



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 6 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:32 P.M., 06 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

DEFENCE

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Stephen Morgan: [\[110227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy of reducing Army personnel numbers by 7,000.

Stephen Morgan: [\[110230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect on the adequacy of defence procurement over the next 12 months of the (a) suspension of the comprehensive spending review and (b) absence of a fixed multi-year defence budget.

Stephen Morgan: [\[110231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of the effect on the progress of (a) the Tempest and (b) other defence projects for the next 12 months of the (a) suspension of the comprehensive spending review and (b) absence of a fixed multi-year defence budget.

Mr Ben Wallace:

In light of the decision to change the time period of the Spending Review, the Government is considering the implications for the completion of the Integrated Review, and will provide an update to Parliament in due course.

The Spending Review process is continuing, and the Ministry of Defence is in discussion with the Treasury on the Department's settlement. We will continue to deliver the Equipment Plan, but as always, we will keep under review the relative priority of different capabilities as our understanding of evolving threats and new opportunities develops.

■ USA: Defence

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[110072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the most recent Defence Equipment Plan, whether he is taking steps to reduce UK spending on US defence industry products.

Jeremy Quin:

We will always prioritise our response to the threats that the UK faces and we remain committed to delivering the right capabilities for our Armed Forces while delivering value for money for the taxpayer. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to spending over £180 billion on equipment and equipment support in the next decade. In 2018-19 the MOD spent £19.2 billion with UK industry and commerce, directly

supporting 119,000 jobs across the country and indirectly supporting many thousands more.

No decisions have been taken as to changes to the Defence Equipment Plan as part of the Integrated Review; in light of the decision to change the time period of the Spending Review, the Government is considering the implications for the completion of the Review and will provide an update to Parliament once these have been decided.

In addition to the Integrated Review, the MOD is leading a cross-Government review into the defence and security industrial sectors, looking at how we can ensure that the UK continues to have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries, that drive investment and prosperity and that underpin national security now and in the future. We are also pursuing a range of initiatives to strengthen our relationship with the Defence industry, drive innovation and competitiveness, and support responsible exports.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: EU Nationals

Richard Thomson:

[\[908271\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on ensuring that there are no barriers to creative professionals from the EU working in the UK after the transition period.

Caroline Dinenge:

We recognise the importance of access to talent for creative and cultural sectors and regularly engage with industry representatives on changes which affect creative professionals from the EU working in the UK after the transition period.

We will ensure our economy is ready to attract the best and brightest from around the world as we introduce our new points-based immigration system from 1 January 2021.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Jamie Stone:

[\[109557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the insurance industry on creating a framework for the events industry to safeguard (a) customers and (b) people working in the events industry affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are aware that the events and exhibition industry, as well as other sectors, have been severely impacted by Government measures to control the spread of Covid-19.

My Department regularly engages with events stakeholders to assess the issues being faced and to develop means of offering support, including on the issue of

insurance provision. The Government is also in continual dialogue with the insurance sector on its response to COVID-19.

We encourage businesses and suppliers to explore the Government's support package, such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Job Retention Scheme.

We worked closely with stakeholders to develop Covid-19 Secure guidance for a range of events. Furthermore, the events pilots we carried out in September will help to ensure that the correct advice and guidance is put in place to help larger events reopen when it is safe to do so.

■ Internet

Daisy Cooper:

[\[107747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of online content being age-rated and labelled using trusted BBFC classifications which reflect UK national sensitives as a result of large-scale consultation of all four UK nations.

Caroline Dinenge:

It is vital that children are protected from accessing age-inappropriate, harmful content online. The government's Online Harms legislation will establish in law a new 'duty of care' on companies towards their users. The 'duty of care' will ensure companies have robust systems and processes in place to keep their users safe and will deliver a higher level of protection for children than for the typical adult user. Details of how the online harms legislation will protect children from harmful content will be published later this year in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation.

Over the past year we have been working with the BBFC and industry to drive the voluntary adoption of the BBFC's age rating symbols to Video On Demand platforms. Doing so will provide consumers with well recognised age ratings and consumer advice.

■ Internet: Safety

Daisy Cooper:

[\[107749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to make the 2018 BBFC AV Guidance approved by Parliament the basis for future Government online harms proposals to protect children from harmful content.

Caroline Dinenge:

As we announced on 16 October last year, we will not be commencing Part 3 of the Digital Economy Act (DEA) 2017 and its provisions on age verification for online pornography as originally intended. Instead the online harms regime will include provisions to protect children from age-inappropriate content, including online pornography. Our Online Harms proposals will go further than the DEA's focus on

online pornography on commercial adult sites and provide a higher level of protection for children.

Details of how the online harms legislation will protect children from harmful content, including online pornography, will be published later this year in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[107750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward proposals for family friendly WiFi which use the default filters imposed by mobile network operators, based on BBFC guidelines and regulated by the BBFC.

Caroline Dinenage:

Protecting children is at the heart of our online harms agenda, and wider government priorities. The government has worked hard to ensure content is filtered in public places where children are likely to be, as well as at home. The major providers of public WiFi are committed to providing family friendly public WiFi wherever children are likely to be. A Friendly WiFi Logo was launched in 2014 to help parents identify the safest places to browse the internet.

The BBFC provides an independent framework for mobile network operators and defines content that is unsuitable for customers under the age of 18 based on their Classification Guidelines for film and video. There are no plans to require other internet providers who provide family friendly filters to use the BBFC's framework.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Sara Britcliffe:

[\[109743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether there is a roadmap for the return to contact training for local clubs hosting contact sports.

Nigel Huddleston:

We have come to a critical juncture. Incidence rates are growing and the NHS is under increasing pressure. Therefore, from Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December there will be new national measures to reduce the infection rate of coronavirus. However, sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. Exercise and recreation outdoors will be allowed with your household or on your own with one person from another household.

DCMS and Sport England are working with National Governing Bodies to allow the safe return of close contact sports. However, sports which involve close contact with another person cannot currently take place. This is due to the increased risks of transmission of Covid-19, because of the proximity of participants and contact between them.

■ Video on Demand**Daisy Cooper:**[\[107748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he is taking steps to support the BBFC in securing greater coverage for their trusted age ratings on video-on-demand platforms; what video-on-demand platforms carry BBFC age ratings; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of linking those ratings to parental filters.

Caroline Dinenge:

While adoption of the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) best practice age ratings by online platforms is currently voluntary, we welcome Netflix's commitment to work towards complete coverage of its content under the BBFC's ratings and support the BBFC's drive to encourage other Video On Demand platforms to follow suit. By doing so, this will provide consumers, especially parents, with well recognised age ratings and consumer advice.

EDUCATION**■ Financial Services: Education****Anne Marie Morris:**[\[107657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to (a) improve the financial education curriculum and (b) increase delivery of that education at primary level in the context of the economic situation as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Education on financial matters helps to ensure that young people are prepared to manage their money well, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information when needed. In 2014, financial literacy was made statutory within the national curriculum for the first time, as part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds.

The Department also introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides young people with the knowledge and financial skills to make important financial decisions. The Government has published statutory programmes of study for mathematics and citizenship that outline what pupils should learn about financial education from key stages one to four.

In the primary mathematics curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the arithmetic that pupils should have. This knowledge is vital, as a strong understanding of numeracy and numbers will underpin the pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, percentages. There is also some specific content about financial education such as calculations with money.

We trust schools to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for their students, drawing on the expertise of subject associations and organisations such as Young Money.

The Department will continue to work closely with the Money and Pension Service and HM Treasury to consider how to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools .

Schools should have resumed teaching an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term. This means that all pupils will be taught a wide range of subjects so they can maintain their choices for further study and employment. The latest guidance on teaching to support children is set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

The Government has made £650 million of catch-up funding available, as part of a wider £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, to be shared across schools over the 2020-21 academic year. Details of the catch-up package are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-covid-catch-up-plan-to-tackle-impact-of-lost-teaching-time>.

The Education Endowment Fund has published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to use this funding effectively.

■ Foster Care: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[109188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government's covid-19 guidance has affected the legal obligations foster carers have to facilitate meetings with birth parents.

Vicky Ford:

There are no legal obligations placed upon foster carers to facilitate birth family meetings. Arrangements for children to keep in touch with their family are set out by courts or in care plans. Foster parents will necessarily be involved in ensuring that the child in their care is able and supported to attend those meetings, and they may therefore have a role in facilitating or hosting birth families.

Ultimately, contact arrangements should be focused on, and shaped around, the child's needs. Maintaining contact is crucial to help children and young people develop their identity and history, and to understand their lives and their sense of self. However, the child's welfare is the paramount consideration at all times, and each child's wishes and needs for contact should be individually considered and regularly assessed.

The department's guidance on vulnerable children describes how children living in care can stay in touch with their family during the COVID-19 outbreak. Contact arrangements should be assessed on a case by case basis taking into account a range of factors including the government's social distancing guidance and the needs

of the child. Additional information can be found here:

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

■ Free School Meals

Paul Maynard:

[109276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish the Ecorys evaluation of the 2019 Holiday Activities and Food Scheme with respect to free school meals eligibility.

Vicky Ford:

Last year, we commissioned Ecorys to carry out an independent evaluation of our 2019 Holiday Activities and Food programme.

The report has been delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak but it is now in the final stages and is being prepared for publication. We will continue to work with Ecorys on this and we expect their report to be published in the near future.

■ Pupils: Dyslexia

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[109219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings in the Hide and Seek report published by the Driver Youth Trust on 13 October 2020, that 4 per cent of specialist teachers for pupils with dyslexia work in state schools and that 75 per cent of headteachers say they cannot access one to one support for their pupils.

Vicky Ford:

Our ambition is for every child, no matter what challenges they face, to have access to a world-class education that sets them up for life. We know that the quality of teaching is the most important in-school factor for improving outcomes for all children and that it is particularly important for pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND), including dyslexia. We are creating an entitlement to at least three years of structured support and professional development for teachers as they train and at the start of their careers through the initial teacher training core content framework (2019) and Early Career Framework. Together, these set out for the first time the evidence-based body of knowledge and experience that all trainees and early career teachers need, including in relation to SEND.

Further information about initial teacher training core content framework is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-core-content-framework>.

The Early Career Framework is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913646/Early-Career_Framework.pdf.

We recognise that there is work to be done to improve the SEND system, including improving access to support services. This is why we are conducting a review of the SEND system. We are grateful to organisations like the Driver Youth Trust whose work supports the journey towards realising this aim.

■ Schools: Bullying

Andrew Percy:

[\[109287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle bullying in schools.

Vicky Ford:

The government has sent a clear message that bullying should never be tolerated and we are committed to supporting schools to tackle it. All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy, with measures to prevent all forms of bullying, and have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies and monitoring approaches, to best suit their environment.

The department provides advice for schools, which outlines schools' responsibilities. The advice makes clear that schools should make appropriate provision for a bullied child's social, emotional, and mental health needs. It is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>.

Where bullying is reported to the school, it is important that school staff take prompt action to support the bullied pupil and prevent the bullying from happening again. On 7 June, we announced more than £750,000 for the Diana Award, the Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Anne Frank Trust in order to help hundreds of schools and colleges build relationships between pupils, boost their resilience, and continue to tackle bullying both in person and online. Further information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-mental-health-support-for-pupils-and-teachers>.

We are also making sure that all children in England will learn about respectful relationships, in person and online, as part of new mandatory Relationships, Sex and Health Education. This includes content on the different types of bullying, the impact it has, the responsibility of bystanders, and how to get help.

In our drive to tackle behaviour issues and bullying, we have strengthened teachers' power to enforce discipline and promote good behaviour. This includes giving teachers powers to discipline pupils for poor behaviour which takes place outside of the school gates, and extending their searching powers so they can search for, and in certain circumstances delete, inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

We are investing £10 million through behaviour hubs. Schools with exemplary positive behaviour cultures can work closely with schools that want to turn around their behaviour, alongside a central offer of support and a taskforce of advisers. The aim is to improve their culture and spread good practice across the country. The first hubs are planned to launch in Spring 2021 and will run for an initial period of 3 years.

The hubs programme builds on Tom Bennett's independent review of behaviour in schools, *Creating a Culture: how school leaders can optimise behaviour* (2017). In November 2018 we published *Respectful School Communities*, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline. This can combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind, including sexual bullying and sexual harassment. It will help schools to identify the various elements that make up a whole school approach, consider gaps in their current practice and get further support.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Liz Twist: [109563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children with complex needs that require aerosol generating procedures (AGP) have not been able to return to school as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if his Department will work with Public Health England on guidance to urgently ensure a safe return to school for all children.

Liz Twist: [109564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools do not have the facilities to allow children with complex needs that require aerosol generating procedures to return to school; and what steps he is taking to support those schools to ensure that all children can return to school during the covid-19 outbreak.

Liz Twist: [109565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Public Health England consulted with schools on the guidance on aerosol generating procedures (AGP); and if his Department will work with Public Health England to provide guidance to schools who cannot comply with measures to have a separate room to undertake AGP so that children are not prevented from going to school.

Vicky Ford:

We are aware of a small number of children with complex needs, including those that require Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs), who have found it harder to return to schools. We are working with families, education settings, health services and local authorities to ensure that they are able to attend safely as soon as possible.

We published the Safe Working Guidance to help support schools in keeping everyone safe, including those children with complex medical needs who require AGPs and the staff carrying out the procedures. We are trying to give the best possible guidance to schools while recognising that every school setting is different. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

The department has worked closely with Public Health England and stakeholders to publish guidance based on a 'system of controls' which, when implemented, creates

an inherently safer system where the risk of transmission of the infection is substantially reduced. This includes guidance on the specific protective measures needed to undertake AGPs in education settings to manage risk effectively. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

The guidance on undertaking AGPs in education settings, including where use of a designated room is not possible, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>.

We have heard examples of good practice locally and are working with Public Health England and NHS England to establish whether any changes to the guidance or further information about practice principles are needed.

The Departments SEND and NHS England Adviser teams are working with local areas affected by this situation to determine whether further local measures can be put in place to secure pupils' return to school. It is important that schools communicate clearly with parents on progress towards supporting children who need AGPs to return to school safely and provide remote education and support if they are unable to do so.

We do not hold data on the number of schools that do not have a separate room to undertake AGPs.

■ Schools: Location

Damian Hinds:

[107631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made, for each region of England, of the proportion of households with children attending schools in more than one local authority area.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Special Guardianship Orders: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[109486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption Orders are not delayed by constraints in the family courts system as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Adoption and Special Guardianship are a priority for this government as it is so important that children can move into their forever home. Therefore, during the COVID-19 outbreak, we have encouraged local authorities and regional adoption

agencies to continue to support adoption processes. We recognise the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on the family courts system. We are working closely with the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice and our other key partners in the family justice system to make sure that we prioritise children's welfare during this difficult and unprecedented time. We are working together to do everything we can to promote the best outcomes for children and are adapting our ways of working to respond to the challenges we are facing.

Following initial closures, most courts have now reopened providing (limited) capacity for hearings that aren't suitable to be heard remotely to take place in person. Judicial capacity has been increased, with sitting days now above usual levels in most areas. All urgent public law children cases will continue to be prioritised, to help safeguard the welfare of the most vulnerable children.

This department and the Ministry of Justice have been working closely with sector leads to understand the impact of rising volumes and local variation in public family law proceedings, and to develop and implement a number of recovery and reform actions to reduce pressure on the system. Adoption net receipts and orders fell considerably over the lockdown period. The President of the Family Division wrote to Designated Family Judges on 13 May to clarify the guidance so that adoption order hearings would continue during this crisis period. This guidance appears to have led to an increase in orders.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Cannabidiol

Martyn Day:

[\[108270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to review the safety of cannabidiol-containing products sold to consumers.

Victoria Prentis:

Any food product containing Cannabidiol (CBD) is the responsibility of the Food Standards Agency. To bring industry into compliance with the Novel Foods Regulations, in February 2020 the Food Standards Agency announced a deadline of the end of March 2021 for businesses to have validated applications which will be submitted for risk assessment and any subsequent risk management considerations. This process will involve approval based upon dossiers (including safety data), submitted to and reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Novel Food Products.

In addition to this, the Committee on Toxicology has reviewed the available evidence on the safety on CBD in food. Its independent, expert advice was used to help set the current recommendations and consumption limits.

After the deadline any products not linked to a validated application will no longer be allowed to remain on the market and no new products have been allowed on the market since February 2020 without pre-market authorisation. CBD-containing food

products are no different to other foods in that they are also subject to all other relevant food laws.

In Scotland, Food Standards Scotland has regulatory responsibility for CBD used in food products. Food Standards Scotland is working with local authorities and other partners to keep the safety of CBD food products currently on the market under review, and to ensure that products stating they contain this ingredient do so.

Cannabis-based products for medicinal use (CBPM) are not consumer products and are regulated separately. CBPMs must comply with the requirements of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 and Humans Medicines Regulations 2012.

■ Cats: Tagging

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[107767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish a summary of responses from his initial consultation on cat microchipping.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to improving the welfare of cats and has a manifesto commitment to introduce compulsory microchipping of cats. In October 2019 Defra published a call for evidence on compulsory microchipping for cats, which attracted over 3,000 responses. We will be publishing a summary of the responses alongside the launch of a public consultation shortly.

■ Horses: Animal Welfare

Huw Merriman:

[\[107670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure the viability of equine rescue organisations whose income has been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The welfare of companion animals remains a priority for Defra throughout the coronavirus pandemic. My Department continues to work closely with the companion animal welfare sector to understand their concerns and address how organisations that work with horses and other companion animals are affected by Covid-19.

We provide and regularly update online Government guidance for people who are responsible for horses and other animals to reflect the changing position relating to Covid-19 and to help them understand how to provide for their equine welfare. This includes clarifying what activities may be undertaken in light of restrictions in place to tackle Covid-19, such as rescue and rehoming, and also advising what people should do if they show symptoms of Covid-19, or are self-isolating, or are unable themselves to care for their horses.

We continue to hold discussions with key equine welfare organisations and want the sector to be able to continue to carry out its good work. The Government has

announced various measures to support charities, including VAT deferral, paying no business rates for their shops next year and furloughing staff where possible with the Government paying a significant contribution of their wages.

■ Langstone Harbour: Sewage

Stephen Morgan:

[\[107733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what limit on the effect of sewage waste released into Langstone Harbor Southern Water has communicated to his Department.

Rebecca Pow:

Southern Water operates several assets with Environmental Permits authorising the discharge of dilute storm sewage into Langstone Harbour or to the Solent during times of heavy and persistent rainfall. These discharges take place via storm overflows.

Storm sewage discharges are necessary because England has a 'combined' sewerage system in many urban centres which convey both rainwater and wastewater from toilets, bathrooms and kitchens within the same pipes to a sewage treatment works. During heavy rainfall the capacity of these pipes can be exceeded many times over. Storm overflows act as relief valves which prevent the system from overloading which would otherwise result in sewage backing up and flooding people's homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Where the Environment Agency (EA) suspects or has evidence that Environmental Permit conditions have been breached, or that a polluting un-permitted discharge has occurred, the EA investigates further, taking enforcement action where appropriate in accordance with its Enforcement and Sanctions Policy.

I recognise that there is more to do with regards to the management of sewage pollution. I met water company CEOs in September and made clear that the volumes of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced. To achieve this, I have set up a new Taskforce bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs. This Taskforce will set out clear proposals to address the volumes of sewage discharged into our rivers. The Taskforce is also exploring further short-term actions water companies can take to accelerate progress on storm overflows.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Claire Hanna:

[\[107768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will urgently bring forward legislative proposals to ban environmentally destructive industrial fishing in UK offshore Marine Protected Areas.

Rebecca Pow:

Marine protection is a devolved matter and the devolved administrations are responsible for the enforcement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within their waters. The information below relates to England only.

Once the transition period has finished, we plan to use new powers contained in the Fisheries Bill to put byelaws in place to protect offshore MPAs, as we have done in the inshore environment where over 90 MPAs are now protected from bottom towed fishing gear. The new byelaw power proposed in the Fisheries Bill will allow the Marine Management Organisation to protect offshore MPAs from activities such as trawling which could damage protected features on the seabed. We are prioritising those MPAs most at risk and aim to make rapid progress as soon as the transition period ends. A Call for Evidence for the first sites began on 28 October, and will be followed by the formal consultation in early 2021.

■ River Severn: Flood Control**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[107624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ensure that the Environment Agency in partnership with the River Severn Partnership takes a holistic approach to (a) long-term and (b) short-term flooding solutions along the River Severn.

Rebecca Pow:

The River Severn Partnership (RSP) is led by the Environment Agency (EA) alongside Shropshire Council. It has united local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, water companies through the Water Resources West group, the EA and Natural Resources Wales.

The RSP will deliver a long-term programme addressing water management across the Severn Catchment. This will be achieved through a proactive, coordinated and collaborative approach to flood risk management, water quality, environmental enhancement and an integrated approach to water resource management.

The EA is updating the River Severn modelling and flood mapping to incorporate the latest available data. The £250,000 grant-in-aid investment will deliver a completed model by the end of 2021. This new model will also deliver evidence to support the flood warning service, potential future flood schemes, and will inform our advice in response to proposals to develop within the catchment.

The EA in partnership with all other Flood Risk Management Authorities along the River Severn Catchment is currently putting together the next six-year Flood and Coastal Risk Management Capital Investment Programme 2021/22 – 2027/28.

Around £400,000 Flood Defence Grant in Aid is being invested in the RSP area to accelerate potential scheme delivery in areas following last winter's floods.

Ahead of this winter, the EA continues to work alongside Local Resilience Forums to plan, exercise and prepare for responding to flooding. The EA is ready to provide its

flood warning service and to deploy local flood protection measures and barriers along the River Severn.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[107625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prepare for potential flooding in winter 2020-21 in (a) Shrewsbury and (b) other areas along the River Severn which are prone to flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon Member to the answers given for PQs 94381 and 97520.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-23/94381>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-30/97520>

■ Sewage: Pollution Control

Philip Dunne: [\[107618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the terms of reference of the taskforce reviewing sewage pollution from storm overflows.

Philip Dunne: [\[107619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the membership of the taskforce reviewing sewage pollution from storm overflows.

Philip Dunne: [\[107620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his timescale is for the taskforce on reducing the frequency and volumes of sewage discharges from storm overflows to report.

Philip Dunne: [\[107621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the (a) scope and (b) terms of reference are of the taskforce on reducing the frequency and volumes of sewage discharges from storm overflows.

Philip Dunne: [\[107622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how long he plans the taskforce on reducing the frequency and volumes of sewage discharges from storm overflows to be operational for.

Rebecca Pow:

The Storm Overflows Taskforce comprises representatives of Defra, the Environment Agency, Ofwat, CCW, Water UK and a water company. In addition, Blueprint for Water have been asked to nominate a representative to the group. I will ensure that the Rt Honourable Member receives a copy of the terms of reference. The Taskforce meets regularly and is developing proposals to reduce the frequency and volumes of spills from storm overflows. The group is exploring further short-term actions water companies can take to accelerate progress on storm overflows. The first phase of the

taskforce to develop short term actions runs until November 2020. The second phase, to develop proposals and mechanisms to reduce the frequency and volumes of spills from storm overflows, will report in spring 2021. No timescale for how long the Taskforce will operate has been set as yet.

■ Sewers: Langstone Harbour

Stephen Morgan:

[\[108290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment has he made of the effect of stormwater releases into Langstone Harbour on the health of the local environment; and what recent estimate he has made of the frequency of untreated sewage being discharged in storm overflows in that area in the latest period for which figures are available.

Rebecca Pow:

Storm overflows allow excess surface water and sewage to be directed away from homes during rainfall events. They are operating more frequently across the country due to housing growth and climate change. In 2019, storm overflows across the country spilled an average of 35 times each and nearly one in ten spilled more than 100 times.

Langstone Harbour is designated as a transitional waterbody under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Environment Agency (EA) monitors the harbour for water quality and ecology. Since the 1990s, there has been an improving trend in nutrients within the harbour. This is due in part to the transfer of the Budds Farm discharge from the north of the harbour to a long sea outfall 5 kilometres offshore. The improvement in nutrients has led to the substantial reduction in macroalgae and Langstone Harbour now consistently achieves WFD Good status for nitrogen and macroalgae.

Langstone Harbour is also a designated shellfish water under WFD. It fails the stringent WFD microbial standard in shellfish flesh. Discharges from Combined Surface water Outfalls (CSOs) are likely to be one of the sources of shellfish contamination, as sewage contains bacteria and other material that shellfish feed on which can contaminate the shellfish for a period of time. Upgrades to reduce CSO spills were proposed in Southern Water's latest Asset Management Plan (AMP). However, this is unlikely to go ahead, as it will not be cost beneficial. The cost of infrastructure upgrades is likely to be far greater than the commercial value of harvested shellfish.

Southern Water provides the EA with a record of its storm water discharges annually, detailing frequency and duration. The most recent data for Langstone Harbour that has been fully assessed and is supplied below. The EA may request specific information at any time.

The data shows that, in 2019, the majority of storm water discharges into Langstone Harbour came from Budds Farm sewage treatment works, with 57 spills that year, totalling 617 hours.

Table 1: Storm water discharges into Langstone Harbour from Southern Water Assets 2019

SITE NAME	PERMIT REFERENCE	ACTIVITY REFERENCE (IF MORE THAN ONE DISCHARGE) ON PERMIT	TOTAL DURATION (HOURS) OF ALL SPILLS PRIOR TO PROCESSING THROUGH 12-24 HOUR COUNTING METHOD	COUNTED THROUGH 12-24HR COUNTING METHOD	DISCHARGE LOCATION
Budds Farm Havant WTW	A00751 / 3	Settled storm	617.12	57	Shortfall outfall into harbour
Budds Farm Havant WTW	A00752 / 1	Storm	0.70	1	Outfall to Brockhampton Stream
Budds Farm Havant WTW	A00753 / 1	Storm	0.63	1	Fort Cumberland (harbour mouth)

Stephen Morgan:[\[108307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment has he made of the effect of untreated sewage being discharged in storm water released into Langstone Harbour on the safety of local swimming in that area.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) carries out monitoring of specific bathing waters. The nearby designated bathing waters on Hayling Island, Beachlands West, Beachlands Central and Eastoke, and those on Portsea Island, Eastney and Southsea East, all consistently achieve a water quality classification of excellent.

The list of 'designated' bathing waters (issued by Defra) is carefully compiled to ensure that samples are taken at the most appropriate geographical locations. Langstone Harbour is not a designated bathing water and therefore does not benefit from the bacteriological monitoring that designated bathing waters receive.

The EA does not have any evidence that storm discharges into Langstone Harbour impact any designated bathing waters.

Storm discharges may impact water quality within the harbour and so there will be an increased risk for swimmers or other recreational water users here. The harbour, as it does not contain designated bathing waters, is monitored for the purpose of protecting fish and wildlife, not people.

■ Tourist Attractions: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[107668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of all zoos and aquariums are under (a) tier 2 and (b) tier 3 local covid alert level restrictions.

Victoria Prentis:

Given the recent announcement by the Prime Minister, all zoos and aquariums have now been asked to close in line with the latest lockdown measures. We recognise this has been a challenging time for the sector and encourage those who are experiencing severe financial difficulties and need support in caring for their animals to apply for the Zoo Animals Fund. Zoos are also able to apply for the full range of Covid-19 financial support that the Government has made available. We remain committed to ensuring the sector can deliver the best possible care for its animals and are in regular contact with zoos and their representatives to monitor their situation.

■ Tree Planting

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[107737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to include targets for tree (a) planting and (b) preservation in relation to (i) planning and (ii) building requirements in his forthcoming England Tree Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:

We committed in our manifesto to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2025. As noted in a public paper this summer, we are exploring whether a statutory target for trees in England would be appropriate, under the target setting process proposed by the Environment Bill.

To increase planting in England, we recently consulted on proposals for a new ambitious England Tree Strategy, which will be published in spring 2021. This will set out our long-term vision for trees in England and the policy priorities needed to achieve this, as well as plans for how the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund will support the substantial increase in woodland creation that we have committed to achieving in this Parliament.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Diplomatic Service: Reviews

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[108273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department last formally reviewed the effectiveness of its use of diplomatic protection; and what were the key findings of that review.

Nigel Adams:

We exercise diplomatic protection very rarely and at the discretion of the Foreign Secretary. While this elevates a case to a formal State-to-State issue, it does not dictate any particular form of diplomatic or legal action. Whether diplomatic protection is exercised or not, all our consular cases are kept under review.

■ Diplomatic Service: Terrorism

Mark Pritchard: [\[109246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the number of reported incidents of sonic induced illnesses suffered by UK diplomatic staff serving overseas for the period from 1 September 2017 to 30 September 2020.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO is not aware of such a phenomenon affecting any of its staff worldwide.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[109548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to make any staffing changes before the publication of the integrated review.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[109549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the strategic direction of his Department set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy will be used to inform any future staffing restructure in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

The future size and shape of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is yet to be established. This will be determined in coming months through the ongoing organisational design work, and the outcome of the spending review and the integrated review.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[110216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 107085, what prioritisation process he is using to guide his departmental staffing changes.

Nigel Adams:

The future size and shape of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is yet to be established. This, and any prioritisation process, will be determined in coming months through the ongoing organisational design work, and the outcome of the spending review and the integrated review.

■ Israel: Embassies

Stephen Crabb:

[\[107623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2020 to Question 100918 on Israel: Embassies, if he will publish Accountable Grant Agreements between the Government and delivery partners for those projects; and which other proposals were submitted to the open competition.

James Cleverly:

I have asked my office to send you a copy of the Grant Agreements, redacted in line with FOI legislation to protect commercial sensitivities and personal data. I have also asked officials to supply a list of names of the other bidders.

■ Kashmir: Human Rights

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[109320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, further to the statement of UN experts on human rights in Jammu and Kashmir of 4 August 2020, what diplomatic steps he is taking to promote human rights in Jammu and Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of the statement written by UN Special Rapporteurs on 4 August. The UK recognises that there are human rights concerns in India-administered Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure domestic laws are in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights violations or abuse is deeply concerning and must be investigated transparently, promptly and thoroughly. We have raised our concerns directly with the Government of India.

■ Kashmir: UN Resolutions

Afzal Khan:

[\[109626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the UN Security Council on the implementation of resolutions in Kashmir.

Afzal Khan:

[\[109627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help broker peace in Kashmir.

Nigel Adams:

The longstanding position of the UK is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people. We encourage both sides to engage in dialogue and find lasting, diplomatic solutions to maintain regional stability.

It is not for the UK to prescribe a solution or act as mediator, and it would be for both parties to agree if they wanted any external mediation on Kashmir. The UN Security Council last discussed Kashmir on 5 August.

■ Nigeria: Human Rights

John McDonnell:

[\[109147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking against people involved in the suppression of human rights in Nigeria.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government's position on human rights is firm: they are universal and must apply equally to all people. We condemn all human rights violations or abuses in Nigeria and encourage all parties to work together to enable the people of Nigeria to exercise their rights safely, peacefully and in line with the rule of law. The UK Government works closely with the Nigerian Government and international and civil society partners on improving the human rights compliance and accountability of the Nigerian authorities. We are also committed to helping Nigeria tackle the terrorist threat from groups, including Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa, who commit human rights abuses in North East Nigeria. We will continue to make clear to the Nigerian authorities at the highest levels the importance of protecting human rights for all.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Breastfeeding: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[106372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) access to breastfeeding support services and (b) trends in the level of breastfeeding among new mothers.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities and the National Health Service determine local need and commission breastfeeding services.

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not hold data on access to breastfeeding support services. In line with the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement are supporting all trusts to gain accreditation with UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative. In order to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on provision of breastfeeding support, guidance has been issued to local maternity systems to maintain a focus on activities including improving infant feeding support in the hospital and in the community during the pandemic.

A leaflet has also been published which provide parents with information on breastfeeding support during the pandemic which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/05/C0441-maternity-leaflets-cv19-parent-information.pdf>

■ Cancer

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[108281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data has been published from version 8 of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset, and whether that includes data on the number of people diagnosed with secondary breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Version 8 of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset (COSD) applies to cancer data submitted to Public Health England (PHE) from April 2018. Data from this period is included in national and official statistics, such as the case-mix adjusted percentage cancers diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 by the clinical commissioning group in England and other PHE publications such as Local Tobacco Control Profiles which are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/case-mix-adjusted-percentage-cancers-diagnosed-at-stages-1-and-2-by-ccg-in-england>

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tobacco-control>

■ Coronavirus

John Redwood:

[95975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason covid-19 was removed from the list of high consequence infectious diseases on 19 March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The four nations public health high consequence infectious disease (HCID) group made an interim recommendation in January 2020 to classify COVID-19 as an HCID, based on the information that was available during the very early stages of the outbreak.

Once more was known about COVID-19, United Kingdom public health bodies reviewed the available information against the HCID criteria and noted certain changes. These changes included the increase in information available about mortality rates, which are low overall amongst the general population; greater clinical awareness; and the availability of a specific and sensitive laboratory test for the virus.

COVID-19 has not been considered a HCID in the UK since 19 March 2020, but this reclassification has not affected the Government's response to COVID-19, which remains a comprehensive national effort.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Caroline Lucas:

[106954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 October 2020 to Question 103473 on Coronavirus: Protective Clothing, how many eligible

providers his Department defines as the (a) majority and (b) minority; if he will publish a timeframe for when all eligible providers will have their order limits on the PPE portal increased to meet all of their covid-19 PPE needs; and if he will make it his policy to reimburse the costs accrued to eligible providers as a result of those providers having to make alternative procurement arrangements in the event that adequate PPE is unavailable through that portal; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The percentage of modelled demand that the Department is meeting through the current order limits on the personal protective equipment (PPE) portal is dependent on type and size of the customer. For the PPE items offered to primary care providers, the portal meets 100% of modelled demand. For adult social care providers, we are meeting 100% of modelled demand for residential care homes, and small and medium domiciliary care providers. We are currently working with the largest adult social providers to facilitate meeting 100% of their modelled demand, with this increase being phased over the next few weeks to ensure these large deliveries can be received. The Department keeps order limits under review based on the latest available public health guidance, COVID-19 demand modelling, analysis and provider feedback.

■ **Diabetes: Eyesight**

Paul Bristow:

[R] [92911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many diabetic eye screenings have taken place in the NHS, as part of the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme, in each month since April 2019.

Jo Churchill:

We do not receive data on a monthly basis for the diabetic eye screening programme. The data received is a cumulative indicator. The latest data from Public Health England is for the period October 2019 to December 2019, when a cumulative total of 2,340,428 eligible individuals attended a successful screening event, including routine digital screening, digital surveillance and slit lamp biomicroscopy surveillance.

The full quarterly data is available via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-screening-programmes-kpi-reports-2019-to-2020>

■ **Diagnosis**

Daisy Cooper:

[82432]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what correspondence he has had with (a) NHS England and (b) NHS Improvement on reviewing the process by which patients are given a no evidence of active disease verdict; and if he will publish that correspondence.

Jo Churchill:

There are currently no plans to review this process.

■ Food: Labelling

Sarah Champion: [\[96077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 23 September 2020 to Question 89709 on Food: Labelling, which organisations and experts he has met with as part of developing plans to introduce calorie labelling on menus.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 October 2020]: Our consultation on introducing mandatory out-of-home calorie labelling received feedback from a wide range of organisations and experts, including clinical and medical professionals. Departmental officials recently met with representatives from BEAT, an eating disorder charity, to discuss implementation of the policy and we intend to continue to engage with them as our plans develop. In addition, the Minister of State for Patient Safety, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (Ms Nadine Dorries MP) recently met with BEAT and the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eating Disorders.

■ General Practitioners: Epilepsy

Liz Twist: [\[96995\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

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

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Robert Halfon: [\[91833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of take up of the Healthy Start voucher scheme in 2020.

Robert Halfon: [\[91834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on the digitisation of Healthy Start vouchers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 September 2020]: The Healthy Start scheme is kept under continuous review and the Government continues working to ensure that eligible families are aware of the scheme and how it will benefit them. The current uptake figure is 47%.

The scheme is promoted through the Healthy Start and Start4Life websites, reminding families to take up the vouchers. The Healthy Start Issuing Unit is also proactive in identifying and making contact with families who may be eligible for

Healthy Start and issues invitations to apply for the scheme and pre-populated application forms by post.

The NHS Business Services Authority is delivering the project to digitise the Healthy Start Scheme. As part of the project, the NHS Business Services Authority holds monthly showcase events for stakeholders, this includes representatives from National Health Service trusts and local authorities. The NHS Business Services Authority will continue to communicate with all appropriate stakeholders in advance of each stage of the rollout of the digital project. The digital approach to Healthy Start will make it easier for families to apply for, receive and use Healthy Start benefits.

The project is due to begin the private beta phase later this year, followed by a public beta phase starting in early 2021, where new applicants will be able to apply for and use the digital service. The NHS Business Services Authority will also transfer beneficiaries who currently receive the paper-based voucher onto the new digital service from early 2021.

■ Lithium

Alex Norris: [\[105519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Essential Pharma on the removal of Priadel.

Alex Norris: [\[105520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NICE on the removal of Priadel.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: Essential Pharma informed the Department in April 2020 of their intention to discontinue Priadel (lithium carbonate) 200mg and 400mg tablets from the United Kingdom.

The Department engaged with Essential Pharma to reconsider its decision and encourage them to continue supply within the UK. While they did extend the discontinuation date, they were unwilling to continue to supply the UK beyond April 2021.

Following the opening of the Competition and Markets Authority's investigation, Essential Pharma have taken the decision to reverse their discontinuation of Priadel tablets and continue to supply Priadel to patients across the UK, 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.

No discussions have taken place with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

■ Neurology and Parkinson's Disease: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[89699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to consult with (a) charities and (b) patient groups on restarting (i) neurology services and (ii) advanced Parkinson's services.

Jo Churchill:

As part of a national review of specialised neurology, NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working with partners, patients, charities, and societies to support restoration and recovery of specialised neurology services, including advanced Parkinson's services, which have now been restarted.

The Association of British Neurologists has published specific guidance on recommencing neurology services in the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance contains assessments on which services and patients require urgent prioritisation, taking into account the severity and onset of symptoms. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also provided a range of prioritisation advice for restarting community services, which set out how to meet the needs of people with neurological conditions such as Parkinson's safely and effectively. This guidance can be found at the following links:

cdn.ymaws.com/www.theabn.org/resource/collection/65C334C7-30FA-45DB-93AA-74B3A3A20293/20.05.20_ABN_Restarting_Neurology_Services_post_COVID_v1.pdf

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/covid-19-prioritisation-within-community-health-services-with-annex_19-march-2020/

■ Obesity: Children

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[95995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his Department's policy to halve childhood obesity by 2030, as outlined in the childhood obesity plan, published in June 2018.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 1 October 2020]: 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan including our ambition to halve the number of children living with obesity by 2030.

■ Parkinson's Disease: Neurology

Jim Shannon:

[\[86669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) re-establish access to specialist neurology services for Parkinson's patients and (b) provide guidance to services on prioritising urgent patient unmet need.

Jim Shannon:

[86670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of access to health services for people with advanced Parkinson's during the covid-19 pandemic; and what plans are in place to ensure people with Parkinson's have the support they need.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment of access to health services for advanced Parkinson's patients during the COVID-19 pandemic has been made. Early in the pandemic NHS England and NHS Improvement advised in-person consultations "should only take place when absolutely necessary". Providers have been rolling out remote consultations using video, telephone, email and text message services as a priority, including for those with neurological conditions.

To support the delivery of high-quality services for patients with neurological conditions during the pandemic, the Association of British Neurologists (ABN) published a range of guidance to assist healthcare professionals in the prioritisation of services. This guidance can be found at the following link:

www.theabn.org/page/covid19_response

Furthermore, the ABN has now published specific guidance on recommencing neurology services in the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, including those for people with Parkinson's disease. This guidance contains assessments on which services and patients require urgent prioritisation, taking into account the severity and onset of symptoms. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also provided a range of prioritisation advice for restarting community services, which set out how to meet the needs of people with neurological conditions like Parkinson's safely and effectively. This guidance can be found at the following links:

cdn.ymaws.com/www.theabn.org/resource/collection/65C334C7-30FA-45DB-93AA-74B3A3A20293/20.05.20_ABN_Restarting_Neurology_Services_post_COVID_v1.pdf

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/covid-19-prioritisation-within-community-health-services-with-annex_19-march-2020/

■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus

Jackie Doyle-Price:

[92644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role he plans local pharmacies to play in delivering the Government's ambition for widespread national testing for covid-19; and whether he plans to allocate additional funding to the pharmacy sector to ensure that sector's long term sustainability.

Jo Churchill:

We will use existing testing facilities to meet our testing priorities. This will mean using testing both across National Health Service and Public Health England settings (pillar 1), as well as through pillar 2 tests at drive through, walk in and via home

testing groups. As part of the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review, funding for community pharmacy is being discussed.

Justin Madders: [\[97609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with community pharmacies to determine whether there are ongoing pressures on their services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and I meet regularly with key stakeholders to determine the impact of COVID-19.

In respect of stakeholders representing community pharmacy, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I have hosted regular meetings with a wide range of primary care stakeholders, including the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, to discuss the pressures community pharmacies are facing and what further support they need to be able to support patients in their communities, and will continue to do so.

Christian Wakeford: [\[99793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding has been made available to community pharmacies to help them deal with increased demand for their services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has put in place an unprecedented financial package during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support to all businesses, including community pharmacies. We have also made £370 million in advance payments to alleviate cash flow pressures and have provided extra funding to cover the costs of Bank Holiday opening, a new medicine delivery service for shielded patients, and measures taken by community pharmacy to support social distancing. For June to September 2020, there has also been an increase of £15 million per month to reimbursement prices of the most commonly prescribed generic medicines.

Additional funding, for costs incurred during the peak of the pandemic, is being actively discussed with the sector. We will also carefully consider other representations on how we can further support community pharmacy so they can continue to deliver.

■ Pharmacy: Health Services

Dr Luke Evans: [\[95235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the provision of healthcare by community pharmacies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has put in place an unprecedented financial package during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support to all businesses, including community

pharmacies. We have also made £370 million in advance payments to alleviate cash flow pressures and have provided extra funding to cover the costs of Bank Holiday opening, a new medicine delivery service for shielded patients, and measures taken by community pharmacy to support social distancing. For June to September 2020, there has also been an increase of £15 million per month to reimbursement prices of the most commonly prescribed generic medicines.

Additional funding, for costs incurred during the peak of the pandemic, is being actively discussed with the sector. We will also carefully consider other representations on how we can further support community pharmacy so they can continue to deliver.

HOME OFFICE

■ British Nationality: Windrush Generation

Patrick Grady:

[\[110850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to automatically grant British citizenship to British born Windrush descendants whose families gained rights to settle in the UK under the Immigration Act 1971.

Priti Patel:

Individuals born in the UK prior to 1 January 1983 are British citizens. A person born in the UK since 1983 will be a British citizen automatically if either parent was a British citizen or settled in the UK at the time of the birth. This includes any person whose parent was a member of the Windrush generation with indefinite leave to remain granted by the Immigration Act 1971.

A child born before 1 July 2006 will only acquire citizenship automatically through their father if their parents were married. There is a provision in nationality law for such a person to register as a British citizen if they would have become a British citizen automatically had their parents been married. This provision extends to individuals born in the UK to members of the Windrush generation that were granted indefinite leave to remain under the Immigration Act 1971. Those applying under this provision do not have to pay a registration fee.

The British Nationality Act 1981 (Remedial) Order 2019 further provides that such a person may register as a British citizen without needing to meet the good character requirement. The Order specifically amends the British Nationality Act 1981 to address the Supreme Court's finding that the good character requirement for registration under certain routes was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ EDO MBM Technology: Turkey**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[110212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether there are any extant export licences for the supply of equipment to Turkey by EDO MBM Technology Ltd.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

There are no extant licences in scope of this request.

JUSTICE**■ Armed Forces: Legal Representation**

John Healey: [\[107589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many criminal cases brought against a member of the armed forces received funding from the public purse on legal representation for the complainant from 2010 to 2020.

John Healey: [\[107590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil cases relating to allegations of wrongdoing by a member of the armed forces received funding from the public purse for legal representation for the complainant from 2010 to 2020.

John Healey: [\[107591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much has been spent from the public purse on legal representation for complainants on (a) criminal and (b) civil cases in relation to allegations of wrongdoing by members of the armed forces since 2010.

Alex Chalk:

This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT**■ Bicycles: Lighting**

Owen Thompson: [\[108260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to establish a standard mandatory (a) brightness and (b) width of flood for bicycle lights.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The lighting of road vehicles, including bicycles, is regulated by the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 (as amended). To control light output bicycle lamps emitting a steady light must comply with British Standard 6102: Part 3 or an equivalent European standard. The standard includes maximum and minimum luminous intensity requirements, and defines the beam pattern to ensure the road

surface is adequately lit whilst minimising glare to other road users. Flashing lamps may also be used provided they comply with the mandatory minimum luminous intensity requirement.

It is an offence to dazzle other road users with bicycle lamps. There are no current plans to change these provisions.

■ **Bus Services: Local Government**

Daisy Cooper: [\[109694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending the Bus Services Act 2017 to permit local councils to operate bus companies directly.

Rachel Maclean:

The Bus Services Act 2017 does not permit local authorities to establish a municipal bus company as part of a bus franchising proposal.

We believe the Act offers the flexibility for local authorities and their local bus operators to reach agreement on how to deliver the best bus services that meet passengers' needs.

■ **Buses: Carbon Emissions**

Andrew Selous: [\[109195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made in delivering the 4,000 zero emission buses announced by the Prime Minister in February 2020.

Andrew Selous: [\[109196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he plans to take to support bus operators with the additional costs of purchasing zero emission buses to deliver the Government's policy of 4,000 new zero emission buses.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to delivering at least 4,000 zero emission buses.

Further details, including government support for the additional costs of purchasing zero emission buses, will be announced after the Spending Review has concluded.

■ **Hammersmith Bridge: Boats**

Ruth Cadbury: [\[107665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations he has made to the (a) Port of London Authority and (b) London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to allow for the safe passage of river traffic under Hammersmith Bridge.

Rachel Maclean:

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, as the bridge owner, took the decision to close Hammersmith Bridge to river traffic in August 2020, as advised within the Case for Continued Safe Operation. Public safety is the top priority and the

Governments wants to see the bridge reopened to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic as soon as it is safe to do so.

As you may be aware the Government has established a Taskforce – led by Baroness Vere – to bring together both local Councils, Transport for London and the Port of London Authority to assess and determine next steps.

The Department for Transport and the Port of London Authority continue to hold constructive discussions with Hammersmith and Fulham on the possibility of revisiting the Case for Continued Safe Operation to allow controlled and limited river traffic; any changes will be dependent on expert engineers determining that any risks are adequately controlled.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[107666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to allow for the safe passage of river traffic under Hammersmith Bridge.

Rachel Maclean:

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, as the bridge owner, took the decision to close Hammersmith Bridge to river traffic in August 2020, as advised within the Case for Continued Safe Operation. Public safety is the top priority and the Governments wants to see the bridge reopened to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic as soon as it is safe to do so.

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The Department for Transport and the Port of London Authority continue to hold constructive discussions with Hammersmith and Fulham on the possibility of revisiting the Case for Continued Safe Operation to allow controlled and limited river traffic; any changes will be dependent on expert engineers determining that any risks are adequately controlled.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Iron and Steel

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[109187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to introduce a minimum proportion usage of UK steel in HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

The contractors involved in the delivery of HS2 have only recently commenced their procurement of steel for HS2 and therefore it is not possible to determine at this time what percentage of that steel will be British, but, the Government's guidance on the procurement of steel was published in November 2015 and subsequently updated in December 2016. All major government projects are required to take cognisance of the Crown Commercial Service Procurement Policy Note 11/16: "Procuring Steel in Major Projects - Revised Guidance"

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-1116-procuring-steel-in-major-projects-revised-guidance>).

Whilst HS2 Ltd does not directly buy steel, it does apply a strategic and transparent approach to the sourcing of steel for the HS2 Programme through its Tier 1 contractors and their supply chains. HS2 Ltd is governed by the Utility Contract Regulations and ensures a fair procurement process which complies with UK procurement law and the Government policy on the procurement of steel. I can confirm that the UK steel industry is already delivering for HS2 including 1,130 tonnes from Darlington-based Cleveland Bridge. Celsa Steel in Cardiff for 1,800 tonnes of loose steel and rebar. Caunton Engineering in Nottinghamshire for 2,400 tonnes of structural steel.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Biomethane

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[109178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has been made on the role of biomethane in decarbonising Heavy Goods Vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has supported operator trials using biomethane in heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) through our recently completed £20m Low Emission Freight and Logistics Trials (LEFT) programme, delivered with Innovate UK. A final report will be published this month and its conclusions will support the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which is due to be published later this year.

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[109179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his assessment is of the (a) number of and (b) proportion of the total fleet of Heavy Good Vehicles powered by biomethane by 2030.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has not made any assessment of the number or proportion of heavy goods vehicles that could be powered by biomethane by 2030.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Emma Hardy: [\[107726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a retrospective emission-based grant to coach operators with respect to their investment in Euro 6 compliant vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

In local authorities with NO₂ exceedances, coach and bus operators are eligible for grants from clean air funding to help with the cost of replacing or upgrading vehicles. Grants are not given retrospectively to subsidise the cost of a vehicle that has already been purchased as this would not represent a good use of public funds.

■ Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen

Mark Pritchard:

[\[109243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to expand the UK's network of hydrogen refuelling stations.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK is particularly well placed to be a leader in hydrogen and fuel cell powered transportation due to our high-quality engineering and manufacturing capability in relevant supply chains creating opportunities for investment and jobs. The Government's £23m Hydrogen for Transport Programme is increasing the uptake of fuel cell electric vehicles and delivering new refuelling stations and upgrading some existing stations, as well as deploying hundreds of new hydrogen vehicles. We have consulted on ending the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans by 2035 or earlier if a faster transition appears feasible. As part of our consultation on bringing forward the end to the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans, Government is considering what further measures are required to support the uptake of zero emission vehicles.

■ Railway Network: Nature Conservation

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[108245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2020 to Question 102854, what steps Network Rail (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to implement recommendations four and six from the 2018 Varley Review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail will develop a baseline database of habitats and biodiversity across its estate such that long-term management plans can be developed in the same way as those for other railway assets such as track and embankments.

Network Rail are creating a culture dedicated to enhancing natural habitats and, will continue to strive towards demonstrating leadership by partnering with experts, communities and lineside neighbours. Training and recruitment will ensure that the organisation has specialist skills and competencies.

■ Railway Stations: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[107775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to reverse Beeching closures in West Sussex.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Restoring Your Railway programme prioritises levelling-up and restoring connections to communities across the country including where lines and stations were closed in the Beeching cuts.

The second round of the Ideas Fund received 51 applications including for the Arundel Chord, sponsored by the Hon Member.

We will be announcing the outcome of the second round of the Ideas Fund in the coming weeks.

■ Railways: Compensation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[108280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Rail delays and compensation 2020, published 21 October 2020, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the conclusion 24% of passengers needed to chase their delay repay claim.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department commissions research on Rail Delays and Compensation every two years to measure the success of its passenger compensation policies. The 2020 findings show that overall satisfaction with the claims process has improved since 2018. The proportion of passengers who said they had to chase their Delay Repay claim has reduced by five percentage points, and of those who chased their claim, over half received a decision within two weeks. Overall 94% of passengers surveyed had their claim resolved within the Office for Rail and Road's target of four weeks, up six percentage points from 2018. We will use the research findings to continue our work with the rail industry to improve compensation claims processes.

■ Railways: Veterans

Sajid Javid:

[\[107630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to work with the (a) armed forces, (b) national voluntary groups and (c) regional voluntary groups to ensure as many veterans as possible in (i) Bromsgrove District and (ii) the UK benefit from the Veterans' Railcard.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The new Veterans' Railcard will benefit approximately 830,000 HM Armed Forces Veterans who are not eligible for existing railcards. Officials are working closely with the Office for Veterans' Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, Veterans UK and charities such as Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion to raise awareness and ensure as many veterans as possible benefit from the railcard, with more than 4,000 sold during its first week on sale.

At launch we worked with high-profile veterans on a campaign targeting television, radio, print and digital media with the story featured by more than 100 regional radio stations across the UK. We will continue to work with stakeholders to raise awareness over the coming months.

■ Roads: Death

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fatal road traffic collisions were recorded in (a) Sussex and (b) England in (i) 2015, (ii) 2016, (iii) 2017, (iv) 2018, (v) 2019 and (vi) 2020 to date.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of fatal reported personal injury road accidents in the Sussex police force and England between 2015 and 2019 can be found in the table below.

The latest annual published statistics are for 2019. The final data on reported personal injury road accidents in Great Britain for 2020 will be published in September 2021.

REPORTED FATAL ROAD ACCIDENTS, SUSSEX AND ENGLAND, 2015 TO 2019

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of fatal road accidents in Sussex ¹	41	52	50	43	42
Number of fatal road accidents in England	1,373	1,425	1,437	1,427	1,403

Source: DfT, STATS19

¹ Includes East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions

Selaine Saxby:

[\[109756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the Treasury on ensuring that forthcoming transport spending decisions support the aims of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to tackling climate change and reducing emissions from transport. The Department for Transport and HM Treasury hold regular discussions to consider how forthcoming spending decisions align with ambitions to decarbonise the sector.

■ Transport: Refrigeration**Bim Afolami:**[\[107721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason transport refrigeration units are exempt from the Clean Air Zone Framework in England.

Rachel Maclean:

Individual refrigeration units can cause significant levels of pollution; however the standards set out for charging Clean Air Zones (CAZs) set out in the CAZ framework are focussed on vehicle tailpipe emissions, which are the greatest source of roadside pollution by a significant margin.

There are also technical limitations to using CAZs to control such vehicles. CAZs rely on Automated Number Plate Recognition to identify the Euro class of a vehicle but cannot identify whether or not they are a refrigerated vehicle; it would not, at present, be possible to use a CAZ in this way.

Bim Afolami:[\[107722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how his Department monitors the level of emissions caused by transport refrigeration units; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce such emissions to achieve the target of net zero by 2050.

Rachel Maclean:

Emissions from transport refrigeration units are governed by Regulation (EU) 2016/1628, which controls gaseous and particulate pollutants from engines of Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM). This Regulation implements legislative requirements that an engine for NRMM must be approved against before it can be marketed within the UK.

The Department will be working closely with DEFRA and BEIS to ensure the emissions of NRMM, such as transport refrigeration units, reduce in line with the Government's net zero commitments.

To improve air quality, the UK Government announced its intention to remove the entitlement to use red diesel from April 2022, except for non-commercial heating, agriculture, fish farming and rail. This will ensure that the tax system incentivises users of polluting diesel fuel to change practices or pay for their harmful emissions.

The Government has recently consulted on this and is currently analysing responses.

Bim Afolami:[\[107723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 109 on page 20 of the Clean Air Zone Framework, published in February 2020, what support his Department is providing to local authorities setting up Clean Air Zones to help encourage the upgrade of refrigeration units on cold chain vehicles to the least polluting options.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not provide any specific advice or support to local authorities with regard to this issue. It is for local authorities to determine their own local measures and exemptions as part of their local plan submitted to the Government.

We are also supporting the development of cleaner alternatives that affected businesses can switch to by doubling the funding provided for the energy innovation programme, accelerating the design and production of clean energy technologies.

TREASURY

■ Bank Mellat

Tulip Siddiq: [\[107704\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse was of his Department's settlement with Bank Mellat; whether that money has been paid to Bank Mellat; and whether a Treasury licence was granted to make that payment.

John Glen:

HM Treasury reached a settlement agreement with Bank Mellat on 18 June 2019. The amount paid in respect of the settlement was €91,352,709.35. This concluded the litigation with Bank Mellat which HM Treasury had been defending for over 10 years. Bank Mellat's original claim was for \$4.3 billion in damages. Bank Mellat is not subject to UK, EU, or UN sanctions and therefore a licence was not required for HM Treasury to make this payment.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[108306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether there is Government support available for businesses affected by covid-19 (a) tier 2 and (b) tier 3 restrictions in place in neighbouring areas.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the pandemic, the government's priority has been clear: to protect lives and livelihoods. The government has had to take the difficult step of introducing restrictions on businesses and individuals to bring the virus under control. As measures to control the virus have changed, government support has evolved too.

In response to the England-wide restrictions announced by the Prime Minister on the 31 October, we have announced a new set of national support measures. This includes an extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, more generous support for the self-employed, extended application windows for government-backed loans and cash grants of up to £3,000 for businesses forced to close. We have also provided local authorities with £1.1bn to enable them to support businesses over the coming months, as they form a key part of local economies.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:**[\[108288\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate additional financial support to (a) hostels and (b) other group accommodation providers to ensure that they have adequate funding until the 2021 tourist season.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on hostels and other accommodation providers.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 on the accommodation sector.

Some of the sector has already benefitted from the wide range of support, launched by the Government, to safeguard the economy during the pandemic. This includes a temporary reduction on VAT for tourism and hospitality from 20% to 5% until the end of March, and the deferral of VAT payments; a year-long business rates holiday for eligible businesses; grant schemes including the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant and the Local Authority Discretionary Grant; the Self Employed Income Support Scheme, and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We have also provided local authorities with £1.1bn to enable them to support businesses over the coming months, as they form a key part of local economies.

In response to the England-wide restrictions announced by the Prime Minister on the 31 October, we have announced a new set of national support measures. This includes an extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to March 2021, more generous support for the self-employed, extended application windows for government-backed loans and cash grants of up to £3,000 for businesses forced to close.

While we will not be able to protect every single job or save every single business, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses, we will continue to monitor the impact of Government support with regard to supporting businesses, individuals, and sectors such as accommodation as we respond to this pandemic.

Emma Hardy:[\[108289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide additional financial support to hostels which have been unable to reopen due to the covid-19 restrictions since 23 March 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on organisations like hostels.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments such as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 on the accommodation sector.

Some of the sector has already benefitted from the wide range of support, launched by the Government, to safeguard the economy during the pandemic. This includes the deferral of VAT payments, a year-long business rates holiday for eligible businesses, the Self Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

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While we will not be able to protect every single job or save every single business, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs, or starting new businesses, we will continue to monitor the impact of Government support with regard to supporting businesses, individuals, and sectors such as accommodation as we respond to this pandemic.

WALES

■ Business: Wales

Chris Evans:

[\[109310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the first Minister of Wales on financial support for businesses during covid-19 restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with the First Minister of Wales and his Ministerial team on our governments' responses to Covid-19.

Over the past eight months of this crisis, the UK Government and the Welsh Government have worked together co-operatively on measures to help people in Wales get through the Covid outbreak.

The UK Government has guaranteed £5 billion in further funding to the Welsh Government to support its response to the virus. In addition to the extra funding our Coronavirus Business Loan Scheme has supported over 1,600 Welsh businesses,

our Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has protected over 401,000 jobs, our Self-Employed Income Support Scheme has helped over 108,000 self-employed people and we have backed 48,000 bounce back loans.

The Government's extension of CJRS to the end of March further demonstrates that we are taking the steps needed to provide further financial support to protect jobs and businesses in Wales and right across the UK.

■ Economic Situation: Wales

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with Welsh business representatives on the recovery of the Welsh economy from the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with a wide range of Welsh businesses and business representative organisations about the effects of Covid-19 and economic recovery.

It is clear that thriving businesses are critical to economic growth and the Government has provided unprecedented levels of support to businesses across the UK to ensure that we are in the best possible place to drive economic recovery from the Covid-19 outbreak.

■ Tourism: Wales

Chris Evans:

[\[109311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps the Government is taking to help protect employment in the tourism sector in Wales from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

The UK Government has protected jobs in Wales' tourism sector through a far-reaching range of measures, including cuts to VAT, incentives to keep workers in their jobs and the Enjoy Summer Safely campaign, which encouraged thousands of people to get back out and enjoy the best Wales has to offer.

We recognise the challenging times ahead. We are increasing support for businesses and employees in Wales by extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. Both schemes provide invaluable support to the hard-hit tourism and hospitality sectors that are so crucially important in Wales.

Our Plan for Jobs will also make available up to £30 billion to protect jobs, including those in the tourism sector.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Equal Pay****Helen Hayes:**[\[109510\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the effect on (a) the gender pay gap and (b) women of the suspension of the enforcement of employers' obligations to report data on the gender pay gap in the 2019-20 financial year.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is committed to levelling up and making the UK a country where equality of opportunity exists for everyone. As part of this we want to see more employers offering measures such as flexible working and returnships, which aim to help people return to work after a break due to caring responsibilities. We know that measures like these can improve career prospects for both women and men.

In recognition of the unprecedented uncertainty and pressure facing employers due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission suspended enforcement of the gender pay gap reporting deadlines for the 2019/20 reporting year. The data that employers would have had to submit by April this year, had enforcement not been suspended, would have been calculated from a snapshot date before the COVID-19 outbreak. The snapshot date was 31 March 2019 for public sector employers and 5 April 2019 for the private and voluntary sector.

Despite the uncertainty this year, the UK's gender pay gap has fallen to a record low of 15.5% from 17.4%. We will continue to monitor the impact of the gender pay gap reporting regulations and will review their effectiveness by 2022.

■ Households: Coronavirus**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[97525\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking to ensure people living in multi-generational households do not have an increased risk of contracting covid-19.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has provided a range of guidance to support those living in multi-generational housing, alongside detailed advice to employers and key workers on how they can protect themselves and to reduce transmission. We will continue to ensure that our guidance is clear and enables people to protect themselves adequately, this includes guidance for those shielding. Supporting this guidance, we have given councils an additional £1.6bn COVID-19 budget fund to help them protect people during this national emergency.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Carer's Allowance**

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[109686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people who are entitled to carer's allowance (a) claim and (b) do not claim the benefit.

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[109687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of carer's allowance claimants (a) receive an earnings replacement benefit, (b) are eligible for underlying entitlement for carer's allowance and (c) claim for that underlying entitlement.

Justin Tomlinson:

Information on the number of people (i) receiving a payment for Carer's Allowance and (ii) have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance is published and available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>

■ Carer's Allowance: Coronavirus

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[110284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for carer's allowance during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The role that unpaid carers play has perhaps been more important than ever during the current emergency. That is why we have focussed on ensuring carers do not inadvertently stop receiving Carer's Allowance because of changes to patterns of care. This includes allowing emotional support to count towards the 35 hours of care being provided by the carer as well as relaxing the rules around breaks in care. These changes aimed to support carers whose role, in many cases, became harder due to the need to self-isolate or shield the person they care for. And I am pleased to be able to say that we have decided to extend these provisions until 12 May 2021. This is good news for those unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance who need some extra flexibility in the way they provide care during the current emergency, so as to continue to protect themselves and the people they are caring for.

■ Employment: Young People

Colleen Fletcher: [\[109410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of employment of 16 to 25-year olds.

Mims Davies:

Estimates of the number of people who are employed are compiled by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) using the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The latest estimate for the number of 16-24 year olds who are in employment is 3.537 million (June to August 2020), compared with 3.792 million for the period from January to March 2020.

All estimates used in this answer are publicly available on the ONS website (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/summaryoflabourmarketstatistics>).

■ Food Banks and Food Poverty: Poplar and Limehouse

Apsana Begum: [\[108299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of (a) the level of foodbank usage and (b) the level of food poverty in the Poplar and Limehouse constituency.

Will Quince:

No estimate has been made.

■ Funeral Payments

Carolyn Harris: [\[109490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what effect the 2018 reforms to the Social Fund's funeral expenses payments scheme have had on the processing times for payments under that scheme.

Carolyn Harris: [\[109491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what effect the 2018 reforms to the Social Fund's funeral expenses payments scheme have had on the number of claims (a) accepted and (b) rejected under that scheme.

Mims Davies:

The Social Fund Funeral Expenses Amendment Regulations came into force in spring 2018. Whilst data is not collated on the specific effects of these reforms, data on processing times and the number of claims accepted can be found in The Social Fund Annual Report 2018/19 which was published on GOV.UK on 4 November 2020.

Carolyn Harris: [\[109492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the 2018 reforms to the Social Fund's funeral expenses payments scheme, whether the changes to enable claimants to submit evidence electronically have been implemented in full.

Mims Davies:

Regulation 2 of The Social Fund Funeral Expenses Amendment Regulations 2018 allows for the electronic submission of evidence in connection with claims for social fund funeral payments. As a result, Funeral Directors are able to submit evidence electronically to support a claim for Funeral Expense Payments, and we continue to work on identifying a secure digital solution to extend this option to applicants.

Carolyn Harris: [\[109502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many funeral expenses payments claims took longer than six weeks to clear in (a) 2019-20 and (b) the first six months of 2020-21.

Mims Davies:

This information is not held.

■ **Funeral Payments: Coronavirus**

Carolyn Harris: [\[109494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether any changes have been made to the processing of funeral expense payments as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Carolyn Harris: [\[109495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether any changes made to the processing of funeral expenses payments as a result of the covid-19 outbreak have affected timescales for the completion of claims for those payments.

Carolyn Harris: [\[109496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether changes made to the processing of funeral expenses payments as a result of the covid-19 outbreak will be retained permanently.

Mims Davies:

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, steps have been taken to significantly speed up the processing of Funeral Expenses Payment claims in support of those who need it most. These measures will continue to form part of the department's response throughout the pandemic and we will consider if these should be retained permanently in due course.

■ Jobseeker's Allowance: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova: [\[108291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on extending six month eligibility for jobseeker's allowance during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

There have been no discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on extending eligibility for contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance during the covid-19 outbreak.

People who are entitled to contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or whose entitlement ends before they find employment, may have access to income-related support through Universal Credit. Entitlement will depend on individual circumstances.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[110126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many businesses have signed up to take part in the Kickstart scheme to date, by (a) region and (b) industry.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to my answer to question 107629, answered on 2 November 2020.

Justin Madders: [\[110161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for the Kickstart Scheme have been successful since the scheme opened.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to my answer to question 107629, answered on 2 November 2020.

Justin Madders: [\[110162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, is she will publish a breakdown of the reasons for unsuccessful applications to the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

Applications for funding from the DWP's Kickstart Scheme are assessed on (a) the fiscal competence of the employer and gateway, (b) the quality of the employability support provided, and (c) whether the jobs being created are additional. Guidance on ensuring an application meets these criteria is available on the Kickstart gov.uk website.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Disability**Andrew Rosindell:****[107613]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that disabled young people are able to access the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

We are encouraging employers to create a range of opportunities through the Kickstart Scheme for all young people aged 16 to 24 who are at risk of long-term unemployment - including those who have disabilities. Job Centre Plus Work Coaches will identify those young people most in need of the extra support offered by the Kickstart Scheme. We are also encouraging organisations that work with disabled young people to take part in the Kickstart scheme, this can include acting as gateway organisations for employers in their networks to take part in the Kickstart scheme. This will help ensure that young people with disabilities, as well as young people experiencing other disadvantages, are able to access the Kickstart Scheme.

DWP also offers a range of support programmes including Access to Work and Disability Confident to advise and support employers looking to take on disabled jobseekers – this support can be accessed through local Jobcentres or through gov.uk at: www.gov.uk/disability-confident.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Young Offenders**Peter Kyle:****[110187]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme placements have been offered to young people with a criminal record.

Mims Davies:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

■ Minimum Wage: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:****[109435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support is available for people on the National Minimum Wage, who are ineligible for the self-isolation payment, in the event that they have to self-isolate.

Justin Tomlinson:

People who are infected with Covid-19, or self-isolating in line with Government guidance are eligible for ESA, subject to the normal conditions of entitlement. We have removed the waiting days and claimants will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA without the requirement for fit notes or a Work Capability Assessment from day one. Households may also be able to claim Universal Credit where eligible. New claim advances are available urgently if a claimant needs financial support. These advances allow claimants to receive up to 100% of their estimated Universal Credit payment upfront. The Budget already announced that claimants will be able to access advances via phone or online, instead of having to

attend the jobcentre. This applies to all claimants, including those who are required to self-isolate.

■ National Insurance: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[109436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the digital solution to verify the identities of those applying for National Insurance numbers who have not been through the Home Office visa application process will go live.

Mims Davies:

DWP aims to reduce the reliance on a single Identity Verification Service by Quarter 2 in 2021. Part of this work is to introduce a new flexible reusable online service which will meet the needs of a wider range of customers that is not possible using a single solution. DWP will conduct the work to identify an online solution for those customers who have not been processed through the Home Office visa application process, to apply for National Insurance Numbers in the next Financial Year.

■ Occupational Health

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[109688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the response to the Health is everyone's business: proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss consultation, closed in July 2019, will be published.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to reducing the disability employment gap and supporting disabled people and those with health conditions to thrive at work. The consultation closed in October 2019. We received a good response from a range of stakeholders and are now considering the timing of the response in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We anticipate that a response will be available by the end of the year.

Background

The consultation '*Health is everyone's business: proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss*' ran between July – October 2019 and included proposals across four major policy areas:

1. Amend the legal framework to encourage early action to support individuals when they are absent from work and to facilitate more conversations to agree effective workplace modifications;
2. Reform of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) so that it is better enforced, more flexible, and support the lowest paid employees;
3. Measures to improve availability of high-quality, cost-effective occupational health (OH) services for employers; and

4. Advice and support from government for employers to understand and act on their responsibilities

We received a good response from a range of stakeholders.

■ Older Workers: Training

Sarah Olney:

[\[110208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's strategy is on retraining and reskilling people over the age of 60 who have become unemployed since the start of the covid-19 outbreak and who may struggle to find employment again.

Mims Davies:

The Government's Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people, including older workers, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and build the skills they need to get into work. This includes doubling the number of Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, increasing the number of sector-based work academy placements which support unemployed claimants of all ages through training and work experience to find a job, and a new online job finding support service.

DWP launched an online mid-life MOT in 2019, which aims to engage individuals more actively in health, finance and skills planning. The MOT directs individuals to the National Careers Service which offers a universal service for adults in England including people aged 50 years and over who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment. This should be of particular benefit for those out of work due to COVID-19 who may need to retrain or pivot career.

Adult skills are key in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage and we are working with the Department for Education who are continuing to invest £1.34 billion in 2020/21 in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). The principal purpose of the AEB is to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. From 1 August 2019, adults with limited digital skills can get access to fully funded specified digital skills qualifications. The AEB also funds learning in the workplace, where a learner has a statutory entitlement to full funding.

On 29 September, the Prime Minister also announced the launch of new digital bootcamps, in six areas, to support local regions and employers to fill in-demand vacancies. The bootcamp training courses will provide valuable skills based on employer demand and will offer a fast track to a job interview on completion. Pending the success of the initial bootcamps, the Department for Education are planning to expand the digital bootcamps to more of the country from Spring 2021 and we also want to extend this model to include other technical skills training.

■ Pension Credit

Caroline Lucas:

[\[109282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of (a) the effect of non-take up of pension credit by eligible individuals on their need for

health and social care services and (b) the implications for auto-enrolment for pension credit of advances in data-matching; if she will make it her policy to commission an auto-enrolment pilot of persons eligible for pension credit; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

Justin Madders:

[\[110160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many personal independence assessments were completed in each month from April 2019 to August 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

Please see the table below which provides the number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments completed in each month from April 2019 to August 2019.

PIP ASSESSMENTS	APR-19	MAY-19	JUN-19	JUL-19	AUG-19
Total	78,580	81,070	74,530	84,400	75,240

Please note:

All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 10.

All of the above data is derived from contractual management information produced by the Assessment Providers.

The above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication standards.

■ **Redundancy and Unemployment: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[109408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of (a) redundancy and (b) unemployment.

Mims Davies:

Estimates of the number of redundancies and the number of people who are unemployed are compiled by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) using the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The latest estimate for the number of redundancies is 227,000 (June to August 2020), compared with 107,000 for the period from January to March 2020.

The latest estimate of the number of people who are unemployed is 1.522 million (June to August 2020), compared with 1.365 million for the period from January to March 2020.

All estimates used in this answer are publicly available on the ONS website (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/summaryoflabourmarketstatistics>)

■ Rented Housing: Epsom and Ewell

Chris Grayling: [\[110067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Answer 2 November to Question 107609, if she will make an assessment of the number of properties on the rental market in Epsom and Ewell which fall into the lower quartile financial limits for housing support.

Will Quince:

We do not currently hold information to make such an assessment.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Catherine McKinnell: [\[109349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of reintroducing (a) benefits sanctions and (b) welfare conditionality for disabled claimants during the covid-19 outbreak on the financial security of those claimants.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, we are financially supporting an unprecedented number of new and existing benefit claimants and have made a number changes to the benefits system. At the start we switched off conditionality for all claimants, supporting people during very uncertain times. After 1st July, we began to reintroduce Claimant Commitments. Any work related activity which may be agreed by disabled people as part of this Commitment, continues to be tailored in light of their health condition to ensure it is reasonable.

We ensure that our more vulnerable claimants are further protected by exempting those with more serious medical conditions and disabilities from any form of conditionality and sanctions. Our guidance continues to be tailored in light of the ongoing public health situation, the national working environment and of their health condition to ensure it is reasonable.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[109760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of ending mandatory reassessments for benefits related to diagnosed irreversible disabilities or progressive conditions.

Justin Tomlinson:

Since 29 September 2017, those placed in ESA's Support Group and the UC equivalent who have the most severe and lifelong health conditions or disabilities,

whose level of function would always mean that they would have Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity, and be unlikely ever to be able to move into work, will no longer be routinely reassessed.

These criteria are applied at either the initial Work Capability Assessment or for existing claimants at their next assessment. We need to ensure that we have the right and most up to date information to apply the criteria fairly and make sure we identify everyone who should benefit from it. The people who best understand how their health problem or disability affects them are the individuals themselves, and so it is only right that we ask them for their information. However, we will do this in the least intrusive way and, wherever possible, carry out a paper based assessment.

■ Universal Credit

Marsha De Cordova: [\[108292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on previewing the cap on savings for universal credit recipients.

Will Quince:

We have no plans to make any changes to the £16,000 savings limit, and no recent discussions have taken place to that effect.

The limit strikes a balance between protecting less well-off people and the taxpayer, whilst at the same time encouraging saving.

Justin Madders: [\[109433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims are subject to deductions for tax credit overpayments; and how many of those deductions are related to the cross over period between tax credit claims ending and universal credit claims starting.

Will Quince:

The latest available data, for March 2020, shows around 15% of all Universal Credit claims had a deduction for Tax Credit Overpayments.

We do not capture data on how many of the deductions taken from Universal Credit are due to the cross over period between tax credit claims ending and Universal Credit claims starting.

When a claim for Universal Credit is made and it has been established that the customer meets the basic entitlement conditions, DWP automatically instructs HMRC to end the Tax Credit award with effect from the day before the Universal Credit claim was made. Delays in ending Tax Credits are therefore minimal once the basic entitlement conditions of Universal Credit have been established.

When a Tax Credit claim comes to an end and the claimant makes a new claim to Universal Credit, any outstanding Tax Credit overpayments are transferred to DWP. HMRC will inform the claimant prior to transfer and provide details of the debt to be transferred.

Once transferred, the claimant is notified via their online Universal Credit journal about the rate of deduction in respect of Tax Credits debt. Where a claimant is in financial hardship they can contact DWP Debt Management to discuss and agree a sustainable rate of repayment.

From 3rd April 2020, other deductions, including Tax Credit overpayments, were suspended for three months due to Covid-19, resulting in none of these deductions being taken during May and June 2020.

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[109685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of changing carer's allowance status from unearned income to earned income for universal credit claimants.

Will Quince:

No such estimate has been made.

Carer's Allowance is taken into account in the calculation of Universal Credit in the same way as the benefits it replaced.

Universal Credit includes an additional amount for carers at the rate of £162.92 per monthly assessment period. This amount recognises the additional contribution and responsibilities associated with caring.

■ Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit: Coronavirus

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[109676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of (a) making the uplift to universal credit and working tax credit permanent and (b) extending that uplift to legacy benefits.

Will Quince:

The Government introduced a package of temporary welfare measures worth around £9.3 billion this year to help with the financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the £20 weekly increase to the Universal Credit Standard Allowance rates and Working Tax Credit basic element as temporary measures for the 20/21 tax year. There are no plans to extend this to legacy benefits.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employed

Stephen Farry: [\[109749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government plans to extend the Minimum Income Floor suspension for six months.

Mims Davies:

The suspension of the Minimum Income Floor for Universal Credit that was due to expire on 12 November 2020 will be extended to the end of April 2021.

Helen Hayes:

[\[110194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of reinstating the minimum income floor for Universal Credit on people who have been unable to access support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Mims Davies:

The Minimum Income Floor will not now be re-instated from 12/11/20 when current Covid easement regulations were due to cease. After careful consideration of the ongoing public health situation and the national working environment, the current suspension of the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit has been extended to the end of April 2021.

Universal Credit is available to support claimants even where they are not entitled to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[110255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October 2020 to Question 105366 on Music: Teachers, whether the relaxation of the Minimum Income Floor will be extended beyond 13 November 2020, as currently provided for in The Universal Credit (Coronavirus)(Further Measures) Regulations 2020 SI 2020 No.371.

Mims Davies:

The suspension of the Minimum Income Floor for Universal Credit that was due to expire on 12 November 2020 will be extended to the end of April 2021.