c) through home testing kits to the receipt of a response; and in how many cases has that response time been longer than seven days in (i) York, (ii) Yorkshire and (iii) the UK.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the information in the format requested.

Steve Reed:

[53992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department holds data on the average time taken for a covid-19 positive test result to be reported to the relevant local authority by test setting.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 June 2020]: We do not currently hold the information in the format requested.

Mr Steve Baker:

[88303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of targeting covid-19 testing on hotspots on case numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Our approach to testing is guided by the latest scientific advice. We are targeting testing capacity at the areas that need it most, including those where there is an outbreak, and prioritising at-risk groups.

On top of this, we are working in close partnership with local public health teams and councils. Every day they receive test, case and contact tracing data so that they can take action and follow up with anyone who it has not been possible to contact.

Daisy Cooper:

[91159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the oral contribution of the hon. Member for St Albans of 15 September 2020, Official Report, column 199, if he will publish the modelling carried out over summer 2020 by his Department on the estimated demand for covid-19 testing from (a) schoolchildren and (b) key-workers as schools re-opened in September 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: Modelling of demand for tests from those with COVID-19-like symptoms was done on the population as a whole. Symptomatic testing demand was projected separately for those with COVID-19 and those without COVID-19 but with COVID-19-like symptoms. These projections were based on the following, respectively:

- Various planning scenarios for the COVID-19 curve, including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario; and
- Modelling making use of historic data on incidence of illnesses that may present with COVID-19-like symptoms, referencing in particular historic data on general practitioner consultation rates for those with influenza-like illnesses. These historic rates will reflect a range of factors influencing the pattern of incidence of influenza-like illnesses, including the impact of the return to schools.

Projections of both elements of demand were, and remain, subject to a very high degree of uncertainty. Over time, the Department intends to publish detailed data from across the programme to support secondary analysis, for example in academic institutions. Over the coming weeks, as the service matures, more information will be provided on a weekly basis.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[91173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the capacity to test school pupils during winter 2020-21.

Helen Whately:

Anyone experiencing symptoms can access a free test at a testing site or at home by calling 119 or via the online booking portal at the following link:

<https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/antigen/condition>

This includes all pupils, teachers and staff. All children of any age can get a test in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Charlotte Nichols:

[91812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the average distance of a covid test site from home that people have been offered in each of the last four weeks.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

Sir Alan Campbell:[\[92703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 test results from PCR tests in Pillar 2 settings are false positive.

Helen Whately:

All tests have been assessed as performing to manufacturers' specifications before being used. The established Lighthouse laboratories that undertake the majority of test processing have been reviewed by experts, each has a clinical virology lead and we are satisfied the test is reliable and effective. Like any diagnostic test however, there is always the small possibility of a false negative or a false positive result. In the Lighthouse laboratories the specificity of testing is monitored by participation in External Quality Assurance and by sending all positive specimens to the Wellcome Sanger laboratory at Cambridge and data suggests that more than 99.9% of results are confirmed as COVID-19.

Owen Thompson:[\[93639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to roll out covid-19 antibody testing throughout the UK.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: We are already offering antibody tests to National Health Service and care staff in England, with patients and social care residents eligible at their clinician's request. We are also using antibody tests to support research studies.

In order to better understand the role that an antibody test could play in our response to the pandemic, we need to improve our understanding of how the immune system responds to the virus that causes COVID-19. We do not currently know how long an antibody response to the virus lasts, nor whether having antibodies means a person cannot transmit the virus to others. Our understanding of the virus will grow as new scientific evidence and studies emerge. To date, over 1.6 million COVID-19 antibody tests have been carried out.

Kate Griffiths:[\[94560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the reliability of the polymerase chain reaction test for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The current sensitivity of our polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for COVID-19 such as those used at our lighthouse laboratories is over 99%. All manufacturers of PCR tests for COVID-19 must meet the requirements of our validation process to ensure the accuracy of their tests.

Mr Richard Holden:

[97050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of positive covid-19 test results are (a) false positive and (b) false negative.

Helen Whately:

In June 2020 the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies published a briefing paper on the impact of false positives and false negatives in the United Kingdom's COVID-19 reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing programme, which is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gos-impact-of-false-positives-and-negatives-3-june-2020>

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rushanara Ali:

[103522]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on ensuring that the correct supply chain requirements have been made for distributing a covid-19 vaccine.

Jo Churchill:

The Government closely monitors plans for the requirements across the supply chain for COVID-19 vaccines and associated material. For the provision of potential vaccines and their onward deployment, there are clearly defined supply chain plans for manufacturing, transport, storage and distribution.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[96154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the capacity and ability of (a) refrigerated lorries, (b) aircraft and (c) other elements of the supply chain to distribute (i) a covid-19 vaccine, (ii) medical grade receptacles and (ii) PPE for the administration of that vaccine.

Jo Churchill:

The Government closely monitors plans for the requirements across the supply chain for COVID-19 vaccines and associated material. For the provision of potential vaccines and their onward deployment, there are clearly defined supply chain plans for manufacturing, transport, storage and distribution, and for materials such as medical grade receptacles and personal protective equipment.

■ Coronavirus: Wansbeck

Ian Lavery:

[86057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure people in Wansbeck can be tested locally for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The Government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history, including 77 drive-through sites, 155 walk-through sites, 21

satellite test sites, 258 mobile testing units, home testing and satellite kits and five lighthouse laboratories as of 13 October 2020.

Home testing enables anyone who can't get to a testing site, such as those who are shielding, self-isolating, have mobility issues, live in very rural areas or are waiting for elective surgery, to take a test in their own home.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[105578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to include specialist dementia wards for hospitals in plans for supporting people with dementia in England for 2020-25.

Helen Whately:

We know that environment in which care is given and the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the workforce delivering that care are critical to the outcomes of people living with dementia.

We supported the National Dementia Action Alliance's Dementia Friendly Hospital Charter which is helping ensure hospitals are able to support people living with dementia and their families effectively. The Charter has recently been updated in response to COVID-19 and we committed in the Challenge on Dementia 2020 that all National Health Service staff would receive training on dementia appropriate to their role.

We expect to build on this work when we update our Dementia strategy.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Mr Mark Harper:

[\[99544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons he has not yet answered Question 94354, tabled on 23 September 2020; and when he plans to respond to that Question.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question 94354 on 6 October.

■ Eating Disorders

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[104109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of training for doctors on (a) recognising and (b) treating eating disorders.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 20 October 2020]: Individual medical schools set their own undergraduate medical curriculum that must meet the standards set by the General Medical Council (GMC). The GMC, at the request of the Department, held a

roundtable on 21 November 2019 to improve educational knowledge and skill in the recognition and treatment of eating disorders. The GMC has since been working with stakeholders to deliver workstreams identified at the roundtable, largely focused on improving training resources at all levels of medical education.

■ Heart Diseases: Coronavirus

Chris Green: [\[103545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on detection rates of (a) cardiovascular disease and (b) heart valve disease.

Jo Churchill:

Detection rates are captured by general practitioner practices as part of the Quality and Outcomes Framework. This data is published yearly. Data is not yet available beyond 31 March 2020, which would show the impact of COVID-19 on detection rates.

Chris Green: [\[103547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the early detection of heart valve disease within primary care and the wider community during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Primary care and general practitioner practices have remained open throughout the pandemic and the National Health Service has prioritised treatment of the most urgent cases, including heart diseases. To continue to provide consultations in a COVID-19-safe environment, many practices are providing video or phone consultations. The NHS is prioritising restoration of the most urgently needed services, including diagnosis and treatment for patients with heart failure and heart valve disease.

In line with the diagnostics review 'Diagnostics: Recovery and Renewal', published on the 1 October, community diagnostic hubs are being established which will support with diagnostics, to improve the capacity to increase the detection of conditions such as cardiovascular disease and heart valve disease.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Derek Twigg: [\[101975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the time taken to discharge elderly and vulnerable people from hospital to care homes and the community.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 October 2020]: It is our priority to ensure that everyone receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time. On 19 March, as part of our response to COVID-19, we published the 'COVID-19: hospital discharge service

requirements'. This guidance set out how we would continue to support the safe and timely discharge of people who no longer need to stay in hospital, using the 'Discharge to Assess (D2A) model. This guidance was updated on 21 August.

People who are clinically ready are supported to return to their place of residence, where an assessment of longer-term needs takes place. For individuals whose needs are too great to return to their own home, suitable in-patient or residential care is arranged.

The exception to this is where a patient is discharged from hospital following a recent positive test for COVID-19. In this case, as set out in our Winter Plan, published on 18 September, we are implementing a designation scheme with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for premises that are safe for people leaving hospital who have tested positive for COVID-19.

People who are being discharged from hospitals to care homes must be tested for COVID-19 and should have their test result before they leave the hospital. If their test result is negative, they will be able to transfer directly from hospital to a care home. If their test is positive, they will only be able to transfer from hospital to an 'assured' premises. There will be a limited number of exceptions to this policy, to ensure that people are not prevented from accessing the care they need.

We made £1.3 billion funding available via the National Health Service to support the discharge process in March. As part of the £3 billion new funding announced for winter in July, an extra £588 million has been confirmed to continue enhanced discharge arrangements over winter.

■ Hypertension: Medical Equipment

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[104006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to GPs requiring patients to take blood pressure readings at home and send them to the surgery, what support is available to people with the cost of purchasing a blood pressure monitor; and how a patient can ensure that the monitor is calibrated to NHS standards at no extra cost.

Jo Churchill:

The third phase of the National Health Service's response to COVID-19, effective from the 1 August, focused on accelerating the return to near-normal levels of non-COVID-19 health services, which included the ask to accelerate preventative programmes and specifically the better targeting of long-term condition prevention and management programmes. NHS England's letter regarding the third phase is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/07/20200731-Phase-3-letter-final-1.pdf>

Hypertension monitoring and management is a priority for the NHS and we are developing safe systems to manage this making use of digital technology where appropriate. It is acknowledged that home blood pressure (BP) monitoring is not a

preferred or possible option for all patients and there is no requirement on patients to pursue this option as primary care are continuing to offer this service where appropriate at practices. When a validated BP monitor is purchased it is calibrated to the required standard.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Helen Hayes: [\[104758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the availability of the flu vaccine in (a) London and (b) England; and what steps he is taking to help ensure the availability of that vaccine for all people over 50 for Winter 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 October 2020]: We have sufficient vaccine for more than 30 million people to be vaccinated in England this winter. General practitioners and pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season. In addition, the Department has procured additional doses which will be available from November, to increase uptake in existing groups and extend the programme to new cohorts including those aged 50 to 64 years when appropriate.

Priority will be given to those who are most at risk to the effects of flu, and health and social care workers. There will be further communication on extending the programme to the additional cohort later in the season.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the health impact of exhaust particulates from Heavy Goods Vehicles.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[101958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the health impact of exhaust particulates from fleet delivery companies.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England has made no assessment of the health impact of exhaust particulates from Heavy Good Vehicles or fleet delivery companies.

■ Lithium

Alex Norris: [\[105521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the level of access to Priadel in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021 and beyond.

Alex Norris:

[\[105522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he made of the level of access to lithium carbonate in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021 and beyond.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: Supplies of Priadel (lithium carbonate) are available.

Ensuring patients have access to the medicines they need is vital. We have established procedures to deal with medicine shortages if and when they arise.

The Department brought the discontinuation of Priadel to the attention of the Competition and Markets Authority, who have now opened an investigation.

Essential Pharma have taken the decision to reverse their discontinuation of Priadel tablets and continue to supply Priadel to patients across the United Kingdom, whilst we work to agree a fair and appropriate price for this medicine.

Officials continue to work closely with the supplier and wholesalers to maintain the availability of Priadel and alternative lithium carbonate brands to ensure supplies remain available for patients. We are aware that Essential Pharma have quotas in place with wholesalers to reduce the risk of stockpiling, but we have confirmed that ordering mechanisms are in place to ensure all prescriptions for Priadel can obtain supplies. We continue to communicate this information with the National Health Service.

We have also added lithium carbonate to the parallel export restriction list of 8 September 2020 to ensure supplies remain available for the UK.

■ Lung Diseases: Screening

Jim Shannon:

[\[106352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to assess the accuracy of spirometry breathing tests.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In order for spirometers to be placed on the market they need to meet the requirements of the EU Medical Devices Directive 93/42/EEC. This requires that their manufacturer will be assessed by a third party certification body (Notified Body) who will check that the metrology requirements for the devices, including their accuracy, have been met. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) does not perform this function itself.

Once on the market, manufacturers are responsible for the safety and performance of medical devices on the United Kingdom market. We would ask manufacturers to investigate if we became aware of any potential safety or performance issues. Safety issues or adverse incidents can be reported to the MHRA via their Yellow Card Scheme.

■ Medical Treatments: Innovation**Chris Green:** [\[107023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce an innovative medicines fund.

Jo Churchill:

We made a commitment to extend the successful Cancer Drugs Fund into a new Innovative Medicines Fund to fund the most advanced, life-saving treatments for conditions such as cancer or autoimmune disease and for children with other rare diseases.

Proposals for the fund are in development and we expect NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to lead an engagement exercise early next year.

■ Mental Health Services: Abuse**Fay Jones:** [\[102172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on the emotional abuse of clients by their therapists.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to a proportionate system of safeguards for the professionals who work in the health and care system. The Government considered introducing statutory regulation for counsellors and psychotherapists in 2012 but concluded that this was not proportionate to the risks to patients and the public, opting instead for a system of accredited voluntary registration by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) for health and social care.

The PSA currently accredits 10 voluntary registers relating to therapists which can be used by service users to choose a practitioner to meet their needs and be assured they are safe, trustworthy and competent to practise.

■ Obesity: Coronavirus**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[106217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department has on the effect of obesity on covid-19 outcomes; and what assessment he has made of recent trends in the level of obesity in England; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England published a report reviewing the evidence relating to COVID-19 and its association with obesity in July 2020. The review found an increased risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19 in people living with obesity or morbid obesity, it is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/excess-weight-and-covid-19-insights-from-new-evidence>

There are no data covering obesity trends during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously the Health Survey England found approximately a third of adults were classified as obese in surveys over the last 20 years, and before then (1993 – 2000) obesity levels had increased. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2018>

■ Orphan Drugs: Brexit

Chris Green:

[107024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will publish the criteria for determining orphan designation for medicines after the transition period; and whether he plans to consult with (a) patient groups, (b) industry and (c) other relevant stakeholders to help inform this criterion.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) published guidance on 1 October 2020 on how orphan designation for medicines will be managed after the transition period on our website.

The Department and MHRA have held a series of engagement sessions which were open to all our stakeholders to inform on how medicines will be regulated including such medicines after the end of the transition period.

■ Palliative Care

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[99511]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that clinically assisted hydration is available for dying patients in hospitals and care homes.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Guideline 'Care of dying adults in the last days of life', published in 2015, sets out recommendations for healthcare professionals caring for dying patients in all settings, including hospitals and care homes. This includes recommends that adults in the last days of life should have their hydration needs assessed daily and be provided with clinically assisted hydration, in line with their wishes and their safety and needs. The guidance is available at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng31

■ Patients: Personal Records**Richard Fuller:** [\[106950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, what proportion of patients identified to have suffered the effects of the prescribed drug primodos reported that their medical records between the years 1958 and 1978 have gone missing, what assessment he has made of the difficulties presented to patients as a result of those missing records; and what investigations his Department has undertaken in respect of those missing records.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department is aware that some patients who took Primodos between the years of 1958 and 1978 have stated that their medical records are incomplete or missing. However, the Department does not hold data on what proportion of patients who allege they have suffered adverse effects as a result of taking of the prescribed drug Primodos have missing medical records. It should be noted that medical records are generally held by general practitioners and not centrally by the Department. The Department has made no assessment or investigation into the reports that patient medical records from the period between 1958 and 1978 are missing.

■ Physiotherapy: Musculoskeletal Disorders**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[105456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new First Contact Practitioners have been employed by GP practices since 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme in general practice requires physiotherapists to be qualified first contact practitioners. It has reimbursed the recruitment of first contact physiotherapists since 31 March 2019.

The latest data from National Workforce Reporting System administered by NHS Digital reported 69 physiotherapists working in general practice as of June 2020.

■ Pregnancy: Air Pollution**Geraint Davies:** [\[91566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of increased congestion since the easing of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the health of pregnant women and future newborns.

Helen Whately:

COVID-19 lockdown restrictions reduced exposure to some air pollutants in the short term for certain groups, however, long term exposure to air pollution levels can be harmful to everyone. Some people, including pregnant women, are more susceptible to health problems caused by air pollution. Public Health England (PHE) is not aware of any increase of congestion levels beyond those of pre-COVID-19 levels.

PHE continues to make the case for critical action to address air pollution so that people in England enjoy cleaner air and healthier lives, especially those who are most vulnerable such as pregnant women and children. Further information is available in the PHE Strategy 2020 to 2025, available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phe-strategy-2020-to-2025>

■ Rare Diseases: European Reference Networks

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[104699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress the Government has made with the European Commission on the UK's relationship with the European Reference Network for rare diseases after the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 October 2020]: Continued United Kingdom membership of the European Reference Networks beyond the end of 2020 remains subject to the outcome of negotiations with the European Commission. The European Reference Networks are not negotiated in isolation and instead form part of a complex set of interlinked policy issues that remain subject to ongoing negotiations with the European Union.

As part of the UK Strategy for Rare Diseases the Government has supported world-leading experts in rare diseases through clinical services and research. We remain committed to improving the diagnosis and treatment of rare disease patients through the new UK Rare Disease Framework, set to be published by the end of 2020, and the Genome UK strategy. Additionally, UK clinicians across all four nations have been asked to advise the Government on which elements should be retained if future participation in the ERNs is not agreed.

■ Rare Diseases: Medical Treatments

Bob Blackman:

[106326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to consult with rare disease patient groups throughout the UK to ensure that the proposed Innovative Medicines Fund is able to support access to innovative medicines for rare diseases.

Jo Churchill:

Proposals for the Innovative Medicines Fund are in development and we expect NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to lead an engagement exercise early next year.

The engagement exercise will involve the pharmaceutical industry, the National Health Service and associated bodies and patient groups, including those with rare diseases.

■ Respiratory System: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[101970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of people that develop (a) asthma and (b) other respiratory conditions as a result of poor air quality.

Jo Churchill:

In 2018 Public Health England published an estimation of the potential health burden and costs to the National Health Service and social care system arising due to diseases related fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). These include three respiratory diseases, i.e. asthma, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The report is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-a-tool-to-estimate-healthcare-costs>

■ Stem Cells: Donors

Colleen Fletcher:

[90146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage (a) men aged 16 to 30 years and (b) people from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds to sign up to the stem cell donor register.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: Since 2011 the Department has provided over £26.8 million in financial support to NHS Blood and Transplant and Anthony Nolan to enable the establishment of a unified United Kingdom Stem Cell Registry and improve access to, and outcomes of, stem cell donation.

This includes improving equity of access to unrelated donor stem cell transplantation for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) patients through targeted recruitment to the UK Stem Cell Registry. Current funding includes very specific stipulations about the numbers of newly registered bone marrow donors, and the proportion of umbilical cords stored in the UK Cord Blood Bank that must be from BAME backgrounds (35-40%). The funding also has specific targets about the proportion of young donors, specifically young male donors, due to research identifying that younger donors offer the potential for better patient outcomes and a greater chance of survival.

There are now 1.9 million donors on the UK's aligned stem cell registry, with 13% of donors from BAME backgrounds. 15% of donors recruited to the registry between 2019-20 were men aged 16-30.

■ Urinary Tract Infections

Jim Shannon:

[91752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides to people with an urology condition.

Jim Shannon:

[\[91753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure good standards of urology care in the NHS.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have established the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project to improve continence care across the whole public health and care system. It has also published 'Excellence in Continence Care' a practical guide for leaders and commissioners.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published 'Transforming elective care services Urology' a handbook that describes what local health and care systems can do to improve urology elective care services and ensure that patients receive appropriate care.

HOME OFFICE

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Tracy Brabin:

[\[109542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent an increase in anti-social behaviour.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour.

The powers in the 2014 Act are local in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the specific circumstances as they are best-placed to understand the needs of their community and the most appropriate response. The Home Office published statutory guidance to support local areas to make effective use of the powers.

It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to individual crimes and local priorities but to help ensure that the police have the resources they need to do so, we have given policing the biggest funding increase in a decade and are recruiting 20,000 additional officers over the next three years.

As well as regular engagement with ASB partners, we keep anti-social behaviour under review through the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Board which brings together a range of partners and representatives from key agencies and other Government departments.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Peter Kyle:

[\[109508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105467, how many times the COVID-19 Vulnerable Children's Hub has met since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

Supporting vulnerable children and young people, in light of COVID-19, continues to be a cross-government priority. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Home Office's Vulnerable Children Hub was quickly created at the end of March. The Hub provided a forum for cross Home Office policy making across multiple risk areas and provided a wider, cross government forum for engagement in which we developed and implemented cross cutting social policy at pace. From the period of March to early July the Hub met on a weekly or fortnightly basis during which time its work supplemented Cabinet Office led work to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing bilateral engagements between senior officials and Ministers.

The Hub also supplemented the wider Department for Education led Government response to COVID-19 for vulnerable children and has now been formally succeeded by DfE led governance structures. As part of this governance, policy officials from across government meet fortnightly to discuss key operational issues and risks in relation to vulnerable children and young people including school attendance and attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing. A Vulnerable Children and Young People Programme Board continues to meet monthly, with senior officials across several government departments in attendance to plan, track, review and challenge activity to support children and young people in response to COVID-189. A National Board also meets regularly which brings together education and care system leaders to support the development of a consistent, cross-system approach, and to better understand challenges facing children. Children's charity CEOs are also regularly consulted by this Board.

Throughout the response to COVID-19 we undertook and continue to undertake numerous bilateral discussions with OGDs to discuss relevant policy areas to ensure we maintain collaboration and drive forward action to safeguard vulnerable children.

■ Detection Rates

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[109396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of unsolved crime in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the investigative outcomes of crimes, including those that are still under investigation, on a quarterly basis. The data is available for England and for Police Force Area level and the most recently published data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

The Home Office does not collect outcome data at lower levels of geography, such as local authority.

■ English Language: Education

Drew Hendry:

[109478]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of adding the details of which English language testing centres are operational to her Department's webpage entitled UK Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office will update the published list of approved English Language test centres (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt>) to include reference to which centres are currently operational and which are temporarily closed due to Covid-19 related issues.

It will also update the webpage giving advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>) to include a link to the update list of test centres.

■ Immigration: Artificial Intelligence

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[109678]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102174, what decision-making algorithms her Department uses in applications for processing indefinite leave to remain applications.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[109679]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant of the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102174, what decision-making algorithms her Department uses in applications for processing EU settled status applications.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[109680]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102174, what decision-making algorithms her Department uses in applications for processing Tier 2 visa applications.

Kevin Foster:

There are no decision-making algorithms used in the processing of Indefinite Leave to Remain, EU Settled Status and Tier 2 visa applications. Every application is assessed by a decision-maker against the Immigration Rules, on its individual merits and taking into consideration the evidence provided by the applicant and any other relevant factors at the date of the decision

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Paul Blomfield: [\[106981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under what legislation EU nationals in the UK have the right to maintain the same level of access to benefit payments as comparable UK nationals after the end of the transition period.

Paul Blomfield: [\[106982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to allow EU nationals with limited leave to remain in the UK and who are accessing public funds to gain pre-settled status without losing their access to public funds.

Paul Blomfield: [\[106983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to allow EU nationals with discretionary leave to remain in the UK to gain pre-settled status without losing their access to public funds.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has protected the rights of EEA citizens, and their family members, resident in the UK by 31 December 2020 through the enactment of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 and the establishment of the EU Settlement Scheme under Appendix EU to the Immigration Rules. The scheme provides a simple means for those who are eligible to secure their immigration status in UK law.

Those who obtain pre-settled status or settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme are able to access benefits and services in the UK on the same basis as currently applies under free movement rules. Where a person already holds another form of limited leave to enter or remain that allows recourse to public funds, for example discretionary leave, the Immigration Rules (HC 813) make provision for a late application to the scheme. Such an application must be made before the expiry of that leave unless there are reasonable grounds for failure to do so.

Parliament has approved the Citizens' Rights (Application Deadline and Temporary Protection) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020. These regulations protect existing relevant EU law rights for those EEA citizens and their family members who are lawfully resident in the UK at the end of the transition period but who have yet to obtain status under the EU Settlement Scheme, until the final determination of an application to the scheme made by the deadline of 30 June 2021. This ensures there is no change to their current rights while they make their application. Regulations to be made under clause 4 of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill, subject to its enactment, will contain provisions to ensure those with pre-settled status are treated in the same way after the end of the transition period as they are now for the purposes of accessing benefits and services.

■ NHS: Migrant Workers

Drew Hendry:

[\[109482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of further (a) visa extensions and (b) reduced visa costs for NHS workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The Government recognises the vital contribution which overseas NHS, health and social care workers have made and continue to make in fighting the pandemic. That is why we automatically extended the visas of thousands of health professionals who had visas expiring between 31 March and 1 October, free of any charges.

On 4 August, the Government also introduced the Health and Care visa. Those who are eligible can expect a decision within three weeks of enrolling their biometrics. They, and their dependants, also pay significantly reduced visa fees and are exempt from having to pay the Immigration Health Charge.

Those who are not eligible for the Health and Care Visa may still benefit from the Department for Health and Social Care's (DHSC) reimbursement scheme which was launched on 1 October.

We are keeping all measures under review and continuing to work closely with the DHSC to ensure individuals working in the health and care sector are supported fully.

■ Police: Recruitment

Tracy Brabin:

[\[109540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers have been recruited in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England since the 2019 General Election.

Kit Malthouse:

We are increasing the number of police officers by 20,000 over the next three years.

On 29 October, we were pleased to announce that 5,824 additional officers have been recruited across England and Wales as part of the Police Uplift Programme since it started in October 2019, and a further 589 additional officers have been recruited through other means. Latest figures show that the total number of police officers recruited between November 2019 to September 2020 in England alone is 12,197.

West Yorkshire Police has recruited 308 additional officers as part of the Police Uplift Programme and I am extremely grateful to those brave men and women who have signed up to join the police and keep our communities safe.

The latest "Police officer uplift" statistics published on 29 October can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-september-2020>

■ Police: West Yorkshire**Tracy Brabin:****[109541]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers there were in West Yorkshire in (a) 2010 and (b) as at 30 October 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

We are committed to increasing the number of police officers by 20,000 over the next three years, and West Yorkshire Police has already recruited 308 additional officers as part of the Police Uplift Programme. I am extremely grateful to those brave men and women who have signed up to join the police and keep our communities safe.

In March 2010, West Yorkshire Police had 5,856 police officers (headcount). The most recent figures (up to September 2020) shows the force had 5,494 officers.

The latest "Police officer uplift" statistics published on 29 October can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-september-2020>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Steve Reed:****[109375]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities subject to Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level restrictions are able to balance their budgets in financial year 2020-21.

Luke Hall:

Government has provided £6.4 billion directly to councils to help them support their communities in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and is now providing additional funding to support the recent announcement of additional national restrictions. The Government has also introduced a co-payment scheme, designed to help local authorities recoup some of the irrecoverable losses in sales, fees and charges income in 2020/21.

We recognise that even with the considerable support already provided, there will be individual authorities with either unique circumstances or residual issues resulting in unmanageable pressures. We will continue to work with local government to ensure they are managing as the pandemic progresses and that we have a collective understanding of the costs they are facing. We would ask that any local authority who is concerned about their financial position, or ability to set a balanced budget, should approach MHCLG for discussion.

■ Coronavirus: Liverpool City Region

Bill Esterson:

[\[109315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the criteria used for the latest allocation of covid-19 funding to councils in the Liverpool City Region.

Luke Hall:

As with the previous funding COVID-19 local authority funding package announced in July, we have used the new COVID-19 Relative Needs Formula, together with an area cost adjustment, to determine funding allocations to councils in England. This means the distribution accounts for population and deprivation, as well as the varying cost of delivering services across the country. Finally, we have taken account of the funding local authorities have already received relative to their assessed needs and applied a minimum funding floor of £100,000 to each local authority – recognising that all local areas are facing pressures especially as we head into winter. This approach ensures the funds are distributed in a way that balances the need to support all areas of our country, whilst maximising efficiency and targeting resources where they are most needed

With national restrictions replacing local ones on Thursday 5 November, Government has confirmed further support for local authorities through the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, the Additional Restrictions Grant, Business Grants for closed businesses, together with backdated cash grants for businesses in Local Alert Level 2 and 3 areas and additional funding for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

Bill Esterson:

[\[109316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that councils in the Liverpool City Region receive additional funding allocations to offset the shortfalls in funding caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

On Monday 12 October, the Prime Minister confirmed around £1 billion of new funding will be made available to councils across England, with over £900 million of this funding provided to councils for their ongoing work to support communities during the pandemic. Further details of the package were announced on Thursday 22 October. This brings the total funding given directly to councils during the pandemic to £6.4 billion. For Liverpool City Region this includes £59.6 million in un-ringfenced funding, £9 million from the Infection Control Fund and £4.1 million to support Test and Trace. Councils can also separately claim funding through a compensation scheme for lost income from sales, fees and charges. With national restrictions replacing local ones on Thursday 5 November, Government has confirmed further support for local authorities through the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, the Additional Restrictions Grant, Business Grants for closed businesses, together with backdated cash grants for businesses in Local Alert Level 2 and 3 areas and additional funding for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

■ Emergency Services: Planning

Daisy Cooper:

[\[109693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to bring forward legislative proposals for including emergency service provision as essential community infrastructure, on the same footing as health and education, as part of his proposed new planning legislation.

Christopher Pincher:

Our consultation on the planning reforms proposed in the white paper 'Planning for the Future' closed on 29 October. We are now analysing responses and will publish our conclusions and intentions in due course.

■ Landlords

Apsana Begum:

[\[109705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to increase sanctions for rogue landlords.

Christopher Pincher:

Through the Housing and Planning Act 2016 we have already introduced strong enforcement powers for local authorities to tackle rogue landlords. These include the introduction of civil penalties of up to £30,000 and banning orders for use against the worst and most persistent offenders. We have also extended rent repayment orders which require a landlord to repay rent when they have not complied with the law.

In addition, my Department has also created the database of rogue landlords and property agents and, as part of the Renters' Reform Bill, we have committed to widening access to the database to empower tenants to make more informed choices

Since 2019 we have awarded over £6 million in grant funding to local authorities to boost their enforcement work, fostering innovative approaches and sharing best practice to tackle the minority of landlords who deliberately flout the law.

■ Local Plans

Theresa Villiers:

[\[109206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Planning for the Future White Paper published in August 2020, what procedure he proposes will be used to enable local communities to scrutinise individual development proposals in each of the proposed Growth, Renewal and Protected zones after a local plan is in place.

Christopher Pincher:

We have consulted on these proposals and have welcomed responses from all interested parties. It is important that we analyse the consultation feedback thoroughly, and we will respond formally in due course.

Effective community engagement would be at the heart of changes which we have proposed. Input at the stage of preparing plans and design codes would ensure real influence over both the location and design of development. Communities would continue to have a say where the details of proposals are being applied for, and where planning permission continues to be required.

■ **Night Shelters: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle:

[109384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled Covid-19: provision of night shelters, whether communal shelters for homeless people will be able to open in winter 2020-21.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We have worked extensively with Public Health England to provide Operating Principles for the sector to help them open shelters as safely as possible where necessary, when self-contained accommodation can't be made available and when local partners agree that it is the right thing to do

On 13 October, we announced further funding which will give local areas the tools they need to support vulnerable rough sleepers this winter. This includes a £10 million Cold Weather Fund for local areas to bring forward self-contained and COVID secure accommodation this winter and £2 million funding for the faith, communities and voluntary sector to transform their traditional rough sleeping services into self-contained and COVID secure accommodation.

Neil Coyle:

[109385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what type of accommodation for homeless people will meet the threshold for safety set out in his Department's guidance entitled Covid-19: provision of night shelters.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We have worked extensively with Public Health England (PHE) to provide Operating Principles for the sector to help them open shelters as safely as possible where necessary, when self-contained accommodation cannot be made available and when local partners agree that it is the right thing to do.

The type of accommodation to which these principles refer is clearly set out within the guidance, this can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters>.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Standards**

Apsana Begum:

[109706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to increase the use of rent repayment orders to compensate tenants in the event that they are found to be living in sub-standard properties.

Christopher Pincher:

Local authorities enforce standards in privately rented homes. If they identify health and safety hazards or poor conditions, they have strong powers to oblige landlords to remedy these. This includes powers to seek rent repayment orders for up to 12 months rent for legal breaches, including letting out substandard properties.

Rent repayment orders were extended through the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to cover a wide range of offences. If a local housing authority becomes aware that a landlord has been convicted of any of these offences, it must consider applying for a rent repayment order. Tenants are also able to submit a claim for a rent repayment order directly to the First-tier Tribunal.

Local housing authorities are required to develop and document their own policy on when to prosecute and when to apply for a rent repayment order and should decide each case independently. I have no plans to change this system.

■ Respite Care: Finance**Tim Loughton:**[\[109131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities are able to fund and deliver short respite breaks for disabled children and their families.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise the pressures that the pandemic has placed on local authority finances, and are monitoring this closely through monthly financial returns. We are providing local authorities with an unprecedented package of support, including £4.6 billion of unringfenced grants. Local councils can use this funding to respond to pressures in their local area, including for respite services for disabled children and their families.

■ Service Charges: Greater London**Apsana Begum:**[\[109710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the the effect of landlord practices in (a) calculation, (b) charging and (c) administering service charges on leaseholders in (a) Poplar and Limehouse constituency and (b) London.

Apsana Begum:[\[109713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of recent trends in (a) disputes over service charges, (b) how service charges are challenged and (c) how disputes are resolved.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government believes very strongly that service charges should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. The law is clear that service charges must be reasonable

and, where costs relate to work or services, the work or services must be of a reasonable standard. Disputes may be resolved informally between leaseholders and the freeholder, or leaseholders may make an application to the First-tier Tribunal to make a determination on the reasonableness of their service charges. There are two service charge codes of practice approved by the Secretary of State for the residential leasehold sector and private retirement housing published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Association of Retirement Housing Managers, which can be taken into account at court or tribunal proceedings where relevant. The department does not hold information about service charge calculation and administration in Poplar and Limehouse or London, nor trends in disputes over service charges, how they are challenged or resolved. Service charges are the most common subject for enquiries to the Leasehold Advisory Service. Free initial advice regarding service charges as well as other leasehold matters may be obtained via the Leasehold Advisory Service, the specialist advisory body funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide assistance to leaseholders. The Government established an independent working group, chaired by Lord Best, to raise standards across the property sector, which also considered how fees such as service charges should be presented to consumers. The working group published its final report to Government (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations and will announce next steps in due course.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle:

[109386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the application process for the Cold Weather Fund will open; and when organisations will be informed about the allocation of that funding.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government recently announced a new £10 million Cold Weather Fund to support councils in helping rough sleepers off the streets during the winter by assisting them in providing more self-contained accommodation.

This is alongside an additional £2 million for faith and community groups to help them provide secure accommodation for rough sleepers, and comprehensive guidance to the sector, produced with Public Health England, Homeless Link and Housing Justice to help shelters open more safely, where not doing so would endanger lives.

We will be setting out how local authorities can access the Cold Weather Fund shortly.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Bill Esterson: [\[109317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the economic modelling of the comparison between the EU-Japan trade agreement and the UK-Japan trade agreement.

Greg Hands:

The economic modelling in our impact assessment compares the impact of the agreement against a baseline where the UK does not have an agreement with Japan. This is the most appropriate baseline to compare impacts against because, without this agreement, at the end of the transition period the UK and Japan would revert to a trading relationship without a trade agreement. The Parliamentary Report sets out changes in the agreement from the EU-Japan trade agreement to the UK-Japan agreement and a description of their expected impacts.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Coronavirus

Alex Norris: [R] [\[109586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will provide a regional breakdown of (a) existing and (b) planned Nightingale Courts.

Chris Philp:

Nightingale courts are one of the ways in which we are ensuring we have additional capacity to alleviate the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic. The regional breakdown of the 16 operational Nightingale courts is as follows.

HMCTS REGION	OPERATIONAL NIGHTINGALE COURTS
London	Ministry of Justice - 102 Petty France, Prospero House
Midlands	Former Telford County Court
North East	Cloth Hall Court, Leeds, Middlesbrough Town Hall, York Hilton, Middlesbrough Jurys Inn
North West	Chester Town Hall, Former Fleetwood Magistrates' Court, Liverpool, St George's Hall, Salford Lowry Theatre
South East	East Pallant House, Knight's Chamber, Peterborough Cathedral

HMCTS REGION	OPERATIONAL NIGHTINGALE COURTS
South West	Bristol Law Society, Winchester, The Guildhall
Wales	Swansea Civic Centre

We are considering a number of locations for future Nightingale courts, but no final decisions have been made.

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

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Rosie Duffield: [\[109560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans his Department has to address the backlog of urgent possession court cases caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Overall Arrangements produced by the judicial-led working party set up by the Master of the Rolls details measures that will assist with managing the incoming volume of possession cases and provide access to justice for all parties while protecting the most vulnerable.

These arrangements include improvement in the signposting and guidance for landlords and tenants, the introduction of a review process to allow early engagement between parties and provisions for possession hearings to take place in a safe way.

In addition a scheme of prioritisation to assist judges with identifying the most urgent cases has been introduced. The listing of cases is a judicial function and prioritisation is a tool available to the judiciary when case managing possession matters.

Rosie Duffield: [\[109561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many urgent possession court cases have been delayed by the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The requested information is not held. Management Information collected in possession proceedings, including information relating to adjournments, does not detail any urgent marking.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[109522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) cases of covid-19 and (b) covid-19 related deaths there have been in each prison in England and Wales as of 23 October 2020; and if he will publish that data on a weekly basis.

Lucy Frazer:

Verified data on the number of prisoners that have tested positive for COVID-19 and the number of prisoner deaths is published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for the period up to the 30 September 2020, via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-covid-19-statistics-september-2020>.

Published data for the total number of covid-19 cases and covid-19 related deaths for prisons in England and Wales will be updated on 13 November 2020 with data to 31 October 2020. We are currently considering options regarding the weekly publishing of this information and the providing of details by individual prisons.

Closed settings such as prisons pose particular challenges in managing outbreaks, but we have implemented strong measures to mitigate this risk, guided by public health advice, and with the safety of those staff working in all our establishments and prisoners remaining the absolute priority.

We have begun introducing a testing regime for staff and prisoners across all prisons in England and Wales to help identify and isolate cases early and control the spread of coronavirus. Routine staff testing will also be rolled out from November for both directly employed and non-directly employed staff who work with prisoners on a weekly basis. Reception and transfer testing for prisoners is now in place in seven prisons in England and two in Wales. Further sites are expected to begin testing over the coming weeks with a focus on reception prisons first.

Testing is one of the many mitigations methods that have been introduced to manage the spread of infection. This sits alongside the face mask strategy for staff, compartmentalisation, additional single-cell accommodation and the social distancing measures. All of these measures collectively contribute to preventing the spread of coronavirus and protect staff, residents and the public and it is important to continue to follow all of the guidelines in place.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Anniversaries: Northern Ireland****Robin Millar:****[908116]**

What steps his Department is taking to mark the 100 year anniversary of Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government is committed to facilitating national recognition and international awareness of this important national anniversary.

The centenary will be an opportunity to reflect on this moment of profound significance in the history of the United Kingdom, in a way that includes diverse perspectives and facilitates respectful discussion.

It will also offer a platform to showcase what is best about Northern Ireland around the world. The programme of centenary events being developed will therefore

celebrate Northern Ireland's people, business, culture, arts, and young talent, looking forward to a positive future.

■ **Armed Forces and Police: Northern Ireland**

Mrs Sheryll Murray:

[\[908124\]](#)

What steps his Department plans to take to help tackle vexatious claims made against (a) armed forces and (b) police personnel in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has been clear that it will introduce legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of re-investigations that has failed victims, veterans and police personnel alike.

We remain committed to engaging with partners from all communities and making progress on this important issue as quickly as possible.

■ **Hospitality Industry and Tourism: Northern Ireland**

Cherilyn Mackrory:

[\[908123\]](#)

What support the Government is providing to the tourism and hospitality sectors in Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

The tourism and hospitality sectors have benefited from UK-wide Government financial support. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended for a further one month until December.

In addition, a VAT cut to 5% has been extended for both sectors.

While the Government will take every opportunity to promote Northern Ireland, tourism is the responsibility of the NI Executive, to whom the Government has provided £2.4bn to respond to the pandemic, including supporting those sectors most affected.

■ **Job Support Scheme: Northern Ireland**

Christine Jardine:

[\[908134\]](#)

What funding the Government plans to make available to businesses in Northern Ireland to help with the transition from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to the Job Support Scheme.

Mr Robin Walker:

This Government has introduced some of the most generous support schemes in the world, to support people and businesses in Northern Ireland, as they navigate the difficulties posed by COVID-19.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was due to end on 1 November but will be extended for a further one month until December. The Job Support Scheme (JSS) will be available to support businesses and their staff when the CJRS ends.

CJRS and JSS are part of the comprehensive package of support that the Government has provided to support the economy at this time. In Northern Ireland, this has included an additional £2.4bn funding for the Executive. Advice and support for businesses is available on gov.uk/coronavirus, or alternatively via the business support helpline.

■ **Terrorism: Northern Ireland**

Louise Haigh:

[\[109487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many legacy cases from the Troubles in Northern Ireland are (a) before the courts and (b) due to be brought to court in the next 12 months; and how many of those cases involve the prosecution of present or former (i) service personnel, (ii) police or other security forces, (iii) republican terrorists and (iv) loyalist terrorists.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government does not hold figures on prosecutorial decisions as this is a matter for the prosecuting authorities, in this case the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland that acts independently of Government.

■ **United Kingdom Internal Market Bill: Northern Ireland**

Marion Fellows:

[\[908114\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effect of the UK Internal Market Bill on Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Internal Market Bill is economically important for Northern Ireland. It ensures direct trade from Northern Ireland to Great Britain will continue as it does now, delivering this Government's clear commitment to provide for unfettered access in legislation.

But the Bill's significance is not just economic. The Government is taking powers in reserve to create a legal safety net that guard against the harmful legal defaults in the Protocol, in the event that agreement with the EU is not reached in Joint Committee discussions.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland speaks frequently with Cabinet colleagues on a range of matters including these points.

PRIME MINISTER

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[109425\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether (a) he, (b) officials in his office and (c) political advisors in his office have briefed members of the press with the name of the (i) law firm

and (ii) lawyer that represents individuals the Home Office is attempting to remove under the Dublin III regulations in the last six months.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer my Hon Friend the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts gave him on the 29 October 2020, UIN 102849.

TRANSPORT

■ **Cycling: Easington**

Grahame Morris:

[\[109299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve cycling infrastructure and investment in Easington constituency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is investing £2 billion in cycling and walking schemes this parliament, supported by a new long term vision to deliver better streets for cycling published in July.

£2.2 million was allocated to the North East Joint Transport Committee area in June from tranche 1 of the Active Travel Fund. Tranche 2 allocations will be announced shortly. Decisions on allocating the remaining funding this parliament will be confirmed in due course.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Data Protection**

Steve McCabe:

[\[109153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect the General Data Protection Regulation has had on the ability of the DVLA to sell data to third parties.

Steve McCabe:

[\[109154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA is permitted to release data to private parking companies.

Steve McCabe:

[\[109155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether individuals are informed when the DVLA has passed on their data to a third party.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has robust processes in place to ensure compliance with the rules governing the processing of personal data included in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The implementation of the GDPR required no specific changes to the robust controls already operated by the DVLA in relation to the lawful sharing of data with authorised third parties. The law allows vehicle keeper details to be disclosed to third parties, including private parking companies, who can demonstrate that they have a

reasonable cause to receive it, and any charges levied are to cover costs of processing requests.

The DVLA's privacy policy is available online at: www.gov.uk/dvla/privacy-policy and provides data subjects with detailed information on who the DVLA shares information with, rather than contacting individuals whenever information is shared. Relevant information is also included in forms and leaflets and on the DVLA's online services.

■ **Driving Instruction: Qualifications**

Stuart C McDonald: [\[109424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the two year period, from date of completion of part 1, in which a candidate can complete parts 2 and 3 of the Approved Driving Instructor certification.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of the approved driving instructor (ADI) qualification process is set in legislation and the Government has decided not to lay further legislation to extend it. This is to ensure a potential driving instructor's road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date to help them prepare for their remaining qualifying tests and deliver effective instruction once they have joined the ADI register.

■ **Electric Scooters: Young People**

Theresa Villiers: [\[109204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure young people using e-scooters are educated on using them safely and with appropriate regard to pedestrians.

Rachel Maclean:

In a number of local areas across the country, trials of rental e-scooters are underway. They will run for 12 months and the results will be closely scrutinised to inform future policy. In all trial areas, e-scooter rental operators provide digital training to users as well as in person training at events. E-scooter operators use geofencing technology to limit the speeds e-scooters can reach and the areas they can operate in. They also incentivise considerate parking of vehicles, for example, by rewarding users who utilise parking bay zones. In order to register to use a trial e-scooter, a form of driver licence is required, therefore, no one under 16 years of age is legally able to use a rental e-scooter.

■ **Public Transport: Antisocial Behaviour**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[109391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour on public transport.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime wherever it occurs in the transport system. The transport industry, local authorities, the police and others are already investing in and undertaking wide-ranging initiatives to improve the personal security of public transport passengers and staff and to keep our public transport systems as low crime environments.

Railways: Fares**Helen Hayes:**[\[109513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to introduce more flexible rail fares for commuters in (a) London and (b) England in response to an increase in remote and flexible working during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government recognises the change in travel patterns, the impact of COVID-19 and therefore the need to accommodate a more flexible style of working and travelling. We also understand concerns about the cost of some rail fares and the impact that this can have on people's budgets.

The Department has proactively approached the rail industry and is currently considering proposals received from train operators who both operate services into London and those who operate elsewhere in England, that try to ensure better value and convenience for travellers. Train operators who already offer some form of flexible ticketing for commuting into London include c2c, Chiltern Railways, Gatwick Express, Greater Anglia, South Western Railway, and Govia Thameslink. Commuting within London falls under the responsibility of the Mayor of London.

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

Taxis: Coronavirus**Gill Furniss:**[\[109525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support taxi drivers in (a) Tier 2 and (b) Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level areas.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has acted to support those that are self-employed and have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak across all sectors of the economy. The overwhelming majority of taxi and PHV drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Over the first three rounds of the scheme a total of up to £19,410 has been made available to those eligible. A further grant will cover a three-month period from the start of February 2021 until the end of April 2021. HMRC will review the level of the second grant and set this in due course.

Taxi and PHV drivers may also be eligible for Universal Credit, from 6 April the standard allowance available under the Universal Credit system was increased from

£317.82 to £409.89 a month. In addition, the Universal Credit calculation was amended, no longer using an assumed level of earnings (Minimum Income Floor) but actual earnings.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Julie Elliott: [\[109352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on travel companies; and what steps the Government is taking to help support the travel industry during the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

In response to the impact of and specific challenges posed by COVID-19 to international travel, the Prime Minister has asked the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Transport to establish the cross-government Global Travel Taskforce, to consider further how government can support the sector to meet these challenges.

The travel sector is crucial to the UK's economy. The Chancellor has put in place unprecedented support package to help businesses to manage the challenges they are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Prime Minister announced on the 31 October, that people and businesses across the UK will be provided with additional financial support as part of the Government's plan for the next phase of its response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) will remain open until December, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500. Under the extended scheme, the cost for employers of retaining workers will be reduced compared to the current scheme, which ended on the 31 October. This means the extended furlough scheme is more generous for employers than it was in October.

Sarah Owen: [\[109699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the criteria are for the establishment of a covid-19 travel corridor.

Robert Courts:

Decisions on International Travel Corridors are currently informed by risk assessments provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), working closely with Public Health England (PHE), using methodology endorsed by the four Chief Medical Officers (CMO) of the UK.

JBC and PHE monitor over 250 countries, territories and islands daily to inform these risk assessments. Factors taken into consideration include:

- An estimate of the proportion of the population that is currently infected (this is known as 'point prevalence');

- Weekly case incidence rate taking into account population size of the country, territory or island;
- Trends in incidence, deaths, hospitalisations and intensive care admissions;
- Information on laboratory capacity, testing and contact tracing strategies, and test positivity rates;
- COVID-19 cases detected in the UK following travel to the country, territory or island ('imported infections');
- Qualitative information related to the reliability of reported data and the maturity of public health systems;
- Public health measures in place and the enforcement of, and adherence to, those measures.

TREASURY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Drew Hendry:

[\[109480\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of compensating firms ineligible for support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme who have maintained the salaries of employees.

Jesse Norman:

Those businesses not eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme may have access to other elements of the Government's package of financial support.

Support for businesses has reached millions of firms, paying out over £70bn in loans and grants. This includes through the Small Business Grant Fund, business rates holidays, the Bounce Back Loans Scheme, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, tax deferrals for VAT and Self-Assessment, preventing commercial tenants from being evicted, the Statutory Sick Pay Rebate Scheme, and the Future Fund.

HM Treasury and HMRC are undertaking an evaluation that will assess the delivery of the CJRS and the Job Retention Bonus. The Government will publish the CJRS Evaluation Strategy by December 2020, and the CJRS Evaluation Report by the end of 2021.

■ Business: Insurance

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[109729\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that insurers settle claims as swiftly as possible for businesses now assessed as qualifying for business interruption insurance coverage as a result of the outcome of the recent Financial Conduct Authority test case on that matter.

John Glen:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector regarding its response to this unprecedented situation.

The Financial Conduct Authority rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly and in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

On 15 September, the High Court published its judgment on the FCA court case for a selected number of key issues, to resolve uncertainty for many customers making business interruption claims. The FCA has published guidance for firms in response to the High Court's judgment setting out their expectation that firms should apply the judgment of the court in re-assessing all outstanding or rejected claims and complaints which may have been impacted by the test case, with the exception of cases that have been referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

On 2 November, the Supreme Court granted permission for the FCA and insurers to appeal if it is not possible to resolve the outstanding issues in the coming weeks. The hearing is scheduled to take place from 16 November. The FCA and insurers had agreed that they would seek to have any appeal heard on an expedited basis, given the importance of providing legal clarity to policyholders as soon as possible.

Where a claim has been assessed as qualifying for business interruption insurance cover, it is the Government's expectation that insurers should work to issue payments promptly. The Government continues to monitor the situation closely.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[109732\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to help representatives of care homes to work with representatives of the insurance industry to resolve difficulties caused by rising insurance premiums since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government appreciates this is a challenging time for the care home sector, and for residents and their loved ones. The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector regarding its response to this unprecedented situation, and is encouraging insurers to do all they can to support customers during this difficult period.

Insurers take commercial decisions regarding the products they offer and risks they cover based on their view of the likelihood of a risk occurring. However, different insurers may take a different view, and customers are encouraged to shop around to seek the most suitable cover at the best price.

The Government is committed to ensuring consumers have access to a range of financial products that suit their needs and is keeping this situation under review.

■ Childminding: Coronavirus

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[109207\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department will provide for childminders who did not qualify for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is providing extra security to nurseries and childminders that are open by 'block-buying' childcare places for the rest of 2020 at the level the Government would have funded before coronavirus, regardless of how many children are attending.

This means that even if providers are open but caring for fewer children, as a result of low demand from parents or due to public health reasons, they can continue to be funded for the autumn term at broadly the levels they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus outbreak. This gives another term of secure income to nurseries and childminders that are open for children who need them.

Early years settings will continue to benefit from £3.6 billion of planned funding in 2020-21 to create free early education and childcare places for children.

The SEISS is one element of a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19.

■ Customs Intermediaries

Hywel Williams:

[\[109185\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many customs intermediaries are employed in the UK as of November 2020; how many customs intermediaries he estimates will be employed by January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not employ customs agents/customs intermediaries directly.

The sector is varied and made up of a number of different business models including specific customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators; all of which will require varied numbers of staff. Many in the sector have innovated and brought in significant IT solutions which have reduced the numbers of staff they require.

The Government has made available over £80 million to increase the capacity of the sector. The grants are flexible in order to reflect the diversity of the sector and cover IT, training and recruitment to support businesses to innovate and work within their own business model.

The Government continues to monitor progress carefully and keeps all support mechanisms under review.

■ **Customs Intermediaries: Recruitment**

Hywel Williams:

[\[109184\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) large companies, (b) SMEs and (c) micro businesses in recruiting customs brokers ahead of the end of the transition period.

Jesse Norman:

Most companies will not need to employ customs brokers directly. The Government expects that all but the largest of businesses will use the services of an intermediary to support them in completing customs declarations.

The Government is supporting the intermediary sector to expand to meet predicted demand at the end of the transition period making available over £80 million of support for IT, training and recruitment through the Customs Grant Scheme.

In addition, the Government is supporting the sector through measures including changing liability rules, allowing parcel operators to bulk consignments, and the staging-in of import declarations.

The Government continues to monitor progress carefully, keeping all support mechanisms under review.

■ **Debts**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[109392\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of trends in the regional spread of household debt in each of the last five years.

John Glen:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produce estimates of household debt in the UK. According to latest available data, median household non-mortgage debt between 2016 and 2018 was highest in London, the South East and the South West and was lowest in the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber and Scotland.

In the UK as a whole, household debt-to-income has fallen from 152% at the start of 2010 to 135% in Q2 2020. This remains significantly below its pre-financial crisis peak of 160% in Q1 2008.

■ **Females: Government Assistance**

Helen Hayes:

[\[109512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what monitoring the Government is undertaking of the effect on women of the (a) Kickstart Scheme, (b) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (c) Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

When designing the Kickstart Scheme, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme policies and subsequent reforms, the Government undertook an analysis of how the policies were likely to affect individuals sharing protected characteristics in line with its Public Sector Equality Duties, and in accordance with the internal procedural requirements and support in place for ensuring that equalities considerations inform decisions taken by ministers.

The Government will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout its implementation, and will continue to evaluate the longer term outcomes and impact for Kickstart participants after they have completed their six month job placements. Where feasible to do so, results will be disaggregated and reported to show outcomes and effects for different groups within the wider Kickstart population, including by gender. Evaluation results will be published in line with official protocols for Government social research and statistics.

HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are evaluating the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme evaluation strategy will be published by December 2020, and the findings of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme evaluation report will be published by the end of 2021.

■ Food: Wholesale Trade**Emma Hardy:**[\[109588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend Business Rates Relief to food and drink wholesalers in Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level areas.

Jesse Norman:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published guidance for local authorities on eligible properties. As set out in the guidance, support is targeted at premises that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues; for assembly and leisure; or as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation. It is for local authorities to determine eligibility for reliefs, having regard to guidance issued by the Government.

Local authorities which were subject to restrictions on indoor socialising between 1 August and 5 November will receive funding to allow them to make backdated grants to businesses which were able to remain open during that period, but were experiencing a severe reduction in demand due to these restrictions. Local authorities across England will also receive a total of £1.1bn to provide further business grants and other forms of business support to companies in their areas.

Emma Hardy:[\[109589\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the wholesale food and drink sector of including that sector in the Business Rates Relief scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published guidance for local authorities on eligible properties. As set out in the guidance, support is targeted at premises that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues; for assembly and leisure; or as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation. It is for local authorities to determine eligibility for reliefs, having regard to guidance issued by the Government.

A range of further measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for the business rates holiday, has also been made available.

Fuels: Excise Duties**Geraint Davies:**[\[109135\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page 19 of the Reforms to the tax treatment of red diesel and other rebated fuels: consultation, what steps his Department plans to take to assess the effect of those reforms on the prices of goods and services that households and voluntary organisations use.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor announced at Budget 2020 that the Government will remove the entitlement to use red diesel from April 2022, except in agriculture, fish farming, rail and for non-commercial heating (including domestic heating). The Government recognises that this will be a significant change for some businesses and launched a consultation in July to make sure it has not overlooked any exceptional reasons why other sectors should be allowed to continue to use red diesel beyond April 2022.

To assess the effect of these reforms on the prices of goods and services that households and voluntary organisations use or pay for over the long-term, the Government will draw on a range of relevant evidence. This includes information received from stakeholders as part of the consultation on sectors and organisations' current red diesel consumption and costs, their capacity to shift to alternatives to red diesel, and their capacity to pass through costs down the supply chain or absorb these extra costs.

Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[109559\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will waive the limit on Small Donations Scheme claims against regular documented gift aid claims.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has no plans to waive this limit - known as the matching rule - because it is vital to protect the integrity of the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme. The

scheme has substantially fewer record-keeping requirements than Gift Aid which would make it vulnerable to fraud should the matching rule be waived.

■ **Government Securities: Coronavirus**

Jane Stevenson:

[\[109668\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to use debt securities to finance the Government's response to the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The package of measures that this government has delivered over the past months, in order to provide the critical support needed by individuals, families and businesses facing disruption due to COVID-19, has led to a significant increase in the Government's financing requirement in the near term. As recently noted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UK authorities' aggressive policy response has been one of the best examples of coordinated action globally and has helped mitigate the damage, holding down unemployment and insolvencies.

As previously announced by the Chancellor, this additional financing will be fully funded via additional borrowing through the Government's normal debt management operations. This includes through the increased sale of Government bonds (gilts) via the Debt Management Office (DMO). The majority of the Government's debt is held in gilts.

On 16 July 2020, HM Treasury most recently revised the Debt Management Office's (DMO) financing remit for 2020-21, announcing that planned gilt sales will now total a minimum of £385bn in the period April to November (inclusive). The DMO is on target to raise this amount.

■ **Job Support Scheme**

Jamie Stone:

[\[109558\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether employers who submitted an annual Full Payment Submission between 6 April 2019 up to 11:59 pm 23 September 2020 are eligible for the Job Support Scheme; and for what reason the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme does not allow employers to claim from 6 April 2019.

Jesse Norman:

On 31 October 2020 the Prime Minister announced that the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was being extended, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

On 29 May 2020 the Government announced that employers would be able to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to furlough employees flexibly from 1 July 2020. In order to enable the introduction of flexible furloughing, it was necessary to close the old scheme. As part of the 29 May announcement, the Government made clear that employers would have until 31 July 2020 to submit claims which covered periods running up to 30 June 2020.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**Anne Marie Morris:** [\[109364\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the business rates holiday to the 2021-22 financial year.

Jesse Norman:

The Government will continue to look at how to adjust support in a way that ensures people can get back to work, protecting both the UK economy and the livelihoods of people across the country. The Government will consider all reliefs in the round, against the broader fiscal and economic impacts of COVID-19, as part of the Business Rates Review.

■ Protective Clothing: VAT**Justin Madders:** [\[109447\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the VAT zero rating for personal protective equipment will be extended past 31 October 2020.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[109597\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the financial security of businesses during the covid-19 outbreak of extending the zero VAT rate on the supply of personal protective equipment beyond 31 October 2020.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[109598\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the evidential basis was for the decision to choose 31 October 2020 as the expiry date for the zero VAT rate on personal protective equipment.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary zero rate of VAT on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was an extraordinary measure to help affected sectors (such as hospitals and care homes) during the initial shock of the COVID-19 pandemic and when the global supply of PPE did not meet demand.

This measure came to an end on 31 October (as legislated), as alternative measures introduced by the Government will ensure the supply of COVID-19 related PPE to affected sectors from November. This means the VAT relief is no longer required to ensure the supply of PPE is maintained and businesses that make VATable supplies can also recover any VAT they incur on the purchase of PPE as a business expense.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus**Gill Furniss:** [\[109526\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support breweries supplying pubs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level areas.

Stuart Anderson:

[\[109661\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support is available for small brewers experiencing financial hardship as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that breweries have been acutely disrupted by recent necessary restrictions to the hospitality businesses they supply. That is why the Government has extended the unprecedented package of support measures, to protect businesses and jobs. This includes:

- An extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 2 December
- Cash grants of up to £3,000 per month to help businesses that are closed with their costs, including paying their supply chains
- £1.1 billion of Discretionary Grant funding for local authorities to target support to the businesses that are most important to their local economy
- Plans to extend existing loan schemes to the end of January and an option to top-up Bounce Back Loans
- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England until the end of March, worth £10 billion in tax foregone.

Small breweries have and will continue to benefit directly from Government support schemes, and indirectly from the support offered to the pubs and restaurants they supply, protecting jobs in the industry. The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the sector and to work with businesses and representative groups to inform our efforts to support this sector.

■ Red Diesel

Geraint Davies:

[\[109134\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect on the zero-emission technology industry of the red diesel taxation reform Budget announcement made in March 2020.

Geraint Davies:

[\[109138\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward the planned reforms to red diesel taxation in the event that data shows that those reforms will accelerate the development of clean technology to tackle air pollution.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor announced at Budget 2020 that the Government will remove the entitlement to use red diesel from April 2022, except in agriculture, fish farming, rail and for non-commercial heating (including domestic heating). This change will ensure that most businesses using diesel in the UK pay the standard fuel duty rate on diesel, which more fairly reflects the harmful impact of the emissions they produce.

These reforms are also designed to ensure that the tax system incentivises users of diesel to improve the energy efficiency of their vehicles and machinery, invest in cleaner alternatives or use less fuel. The Government has previously received feedback from developers of alternative fuels and technologies that they view the low cost of running a diesel engine with red diesel as a barrier to entry for greener alternatives.

To support the development of alternative energy sources that businesses can switch to, the Chancellor committed at Budget 2020 to at least doubling the size of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's £500 million Energy Innovation Programme.

Recognising that this will be a significant change for some businesses, the Chancellor set out at Budget that businesses will have until April 2022 to prepare before any changes take effect. The Government launched a consultation in July on these tax changes and this has now closed. The Government will announce next steps in due course.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Gill Furniss:

[\[109527\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional support he is making available to (a) nightclub DJs and (b) other freelance workers in industries closed as a result of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

Following the implementation of further national restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus, the Government has announced additional economic measures to give individuals the flexibility to adjust and plan over the coming months. These include:

- An extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 2 December, allowing eligible employees to receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.
- The Government has announced more generous support to the self-employed, who will now receive 80% of average trading profits in November. As SEISS grants are calculated over 3 months, this increases the total level of the grant to 55% of trading profits for November to January and the maximum grant will increase to £5,160. We will also be paying this out more quickly by bringing forward the SEISS 3 claims window from 14 December to 30 November.
- An extension of existing government-backed loan schemes and Future Fund to the end of January and an ability to top-up Bounce Back Loans

These measures, on top of the £200 billion package of support we have committed since the beginning of the crisis, will ensure that freelancers, including night-club DJs, who temporarily cannot trade or have suffered reduced demand due to the pandemic are supported over the winter.

In order to support those individuals who are not eligible for the existing package of measures, the Government has also made the welfare system more generous - worth £9.3bn according to recent OBR estimates. This includes a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1bn increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[109675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme will cover financial support for the transitional periods (September and October 2020) between its first and second rounds of grant support.

Jesse Norman:

The Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grants provide a lump sum payment based on three months' worth of profits in order to support eligible self-employed individuals. The first SEISS grant was open for applications from 13 May until 13 July and the second was open for applications from 17 August until 19 October.

The Government has announced that it will provide further taxable grants through the SEISS Grant Extension. The third grant will cover 55% of average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of profits, and capped at £5,160 in total. This grant will be increased from the previously announced level of 40% of trading profits to 80% for November 2020. This therefore increases the total level of the grant from 40% to 55% of trading profits for 1 November 2020 to 31 January 2021. The fourth grant will cover a three-month period from 1 February 2021 until 30 April 2021. The Government will review the level of the fourth grant and set this in due course.

For those who require more support, the SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Martyn Day:

[\[109503\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of his decision for a one-year spending review on investment in maritime decarbonisation.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor and the Prime Minister have decided to conduct a one-year Spending Review in order to prioritise the response to Covid-19, and our focus on supporting jobs. Alongside this, the government continues to take its environmental

responsibilities very seriously, and is committed to meeting its climate change targets.

The government is considering how it can most effectively progress transport decarbonisation, including on maritime, through the Spending Review.

In 2019, the Department for Transport published the Clean Maritime Plan, which identified the potential for clean economic growth in the UK as a result of the transition to zero emission shipping.

■ Valuation Office Agency: Coronavirus

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[109258\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of adequacy of resources available to the Valuation Office Agency during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Treasury continues to provide the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) with the resources required successfully to deliver the valuations and property advice needed to support taxation and benefits. The VOA has received additional funding to deliver their operational activities including an extra £9m in 2018-19 and £25m in 2019-20, on top of its core budget and an additional £11.5m at Budget 2020 to modernise its IT systems.

The VOA has received a high increase in volumes with the check and challenge service as a consequence of COVID-19 which has put pressure on the service. These volumes are monitored actively and the VOA continues to flex resource to meet changing demand.

The Treasury works closely with the VOA and its sponsor department, HMRC, to understand the VOA's resource requirements and is considering the appropriate level of funding for the next financial year as part of the current Spending Round.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Catherine McKinnell: [\[109351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she will take to support disabled people who might be required to shield again as a result of covid-19 related local, regional or national public health restrictions.

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.

■ Employment: Hearing Impairment

Lilian Greenwood:

[109307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of people (a) with hearing loss, and (b) who list their primary medical condition as difficulty in hearing who were (i) in employment, (ii) economically inactive and (iii) unemployed in the last 12 months.

Justin Tomlinson:

The latest available statistics are for the year 2018/19. These show that of working age disabled people who self-reported difficulty with their hearing there were 38% (166,000) in employment and 62% (270,000) not in employment in the UK. Amongst those who reported difficulty with their hearing, 61% (42,000) were in employment and 39% (27,000) were not in employment who self-reported reported difficulty with their hearing as their main health condition.

These figures are shown in table 3.3 of 'The employment of disabled people 2019' official statistics publication which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2019>.

The next release of these statistics, covering 2019/20, is due in Spring 2021.

The not in employment category includes people who are unemployed and economically inactive. Reliable estimates for these two sub-categories are not possible due to small sample sizes.

Background

Source: Annual Population Survey, April 2018 to March 2019.

Notes:

- Reliable data on 'Difficulty with hearing' is only available using annual estimates due to sample sizes.
- Numbers shown are to the nearest 1,000 percentages to the nearest 1 per cent.
- Figures are for the working age population, comprised of people aged 16 to 64.
- Disability is defined according to the Government Statistical Service harmonised standard, in line with the Equality Act 2010 core definition.

■ Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit: Coronavirus

Jonathan Reynolds:

[109339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit remain unprocessed as a result of the suspension of medical assessments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

Our priority throughout this pandemic has been the health and safety of our customers and staff. This has meant that we have had to suspend face to face medical assessments for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefits, and the on-going

public health concerns means that it will not yet possible to restart face to face medical assessments.

There are currently 5,120 Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit claims outstanding as a result of the suspension of medical assessments. I can assure customers that no one will lose out on any entitlement to payments due to these delays. We have throughout continued to make decisions on claims from those customers who claiming under the Special Rules for Terminal Ill.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[109340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to lift the suspension on medical assessments for industrial injuries disablement benefit claimants that was imposed in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

We are not currently able to lift the suspension on medical assessments for the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) due to the nature of assessments. However, we are urgently exploring the feasibility of developing other assessment channels. Further, we will restart face to face assessments in a safe manner with adherence to the latest public health guidance as soon as we are able to.

However, for claimants with the most serious or terminal conditions, claims continue to be processed and decisions made as normal. Reassessment case awards have been extended to ensure that payments continue unhindered on those cases. Any deteriorations which would have meant an increase in award, will be backdated once face-to-face assessments recommence, to ensure no one is left out of pocket.

■ Jobcentres: Staff

Seema Malhotra:

[\[109370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent work coaches her Department employs; how many new work coaches were recruited in October 2020; and what the average caseload is for each full-time equivalent work coach.

Mims Davies:

The current number of Work Coaches employed is 15028 which includes 2194 recruited in October 2020. The average caseload for each full-time equivalent Work Coach is 280.25, this includes the light touch cases where some of the customers are already in work. However, the average caseload where the customer is on an intensive work search programme is just over 180.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Seema Malhotra:

[\[109369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobs are available for young people to apply for under the Kickstart Scheme; and what management data her Department holds on that scheme.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to my answer to question 107629, answered on 2 November 2020.

■ National Insurance: Coronavirus**Alyn Smith:**[\[109656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress the Government has made on implementing a digital solution to the process of issuing National Insurance numbers.

Mims Davies:

We started testing a partial digital solution, on a small scale, in mid-October, to support the issuing of National Insurance Numbers, which is still ongoing. This solution enables collection of the applicant's data, but not the online verification of their identity.

■ Pension Credit**Chris Law:**[\[109426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the rate was of successful applications for pension credit in each year from 2015 to 2019 inclusive.

Guy Opperman:

The Department does not hold this information.

Sarah Olney:[\[109545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to increase the uptake of pension credit over the next five years.

Guy Opperman:

While over 1.5 million pensioners currently receive Pension Credit, the Government wants to make sure that all pensioners eligible can claim the Pension Credit to which they are rightly entitled.

In February we launched a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit and help dispel some of the misconceptions that people might have about Pension Credit eligibility.

We are also continuing to work with our stakeholders to help spread the messages from the campaign.

Our online Pension Credit toolkit (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pension-credit-toolkit>) has been updated with the recent awareness campaign materials to supplement the resources it already contains for those working with pensioners, such as guides and information designed to help older people understand how they could get Pension Credit.

In May this year we launched an online claim service for Pension Credit to supplement the existing telephone and postal claim services (

<https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>). The online service enables pensioners to apply for Pension Credit at a time that best suits them.

Stuart Anderson: [\[109663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to encourage eligible people to apply for pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

While over 1.5 million pensioners currently receive Pension Credit, the Government wants to make sure that all pensioners eligible can claim the Pension Credit to which they are rightly entitled.

In February we launched a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of Pension Credit and help dispel some of the misconceptions that people might have about Pension Credit eligibility. We are also continuing to work with our stakeholders to help spread the messages from the campaign.

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■ Pension Funds: Climate Change

Stephen Timms: [\[109142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on a joined-up approach by Government and regulators to implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

As a result of action by this Government, the UK is the first major economy to put TCFD into statute for pension schemes - leading the way on this issue, having already legislated for net zero by 2050 and introduced ESG legislation through 2018 amendments to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations.

As part of the Green Finance Strategy, the Government has established a working group of Government Departments and regulators that meets monthly to take forward implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on TCFD. This board is important in fostering co-ordination and consultation given the overlaps and interdependencies within the UK financial services sector.

For DWP, the Financial Conduct Authority is particularly relevant to DWP's recent proposals on TCFD for occupational pension schemes, given the relationship between trustees and their asset managers.

On 2 October, we published a letter exchange with the FCA's Interim Chief Executive Chris Woolard on this topic in which he committed to work closely with the Department when developing proposals.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-conduct-authoritys-plans-for-climate-related-financial-disclosures>

This demonstrates the importance of ongoing bilateral engagement in supporting the co-ordination of any proposals for TCFD requirements.

■ Pension Service: Complaints

Drew Hendry:

[\[109481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of current response times to complaints raised with the Pension Service.

Guy Opperman:

Complaints received about the Pension Service are handled in line with the overall Departmental complaints process published on Gov.uk. We aim to contact customers within 15 working days to clear the complaint or agree how to investigate it if it will take longer.

As part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to make changes to our complaints model to allow staff to be deployed to support processing claims and payments. From 9 July 2020, DWP now triage complaints giving priority to vulnerable claimants who may be at risk, and those with benefit payment issues.

We continue to look into all complaints as quickly as we can and, as part of the triage process used to determine lower priority, we write to those customers explaining there may be a delay in answering their complaint.

We plan to review the effectiveness of the approach we have taken throughout the pandemic as part of an ongoing review into complaints handling.

■ Pension Wise

Stephen Timms:

[\[109140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy for the Money and Pensions Service to reintroduce the Pension Wise usage data reports, showing monthly Pension Wise take up by channel, which were published by her Department up to January 2019.

Guy Opperman:

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) publishes Pension Wise usage data as part of their annual evaluation report which details not only volumes but satisfaction with the service.

Figures can fluctuate monthly, for example due to seasonality and the numbers of people reaching aged 50, who are eligible for the Pension Wise service. The annual reporting allows for wider analysis and commentary against the figures rather than that previously published month by month.

MaPS continually reviews its reporting processes across its customer facing brands and we work very closely with MaPS to analyse their services, along with seeking any opportunities to improve.

■ Pensions: Equality**Stephen Timms:**[\[109141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to promote diversity in pension schemes governance; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

In 2018, Government made amendments to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2005 which required trustees to state their policy on environmental, social and governance considerations in their investment strategy, typically including consideration of the diversity of the firms in which they invest. It also supports greater diversity in trustee board representation.

The primary focus on pensions schemes is ensuring that trustees in all occupational pension schemes meet standards of honesty, integrity and knowledge appropriate to their role.

The Pensions Regulator is already looking at the issue of trustee board diversity across all schemes and began work on this in Spring 2020. The proposed industry working group will bring together the wealth of material and experience that is available to help pension schemes improve the diversity of their boards.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals**Sir Roger Gale:**[\[109129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what average length of time is taken by her Department to process the mandatory reconsideration of a personal independence payment claim.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statistics on the average clearance time for Mandatory Reconsiderations (MR) for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can be found in the data tables of the quarterly statistical publication 'Personal Independence Payment: Official Statistics to July 2020' published by the Department for Work and Pensions and available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-independence-payment-april-2013-to-july-2020>

Figures for Great Britain can be found in Table 4A by month the Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) was cleared in calendar days.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[109395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the total cost to the public purse of the appeals process for personal independence payment assessments in each of the last five years.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Social Security Benefits**

Chris Law:

[\[109427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Scottish Social Security Committee's report on Benefit take-up, published 11 March 2020, whether her Department plans to respond to the (a) recommendation that the Government develops a written strategy that aims to maximise take-up of reserved benefits across the UK and (b) other recommendations made in that report.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP officials appeared at the inquiry to provide information on reserved benefits, and they will provide further information to the Committee should it be required.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**

Ian Mearns:

[\[109303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to apply the temporary £20 weekly uplift to universal credit to (a) existing legacy benefits and (b) job seekers' allowance.

Will Quince:

The Government introduced a package of temporary welfare measures worth around £9.3 billion this year to help with the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the £20 weekly increase to the Universal Credit Standard Allowance rates as a temporary measure for the 20/21 tax year. There are no plans to extend this to legacy benefits.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disability**

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[109350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of permanently removing the need for face-to-face assessments for disabled claimants following the temporary introduction of that policy during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance.

Where possible and in line with usual processes, paper-based assessments will be undertaken, and we continue to do telephone-based assessments where we can. Any re-introduction of face-to-face assessments would involve additional safety measures to comply with public health guidance.

We remain fully committed to making continuous improvements to the support we provide to people with health conditions and disabilities, and are evaluating the changes to our assessment approach which were temporarily introduced. This will inform the approach taken to conducting assessments in the future. We are using a range of information to inform these decisions, including research with PIP and ESA/UC claimants about their experiences of telephone assessments.

■ Universal Credit**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[109341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to rectify the financial situation facing claimants whose wages are not paid in alignment with universal credit months following the decision of the Court of Appeal of 22 June 2020 in the case Johnson, Woods, Barrett and Stewart v. the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Will Quince:

On 20th October I laid secondary legislation in response to the Court of Appeal Judgment made on 22 June in the case of Johnson, Woods, Barrett and Stewart, which concerned claimants who receive two calendar monthly payments of earnings in one Universal Credit assessment period. This will allow us to reallocate a payment of earnings reported via the Real Time Information service to a different Universal Credit assessment period, either because it was reported in the wrong assessment period or (in the case of calendar monthly paid employees) it is necessary to maintain a regular payment cycle. This will mean that claimants who are paid calendar monthly will therefore have one salary payment taken into account in each assessment period. It also means that certain claimants will also benefit from any applicable work allowance.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employed**Seema Malhotra:**[\[109373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number of people whose universal credit payments will be affected by the

re-introduction of the minimum income floor on 13 November 2020 and (b) average amount by which those universal credit payments will be so affected.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[109374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the (a) operation of the minimum income floor and (b) effect of that floor on household incomes; and if she will publish that assessment prior to the reinstatement of that floor.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[109671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will urgently extend the suspension of the minimum income floor on universal credit to support people working in the creative industries and self-employed people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

After careful consideration of the ongoing public health situation and the national working environment, the current easement of the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit that was due to expire on 12th November 2020 will be extended to the end of April 2021.

Regulations will be laid and made prior to 12th November 2020.

■ Youth Services

Seema Malhotra:

[\[109371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many youth hubs her Department plans to establish in each (a) region and (b) nation of the UK; how many of those youth hubs have opened to date; and how much additional funding has been allocated to each youth hub.

Mims Davies:

DWP's current plan is to establish 116 youth hubs nationally; 94 in England, 17 in Scotland and 5 in Wales, including at least one youth hub in each Jobcentre Plus District within Great Britain.

Currently there are 15 youth hubs open offering either a face to face or digital offer. The opening schedule for face-to-face youth hubs, delivered with our network of external partners, is subject to COVID-19 restrictions at a national and local level.

Our 2020/2021 Flexible Support Fund(FSF) has been boosted by £150m as a result of Covid-19. Districts will be able to apply for funding from the FSF to support the opening of Youth Hubs.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOME OFFICE

■ UK Terrorism Threat Level

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS553\]](#)

On Tuesday, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, JTAC, raised the UK terrorism threat level from SUBSTANTIAL to SEVERE. This means that an attack is highly likely.

JTAC's assessments are made independently of Ministers and are based on the latest intelligence. The threat level is kept under constant review.

JTAC's decision to change the threat level has been driven by a number of factors, including the recent attacks in France and Vienna.

Our police and security services work tirelessly to protect the UK from terrorism and will continue to do so. The public should remain vigilant and should report any concerns to the police.