



Daily Report

Monday, 9 November 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:12 P.M., 09 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Beer: Small Businesses****Adam Afriye:** [\[110761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether breweries will be permitted to sell alcohol for home delivery under the new national covid-19 lockdown restrictions in operation from 5 November 2020.

Paul Scully:

Off licenses and licensed shops selling alcohol, including breweries, are permitted to remain open during the new national restrictions in place from 5 November.

■ **Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Sussex****Andrew Griffith:** [\[109766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of loans provided through the Bounce Back Loan scheme to businesses in Sussex.

Paul Scully:

A breakdown on the number of loans provided through the Bounce Back Loan scheme as of 4 October in the Sussex constituencies is in the table below.

CONSTITUENCY	NUMBER OF LOANS OFFERED	VALUE OF LOANS OFFERED (£)
Arundel and South Downs	2,558	74,801,366
Bexhill and Battle	2,283	64,135,053
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	1,559	40,215,614
Brighton, Kemptown	1,456	39,190,890
Brighton, Pavilion	3,007	90,091,158
Chichester	2,508	75,203,785
Crawley	1,724	51,495,006
East Worthing and Shoreham	1,853	51,588,794
Eastbourne	1,828	50,350,115
Hastings and Rye	2,230	60,169,178
Horsham	2,195	66,067,315

CONSTITUENCY	NUMBER OF LOANS OFFERED	VALUE OF LOANS OFFERED (£)
Hove	2,733	80,679,774
Lewes	1,813	51,297,358
Mid Sussex	2,128	61,380,476
Wealden	2,425	72,018,072
Worthing West	1,836	50,747,561
Total	34,136	979,431,515

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Emma Hardy:

[\[109587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether businesses who have been adversely affected by the Rule of 6 and 10.00pm curfew restrictions in tier 1 local covid alert level areas are eligible for covid-19 business grant support.

Paul Scully:

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

The Government will provide further financial support. The furlough scheme is being extended for a month with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked. The mortgage holiday will also be extended to reassure homeowners. Business premises which are legally forced to close will receive grants worth up to £3,000 per month in England, and £1.1bn is being provided to Local Authorities to enable them to support businesses.

Barbara Keeley:

[\[110766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to monitor compliance with covid-19 guidance among office-based businesses.

Paul Scully:

Across all industries, 97% of UK businesses say they are aware of the government safer workplace guidance. Source: '[Business Impact of Covid-19 Survey](#)', ONS, October 2020.

Across all industries, only 2% of UK businesses said that they have not implemented any safety measures in the workplace. Source: '[Business Impact of Covid-19 Survey](#)', ONS, October 2020.

A survey of the public found that almost two thirds of employees (63%) in Great Britain had been consulted on safer working practices by their employer, whilst a similar proportion (62%) said that their employer is displaying a covid-secure poster in their workplace. Source: ‘ [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#) ’, ONS, October 2020.

Bill Esterson:

[110799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance he has given to businesses on allowing staff to take time off as a result of contracting covid-19 or being told to isolate by NHS Track and Trace.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided guidance to numerous workplaces here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>. These make it clear what steps need to be applied and link through to the Department for Health and Social Care’s latest advice around self-isolation and Test and Trace.

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

Colleen Fletcher:

[111543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses, by sector, that have reduced the number of people they employ since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish data in their Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey (BICS) on the percentage of businesses, who have not permanently stopped trading, that have made redundancies in the last two weeks. Between 21st September to 4th October, surveyed business reported that 1% of their workforce were made redundant. This data, including industry breakdowns, can be found at:

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

The Government is committed to supporting businesses and workers during this pandemic. Through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, we have supported 9.6 million jobs, across 1.2 million employers, with claims worth £41.4 billion. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that this scheme will be extended until the 31st March 2021, providing both support and certainty to businesses.

■ Carbon Emissions

Alex Sobel:

[\[109610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress the Government has made on meeting the net-zero by 2050 target to date.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Tackling climate change and delivering our world-leading net zero target is a key priority for the Government, the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed this. We have decarbonised our economy faster than any G20 country this century.

Our existing carbon budgets are among the most ambitious in the world and continue to set the right level of challenge for the years ahead. We have met our first two carbon budgets and our latest emissions projections show that we are on track to meet the third.

Ahead of COP26, and we will set out ambitious plans across key sectors of the economy to meet our carbon budgets and net zero – including an Energy White Paper, Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Heat and Building Strategy. This will build on the strong foundations we have established in the Clean Growth Strategy (which set out our plans to reduce emissions across the whole economy through to 2032) and the commitments in our manifesto.

Alex Sobel:

[\[109612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to educate the public on the net-zero by 2050 target.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Achieving our net zero target must be a shared endeavour between governments, businesses and individuals.

We are increasing our work on public engagement on net zero, both in communicating the challenge, and giving people a say in shaping future policies. Publications such as the upcoming net zero strategy will provide important sources of information to engage the public on the governments net zero plans. In addition, Government has invited the public to shape policies on climate change through mechanisms such as consultations and deliberative workshops. We will continue to engage the public as we develop our plans for reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

■ Consumer Goods: Safety

Neil Coyle:

[\[109387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will introduce legislative proposals to give Trading Standards and the Office for Product Safety and Standards the power to (a) remove unsafe products from online marketplaces and (b) take additional action against platforms selling those products.

Neil Coyle:

[\[109389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to tackle unsafe toys being sold online.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe products can be sold in the UK. Both Local Authority Trading Standards and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) have powers to take action against manufacturers, importers or distributors who sell unsafe consumer products, including through online markets.

We are currently conducting a review of the Product Safety framework, including the impact of new technologies and e-commerce, to ensure it remains one of the best in the world in both protecting consumers and enabling businesses to innovate and grow.

In the coming months officials will be engaging with stakeholders on the current and future challenges and opportunities in relation to product safety, to inform the review.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[110889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the areas that were allocated additional financial support in response to going into the Tier 3 local covid alert level will still receive those funds.

Paul Scully:

Yes. We set out in guidance to local authorities on 3rd November what additional support will be available to make grants to business. This covers both during the period of national restrictions and for the prior period where some areas were in High and Very High Local Covid Alert Levels.

Where local authority areas were previously in Local Covid Alert Level 3 (Very High) they may have accessed additional enhanced business support settlements. These settlements are now part of the Additional Restrictions Grant and they will still receive the agreed funding.

■ **Coronavirus: Remote Working**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[110880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that clinically vulnerable people cannot be required to attend work by their employers if their work can be done remotely, during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Government guidance on shielding and protecting those who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 has been updated to clearly state that this group of people are strongly advised to work from home. If they are unable to do so they should not attend work for this period of restriction. The full guidance is available on GOV.UK.

The Government's safer working guidance makes clear what employers need to do to support clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable workers. In all instances, employers must carry out a workplace risk assessment and take action in line with this guidance, which can be found here:

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

Employers who dismiss an employee because they are, or have been, self-isolating, may be liable for unfair or automatically unfair dismissal. This will depend on all the circumstances of the case. Individuals, including those of higher clinical vulnerability, or those who live with someone in that category, may have valid reasons to believe that attending work would create a serious and imminent danger to their health, or to the health of the person they live with. In such cases, it could be automatically unfair to dismiss that individual for staying at home.

■ **Coronavirus: Social Distancing**

Daniel Zeichner:

[109419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when Vivacity Labs, operating on behalf of the Department, first used cameras that use artificial intelligence to monitor pedestrians to improve the collection of social distancing data in Cambridgeshire.

Amanda Solloway:

Vivacity Labs is one of many COVID-19 related projects funded through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Vivacity Labs project referred to was supported through the Innovate UK COVID-19 call for business-led innovation in response to global disruption due to the pandemic.

Vivacity Labs used smart sensors that do not pick up images to monitor road usage.

The data sets being used in this project date from April 2019. This project is applying a new algorithm to this existing data and analyses the spatial differences (gaps, interactions etc.) between different modes of transport and not individuals.

■ **Debenhams: Coronavirus**

Andrew Gwynne:

[110746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with Debenhams on their redundancy process during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Officials are in regular contact with Debenhams.

Whilst we cannot protect every job during this crisis, we continue to do everything we can to help people get through and back into work.

We know this continues to be a worrying time for their employees and families, and we stand ready to support them in any way we can.

Economic Situation: Coronavirus**Alex Sobel:**[\[109606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the economic recovery after the covid-19 outbreak is in line with the policy on meeting the net-zero by 2050 target.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As we recover from COVID-19, the Government intends to deliver a UK economy which is greener, more sustainable and more resilient. The UK is embracing the opportunity to become a world leader in low carbon technologies, services, and systems. The UK low-carbon economy could support up to 2 million jobs.

This year alone, the Government has committed billions in spending as we increase support for our low-carbon economy and green jobs across all sectors of the economy. For example, following the announcements in July, the Green Homes Grant is now live. Under the new scheme, the Government will fund up to two thirds of the cost of home improvements for over 600,000 homes, supporting 100,000 jobs in green construction.

We will continue to build on this even further and deliver a stronger, greener, more sustainable economy after this pandemic. Last month, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister outlined ambitious plans to make the UK the world leader in clean wind energy, boosting our ambition to generate 40GW through offshore wind by 2030.

Electronic Commerce: Regulation**Neil Coyle:**[\[109388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department are taking to ensure that online marketplaces are (a) enforcing safety regulations for third-party products sold on their platform and (b) accountable for the sale of unsafe products on their platform.

Paul Scully:

The UK's national regulator, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), works to ensure that major online marketplaces protect UK consumers from unsafe goods. As part of this, the OPSS is developing a voluntary, new commitment through which we will ask online marketplaces to agree additional actions they will take to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online.

The Government is also conducting a wider review of the Product Safety framework to ensure it remains one of the best in the world in both protecting consumers and enabling businesses to innovate and grow. The review will consider the impact on product safety of new technologies and new business models, including e-commerce.

Neil Coyle:[\[109390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he plans to update consumer laws (a) to include terms and conditions applicable to consumers

buying through online platforms and (b) for those terms to include warranties from online marketplaces on the quality and fitness for purpose of the products purchased.

Paul Scully:

Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, all goods sold by traders to consumers, including through online marketplaces, must be as described, of a satisfactory quality and fit for purpose. The Government keeps this legal framework under review to ensure consumers remain adequately protected.

■ **Energy Supply**

Alun Cairns:

[110809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the resilience of the National Grid as part of the UK's transition to net zero.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK has one of the most robust energy systems in the world. Maintaining a safe and secure energy supply is a key priority for this Government.

We work closely with the National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO), electricity operators, and Ofgem, to ensure our electricity and gas systems are able to respond to new challenges, including the transition to net zero, whilst continuing to ensure resilience.

In April 2019, the ESO published its plan to fully operate Great Britain's electricity system with zero carbon by 2025 and is undertaking a number of projects to explore how this can be achieved.

The Government will continue to work with the ESO to ensure that this is delivered in a manner that ensures the stability and security of the electricity system.

■ **Energy: Meters**

Alun Cairns:

[110810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of UK households have smart meters fitted.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Smart meters are replacing traditional gas and electricity meters in Great Britain as part of an essential infrastructure upgrade to make the energy system more efficient, flexible and ensure cost effective delivery of net zero.

Thirty-nine percent of meters in homes across Great Britain were smart meters as of 30 June 2020. The latest data on the rollout of smart meters is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/smart-meters-in-great-britain-quarterly-update-june-2020>. The next quarterly publication covering the period from July to end of September 2020 is due for release on 26 November.

■ Erasmus+ Programme and Horizon Europe

Kirsten Oswald:

[110847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the views of the Scottish Government and other devolved Administrations are reflected in the UK position in negotiations on continued UK participation in EU programmes Erasmus Plus and Horizon Europe after the transition period.

Amanda Solloway:

The Minister of State for Universities and I have regular conversations with our counterparts in the Scottish Government and other Devolved Administrations across a wide range of education and science, research and innovation issues, including those relating to possible future participation in Erasmus Plus and Horizon Europe.

The Government is open to participation in Horizon Europe if a fair and balanced deal can be reached. Alongside this, BEIS is working with the Devolved Administrations to develop credible options should alternative schemes be required. Funding for any continued participation in EU research and innovation Programmes or EU replacement schemes is subject to allocations at the Spending Review.

The Minister of State for Universities' discussions include the UK's approach to EU study and exchange programmes, including Erasmus+, where the government remains open to considering participation in some elements of the next programme. This will be subject to our ongoing negotiations with the EU. In parallel with the negotiations we are continuing to develop a UK-wide domestic alternative to Erasmus+, as a contingency measure. Decisions on funding beyond 2020-21 will be considered at future spending review processes, including Spending Review 2020 which will set out 2021-22 departmental budgets in November. The Devolved Administrations are also part of the governance and development process for the domestic alternative scheme, and we will continue to co-operate closely with them.

■ Fireworks: Safety

Stuart Anderson:

[109666]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that fireworks are used safely in (a) private homes and (b) commercial settings (i) on 5 November and (ii) during the traditional firework period.

Paul Scully:

There is a comprehensive regulatory framework in place for fireworks to reduce the risks to people and disturbance to animals. Existing legislation controls the sale, availability and use of fireworks, as well as setting a curfew and noise limit.

In order to further promote the safe and considerate use of fireworks, we launched a public awareness campaign on fireworks on 20 October, where we have partnered with stakeholders including animal welfare organisations and retail bodies.

People must follow the national coronavirus restrictions or those relevant in their local area. Information on the national and local COVID alert levels across the UK can be found on the GOV.UK website.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Justin Madders:

[\[109444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Green Home Grants have been approved since the scheme opened.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Green Homes Grant opened to applications on the 30 September 2020. As of 2nd November 2020, 31,279 grant applications have been received. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Justin Madders:

[\[109445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide a breakdown of the reasons for Green Home Grant application refusals.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We have designed the Green Homes Grant voucher application process to automate checks where possible and minimise the time taken for voucher approval. However, should a customer's application be rejected, they may receive correspondence advising they have been rejected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Quotes submitted are ineligible;
- The property is ineligible (for example due to its location);
- The customer has failed identity or land registry checks;
- The customer is ineligible for the low-income scheme;
- The measures selected are ineligible or no primary measure has been selected;
- An on-site audit has confirmed the customer is ineligible.

In order to raise any questions or concerns about the scheme, customers should contact the scheme administrator via the 'Contact us' link on the GOV.UK guidance pages. The first vouchers have now been issued and my officials will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Applications are thoroughly checked for compliance with the scheme rules to help ensure value for money, protect consumers, and detect malpractice.

Stuart Anderson:

[\[109664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on the distribution of Green Home Grants.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Green Homes Grant opened to applications on the 30 September 2020. As of 2nd November 2020, 31,279 grant applications have been received. BEIS will continue to monitor application data as the scheme progresses.

Thangam Debbonaire:[\[110854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Green Homes Grant scheme, how many installers had signed up to be a Green Heat Grant Installer by September 2020.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As of 2nd November, there were 1,141 businesses that are TrustMark registered and certified to install measures under the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme. BEIS will continue to monitor installer applications as the scheme progresses.

Mr Gregory Campbell:[\[111434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if will make an assessment of the potential merits of including Solar PV and Battery Storage in the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are listening to feedback on the Green Homes Grant, including on the type of technologies included in the scheme. The list of technologies currently included in the scheme reflects our assessment of the best balance between economic stimulus and maximising value for householders and taxpayers. We will assess potential technologies under consideration against the following broad policy criteria - job creation, carbon savings, fuel poverty, delivery confidence, value for money, along with BEIS' wider departmental objectives.

■ Horizon Europe**Darren Jones:**[\[109571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for the UK to become a third country member of Horizon Europe in the event that the UK does not agree a deal on its future relationship with the EU by the end of the transition period.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK is open to participation in Horizon Europe if we can agree a fair and balanced deal. We will make a final decision once it is clear whether such terms can be reached.

In tandem with our EU negotiations, as a responsible government, we are also developing alternative schemes to support international research and innovation collaboration. If we do not formally associate to Horizon Europe we will implement ambitious alternatives as quickly as possible from January 2021 and address the funding gap.

Under all scenarios it is our aim that UK organisations and entities continue to participate in Horizon Europe collaborative projects open to third countries, as well as in wider international collaborations. If we do not formally associate to Horizon Europe, UK organisations would still be able to participate in those elements of the programme, open to third countries. As part of our alternatives to Horizon Europe, we will make funding available to allow UK partners to participate in these schemes. Funding for EU programmes or for alternatives would be subject to allocations at the Spending Review.

■ Housing: Energy

Alex Sobel:

[109611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to introduce affordable decarbonized household energy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As stated in the Clean Growth Strategy (2017), the Government is committed to 'phase out the installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating in homes not connected to the gas grid, starting with new homes, during the 2020s.' The first part of this commitment, to decarbonise new homes, is being met through the Future Home Standard, on which government consulted earlier this year. The Future Homes Standard will require new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency, and is set to be introduced in 2025.

Additionally, we are providing financial support to help decarbonise homes on the gas grid. This is being done through:

- The domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) – a support scheme for low carbon heat installations in domestic buildings that will remain open to new applicants until March 2022. As of September 2020, the domestic RHI has supported around 82,300 homes make the transition to low carbon heat.
- The Green Homes Grant – In his Summer Economic Update, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £2bn Green Home Grant scheme that will support homeowners and landlords in England to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, reducing energy bills and carbon emissions, and supporting a green economic recovery. Under this new scheme, the government will fund up to two-thirds of the cost of home improvements for over 600,000 homes.

We intend to publish an updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for England by the end of the year which will provide further information on our plans to support low income and vulnerable households as we transition to net zero.

The Energy Company Obligation, worth £640m per year, focused on low income and vulnerable households, has made around 2.1m homes more energy efficient since it began in 2013.

■ Hydrogen

Alex Cunningham:

[\[110823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to maximise employment opportunities for UK workers from the supply chain required to increase the production and storage of hydrogen as part of the transition to a net zero carbon economy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Low carbon hydrogen is one of a handful of critical options needed to deliver net zero and presents an opportunity to deliver against our clean growth goals – meeting our decarbonisation needs while capturing commercial opportunities for UK firms. In November 2019 we published the Energy Innovation Needs Assessment (EINA) for hydrogen and fuel cells which identified that the future market for all hydrogen technologies could yield around £5.3bn of GVA and create nearly 50,000 jobs by 2050. This document is under review to reflect increased ambition from our move to a net zero target.

We are developing new policy to help realise these opportunities, including investible business models to support deployment, announcing the £100 million Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund to stimulate capital investment, and investing up to £121 million (between 2015 and 2021) in hydrogen innovation across the value chain.

We intend to publish a UK hydrogen strategy the strategy early in 2021 which will set out our strategic approach to hydrogen, and how we work with industry to build a robust UK supply chain capable of delivering low carbon hydrogen at scale to meet our net zero needs.

■ Licensed Premises: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[\[110796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason pubs and bars are not permitted to make off licence sales during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Paul Scully:

Under the new national restrictions in England pubs and bars are permitted to sell alcohol through delivery or via click and collect.

■ Life Sciences

Anthony Browne:

[\[109724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department are taking to ensure that the UK life sciences sector continues to have access to (a) research funding and (b) collaborative working opportunities with European partners after 31 December 2020.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government values the strong collaborative partnerships that we have across Europe and the globe in the areas of science, research and innovation and wants to continue to support these opportunities. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the March Budget that Government investment in R&D will increase to £22bn by 2024/25, the biggest-ever absolute increase.

The UK is open to participation in Horizon Europe if we can agree a fair and balanced deal. We will make a final decision once it is clear whether such terms can be reached.

If we do not formally associate to Horizon Europe or Euratom R&T, we will implement ambitious alternatives as quickly as possible from January 2021 and address the funding gap. Alternatives to Horizon Europe will address discovery, or 'curiosity-led' research, global collaboration and innovation. Under all scenarios it is our aim that UK organisations and entities continue to participate in Horizon Europe collaborative projects open to third countries, as well as in wider international collaborations. This applies across all eligible R&D including life sciences. Funding for EU programmes or for alternatives would be subject to allocations at the Spending Review.

■ Low Pay: Coronavirus**Richard Burgon:**[\[111582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of workers who are expected to be paid less than the National Minimum Wage during the period of the national restrictions that are being introduced from 5 November in (a) Leeds East constituency, (b) Leeds (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) nationwide.

Paul Scully:

The Government is clear that employers must comply with National Minimum Wage legislation and pay their workers at least the minimum wage for hours worked.

The Government is committed to ensuring workers receive the pay that they are owed, more than doubling the budget for National Minimum Wage enforcement. Indeed, last year was another strong year for minimum wage enforcement, with £20.8 million in pay arrears identified for over 263,000 workers.

The Government will continue to support workers across the United Kingdom during this pandemic. Through our Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, we have supported 9.6 million jobs with claims worth £41.4 million. On August 31st, 4,000 jobs in Leeds East, 35,700 jobs in Leeds and 220,000 jobs in Yorkshire and the Humber were supported through the Job Retention Scheme. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that we will extend the scheme through to 31st March 2021, to continue to protect jobs and provide certainty.

■ Nuclear Power**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[110779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence, on the potential merits of coordinated development of key skills required for (a) civil and (b) military nuclear programmes.

Nadhim Zahawi:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has had no recent discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on the potential merits of coordinated development of key skills required for civil and military nuclear programmes.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Finance**Alun Cairns:**[\[110811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the regulated asset-based financing model for funding new nuclear power stations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is looking at options for the financing of new nuclear projects. A Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model has the potential to reduce the cost of raising private finance for new nuclear projects, thereby reducing consumer bills and maximising value for money for consumers and taxpayers. In 2019, we consulted on our proposals for a nuclear RAB model and we will publish our response in due course.

■ Nuclear Reactors**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[110780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the (a) manufacturers and (b) developers of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) in respect of the developing the industrial synergies between SMRs and submarine propulsion nuclear reactors.

Nadhim Zahawi:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, has had no discussions with manufacturers or developers of small modular reactors (SMRs) in respect of developing the industrial synergies between SMRs and submarine propulsion nuclear reactors.

■ Overseas Students: EU Nationals

Anthony Browne:

[\[109725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that PhD students from the EU wish to study in the UK after the increase in student visa costs from January 2021.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK will continue to be a welcoming and world-class destination for all students, including international and European PhD candidates who will be treated equally under the new system. The UK has an internationally recognised higher education system attracting high quality students, a strong research base, excellent research across disciplines, entrepreneurs, practitioners and a high level of international collaboration and investment.

From the start of 2021/2022 academic year, all international students, including those from the EU, EEA and Switzerland, will be able to apply for UK Research and Innovation funded studentships. This will allow international students access to the same level of financial support as a home student in the same programme.

The new Graduate Route allows international students who complete a PhD in the UK from summer 2021 to stay in the UK for three years after study to live and work. The Graduate Route also enables students who have successfully completed undergraduate and master's degrees to stay for 2 years after study. This will make it easier for some of the best, international graduates to secure skilled jobs in the UK. We will continue to make this route simpler and faster.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Caroline Nokes:

[\[109313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's statement on covid-19 on 12 October 2020, which beauty services are included within the definition of the personal care sector.

Paul Scully:

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

Personal care facilities include: hair, beauty and nail salons, tattoo parlours, spas, massage parlours, body and skin piercing services, non-medical acupuncture, and tanning salons.

■ Political Parties: Coronavirus**Colum Eastwood:****[110929]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether covid-19 grants have been allocated to political parties and organisations registered in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government has put forward a package of support for business in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. In England, this included the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF), the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF) and the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF). The Government published clear guidance on the three grant schemes, and local authorities were responsible for delivering grants to businesses what were in scope:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>.

We do not hold grant payment data from local authorities broken down by sector or type of organisation.

On 3 November, the Government published guidance for English local authorities on additional grant funding to support businesses during the November to December national restrictions and periods of local restrictions:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsg-and-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>. Each of the

devolved nations has developed their own schemes to support businesses and the Government has provided further funding to ensure they can continue to plan for Covid-19 response in the months ahead. Enquiries relating to grant schemes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be directed to the relevant administration.

■ Post Office: Legal Costs**Marion Fellows:****[109464]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much Post Office Ltd spent on legal costs in the 2019-20 financial year.

Marion Fellows:**[109465]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in which financial year the £58 million legal settlement in relation to the Horizon IT case will be accounted for in Post Office Ltd's Annual Report and Accounts.

Paul Scully:

Post Office responded to the BEIS Select Committee Inquiry in June 2020 regarding costs of the group litigation and its consequences and estimated that, since 2016/17 Post Office has incurred costs of approximately £43m in relation to the litigation (which began in April 2016). This figure includes expenditure on legal and consultancy fees connected with the litigation and other costs indirectly related to the

litigation, but excludes the settlement amount of £57.75m which was ultimately paid by Post Office in December 2019.

The settlement in relation to the Horizon IT case agreed in December 2019 will be included in Post Office's annual report and accounts for the financial year 2019/20, as will spend on litigation costs for financial year 2019/20.

Under the Companies Act, firms have 9 months after the relevant financial year ends to file their accounts, meaning the end of December 2020 for 2019/20 accounts. For accounts from the 2019/20 financial year Companies House has provided an optional three-month extension of this deadline due to Covid-19. In recent years, the Post Office has laid its report and accounts before Parliament between September and December.

■ Post Offices: ICT

Marion Fellows:

[\[109466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial provision Post Office Ltd is making for future legal costs in response to its decision not to oppose 44 out of 47 appeals in which it acted as prosecutor.

Paul Scully:

The question of financial provisions relating to future legal costs is an operational matter for the Post Office Limited. Post Office Limited will be following appropriate accounting standards in producing their annual accounts.

■ Renewable Energy

Alun Cairns:

[\[110808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the UK's energy that will be supplied from (a) nuclear, (b) wind, (c) biomass, (d) solar, and (e) tidal sources over the next (i) five, (ii) 10 and (iii) 20 years.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department has published projections of electricity generation by source for the UK which can be used to derive the proportion of total UK electricity supply supplied by nuclear and renewable sources, respectively. These are shown in the table below.

For commercial reasons we do not release any breakdown of renewables projections. Officials need to work in a private space to determine auction parameters for each CfD round to ensure competitive tension. Providing a more granular/annual deployment trajectory for specific technologies could distort auction outcomes.

Proportion of UK electricity supply (gross) excluding net imports[1]

YEAR	NUCLEAR	RENEWABLES[2]
2021	21%	44%

YEAR	NUCLEAR	RENEWABLES[2]
2022	21%	47%
2023	19%	51%
2024	13%	54%
2025	15%	57%
2026	19%	58%
2027	20%	58%
2028	19%	57%
2029	17%	57%
2030	18%	58%
2031	20%	59%
2032	20%	59%
2033	20%	58%
2034	19%	58%
2035	20%	58%
2036	24%	57%
2037	27%	55%
2038	26%	55%
2039	26%	56%
2040	26%	56%

The figures are based on central estimates of economic growth and fossil fuel prices and contains all agreed policies where decisions on policy design are sufficiently advanced to allow robust estimates of impact as at August 2019. Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-and-emissions-projections>. Figures provided are derived from BEIS Energy and Emissions Projections (EEP) 2019 Annex J, Total electricity generation by source.

[1] For this calculation total UK electricity supply is defined as including generation from storage but excluding net imports of electricity.

[2] Includes a small amount of generation from non-renewable wastes.

■ Research: Public Consultation

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[109368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government plans to publish its response to the Research and Development Roadmap consultation.

Amanda Solloway:

Alongside the R&D Roadmap, we published a public survey asking key questions set out in the Roadmap. This closed in August and we are now working to analyse the results. The Roadmap marks the start of a conversation to identify the strengths and challenges facing the sector; the issues that need to be addressed; and how we want to work with universities, business, the third sector and across government to cement the UK's reputation as a science superpower.

We are continuing to work with a wide range of stakeholders to develop and implement the proposals in the Roadmap.

■ Research: Publishing

Sarah Olney:

[\[111588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what process his Department is following in order to independently assess the wider social and economic implications of UKRI's proposed Open Access policy.

Sarah Olney:

[\[111589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to publish its assessment of the wider social and economic implications of UKRI's proposed Open Access policy.

Sarah Olney:

[\[111590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to implement cOAlition S's Rights Retention Strategy in relation to UKRI's new Open Access policy.

Amanda Solloway:

As outlined in the recently published R&D Roadmap, Open Access is central to the Government's ambitions for research and innovation, with openness being key to world class research, and to maximise the benefit of public research funding to other researchers, businesses and wider audiences.

As part of the UKRI Open Access review, UKRI is working with BEIS to consider implications for stakeholders. UKRI and BEIS co designed analysis on the social and economic costs and benefits of Open Access, which UKRI commissioned from an independent consultancy. This will assess the possible implications for various groups such as Learned Societies, Research Organisations, Disciplines and Publishers, as well as perspectives of users of Open Access publications including businesses. This independent evidence on costs and benefits, and the responses to

the consultation on the proposed policy run by UKRI from Feb-May 2020, now provide the basis for considering the wider social and economic implications.

The UKRI open access review will report in Spring 2021. Together with its final policy, UKRI will publish key pieces of analysis and this will include the assessment of possible implications for stakeholders, and the analysis of consultation responses.

UKRI supported Plan S and joined the coalition because working internationally is important to help achieve open access, and Plan S broadly aligns with UKRI Open Access principles. UKRI is considering the Plan S principles and guidance, including with regards to rights retention, alongside other evidence and inputs within the broader aspects of the Review. The outcomes of the review will determine the decision on the final UKRI Open Access policy.

BEIS continues to work closely with UKRI to ensure that the policy supports economic Open Access models where the fair, transparent and reasonable costs of Open Access publishing are met.

■ **Retail Trade: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[111548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the retail sector in Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Retailers in Coventry have been able to benefit from 100% Business Rates Relief for financial year 2020/21, cash grants of up to £25,000, tax deferrals, and protection from eviction for non-payment of rent.

Retailers are also able to benefit from additional financial measures recently announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, including the extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, extension to the existing Loan Schemes to January 2021 with the ability to top-up Bounce Back Loans, and cash grants of up to £3,000 per month for businesses which are closed.

All shops can continue to offer home delivery and click and collect services to customers during the national restrictions in place from 5 November.

Four thousand and fourteen Coventry businesses from across all sectors have benefited from Local Authority Grants totalling £47,820,000.

■ **Shipping: Tees Valley**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[110822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect that developing (a) hydrogen and (b) ammonia production capacity in Teesside to meet increased demand for low emission fuels from the merchant shipping industry will have on employment opportunities for (i) port workers and (ii) seafarers; and what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on developing that capacity in Teesside.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Low carbon hydrogen is one of a handful of critical options needed to deliver net zero and presents an opportunity to deliver against our clean growth goals – meeting our decarbonisation needs while capturing commercial opportunities.

DfT-commissioned analysis supporting the Government's Clean Maritime Plan set out that hydrogen and ammonia, a hydrogen carrier, are expected to play a significant role in decarbonising the maritime sector. The global market for elements of alternative fuel production technologies like hydrogen and ammonia, in which the UK has a strong competitive advantage, could rise to up to £11bn per year by 2050, generating economic benefits to the UK of up to £0.5bn per year by the middle of the century

The proximity of the local port to the Net Zero Teesside industrial project, which aims to produce and use significant quantities of low carbon hydrogen, as well as the recently announced ambition for Tees Valley to become a trailblazing Hydrogen Transport Hub, position the area well to realise significant local benefits.

BEIS ministers and officials continue to work closely with colleagues in the Department for Transport (DfT) in developing our approach to hydrogen, including in end uses such as maritime.

■ Solar power: Faversham**Daisy Cooper:**[\[109691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the potential effects on the marine environment of synthetic and plastic fibre pollution at the Cleve Hill solar farm site.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The deemed Marine Licence, which was granted by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 28 May 2020 as part of the Cleve Hill Solar Park Order 2020 (SI 2020/547), sets out the measures the developer of the Cleve Hill Solar Park must take to prevent pollution in the marine environment. The monitoring and enforcement of the conditions in the deemed Marine Licence are matters for the Marine Management Organisation.

■ Unemployment: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[111545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of job loss on mental health and wellbeing; and what steps he is taking to help prevent job losses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Throughout this crisis, our priority has been clear: to protect lives and livelihoods. We know how worried people are and we are taking many steps to protect both jobs and the long-term financial future of businesses during the current economic emergency.

We have introduced an unprecedented and comprehensive package of business support measures to help as many individuals and businesses as possible, which has mitigated some of the worst immediate impacts of Covid-19 on risk factors for poor mental health. This includes measures such as the small business grants, the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. Businesses can also access tailored advice through our Freephone Business Support Helpline, online via the Business Support website or through their local Growth Hubs in England.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has made several announcements setting out how current support will evolve and adapt, including the extension of the CJRS until the end of March 2021, the increase of the third Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant from 55% to 80% of trading profits, and the extension of the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes until 31 January 2021.

In order to highlight available support around mental health, the Government is signposting to resources for businesses and employers, including Mind's website and the Mental Health at Work toolkit, through GOV.UK here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-support-for-business-from-outside-government>.

We also continue to work with the Thriving at Work Leadership Council to encourage employers to sign up to the Mental Health at Work (MHAW) commitments and to engage leading Mental Health charities and organisations to better understand issues around SME mental health, financial insecurity for small business owners and the self-employed, and continue to explore what further support may be offered.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[109536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the wedding industry is included in the hospitality category for the purpose of covid-19 financial support.

Paul Scully:

The wedding industry includes many different types of businesses. Some of these, such as certain wedding venues, are categorised as hospitality businesses for the purpose of COVID-19 support. Other wedding businesses are able to access other business support such as government-backed loans, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. They may also be able to access grants through the Local Restrictions Support Grant.

■ Wind Power

Hywel Williams:

[\[110738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish details on how the £160 million for new large scale port and manufacturing infrastructure to support increases in offshore wind capacity will be allocated.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Details on how the funding will be allocated are yet to be confirmed. The Department is considering the responses from the Request for Information, and depending on the level of interest, we expect that any funding will be awarded following a formal competitive process. Any final award decisions will be subject to in-depth appraisal, due diligence, and scrutiny.

Hywel Williams:

[\[110739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the announcement of £160 million for new large scale port and manufacturing infrastructure to support increases in offshore wind capacity.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department and I have regular and ongoing dialogue with the Welsh Government on a wide range of matters, including our recent announcements regarding offshore wind.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Ballot Papers: Visual Impairment

Cat Smith:

[\[109463\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2020 to Question 104226 in Ballot Papers: Visual Impairment, which accessible formats they are considering providing alongside physical poll cards for blind and partially sighted people who request them.

Chloe Smith:

Further to the answer to [PQ104226](#), announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ Borders: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[\[110870\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the policy paper The UK's Approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol, CP226, whether the point of entry facilities required under the the terms of that protocol have been built.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given to [PQs 106397 and 106398](#) on 2 November 2020.

■ **Business: Northern Ireland****Claire Hanna:**[\[105594\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to take to ensure the equity of immigration and modern slavery compliance controls placed on Northern Ireland businesses and their British competitors.

Penny Mordaunt:

The [Government response to the Transparency in Supply Chains consultation](#), published on 22 September 2020, committed to an ambitious package of changes to the Modern Slavery Act's transparency legislation.

Northern Ireland will engage and consult with affected Northern Irish businesses and public sector organisations on all the proposals.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening****Mr Marcus Fysh:**[\[110864\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason, by what methodology, and with what data the Office for National Statistics adjusts raw data from its sample population testing for covid-19 and implements those adjustments in reporting the prevalence of covid-19 for the different regions of England.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ110864 [PQ110864.pdf]

■ **Elections: Greater London****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[109305\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making the London Mayoral and Greater London Authority elections a postal ballot only in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Chloe Smith:

The UK Government is of the view that it would not be appropriate to impose an all-postal vote for the local and mayoral elections in England, and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, in May 2021. All-postal voting increases fraud risks, and removes choice from voters who wish to cast their vote in person.

Postal voting on demand already allows any registered elector to vote by post.

The Government is working with the electoral administrators and Public Health England to identify and resolve challenges involved in delivering the May 2021 elections, including ensuring polling stations are safe and covid-secure places to vote. People will be able participate in the polls safely, and in a way of their choice, whether by post, proxy or in-person.

This work is outlined in my recent letter to Electoral Returning Officers, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-chloe-smith-mp-to-returning-officers>.

■ Elections: Travellers

Cat Smith:

[110168]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2020 to Question 100441 on Elections, whether the Government has consulted the Traveller and Roma communities on the potential effect of the introduction of Voter ID on those communities' ability to vote in the next General Election.

Chloe Smith:

Further to the answers to PQs [104752](#) and [100441](#) the Government will work with the Electoral Commission, charities and appropriate civil society organisations. The Government has launched a national strategy to improve the lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and the ONS will include specific recognition of these communities in the forthcoming Census.

■ EU Exit Operations Committee

Alex Davies-Jones:

[109745]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions Ministers of devolved Governments have been invited to meetings of the EU Exit Operations Cabinet Committee to discuss preparedness for the end of the transition period (a) from 1 February to 31 August 2020 and (b) since 1 September 2020.

Penny Mordaunt:

The letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to Michael Russell MSP on 27 October, available on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letters-from-the-chancellor-of-the-duchy-of-lancaster-to-jeremy-miles-ms-and-michael-russell-msp> includes detail of the extensive joint working with the devolved administrations.

■ Influenza: Death

Steve Brine:

[111496]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many death certificates in England recorded influenza as the cause of death in Winter (a) 2018-19 and (b) 2019-20.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ111496 [PQ111496.pdf]

■ Statutory Sick Pay**Richard Burgon:**[\[111581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of workers who are ineligible for Statutory Sick Pay in (a) Leeds East constituency, (b) Leeds (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) nationwide.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ111581 [PQ111581.pdf]

DEFENCE**■ Air Force: Military Exercises****Sir John Hayes:**[\[111420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of effectiveness of recent RAF missions in the (a) High North, (b) Baltic and Black Sea regions.

James Heappey:

These RAF missions were very effective. They demonstrated the RAF's flexibility to conduct high tempo air operations at long range. Furthermore, they honed our interoperability with our Allies in the High North, Baltics and Black Sea, which showed our common commitment to NATO Collective Defence and stability in these regions.

■ Armed Forces: Civil Proceedings**Sir John Hayes:**[\[111421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill on service personnel's ability to make civil claims against his Department.

Johnny Mercer:

Service personnel and veterans will continue to be able to bring claims relating to overseas operations against the MOD. While the Bill will introduce a six year longstop for personal injury and death claims, the clock for those claims won't start until the

date of knowledge. This means that for conditions like PTSD, that may not be diagnosed until much later, the six years would start from the date of diagnosis not the date of a deployment on an overseas operation.

Service personnel and veterans will also continue to be able to access the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, including for claims relating to overseas operations, which has a seven-year time limit for bringing claims.

■ Armed Forces: Death

Mr Richard Holden:

[109735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there is a comprehensive list of UK armed forces personnel who died in service, by conflict, that includes their birthplace and final address in the UK.

Johnny Mercer:

Information on deaths in the UK Armed Forces including birthplace and conflict, is held in the Departments centralised database from 1984 to present. Data prior to 1984 including birthplace and conflict, is held on the Armed Forces Memorial database. Neither database holds information on an individual's final address in the UK.

Information on an individual's final address is held separately in the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system from April 2007 onwards and is not currently linked to either death database. Prior to 2007, this information is held in individual personnel files.

A roll of honour is available in the public domain and can be found at the following website: <http://veterans.mod.uk/>. Whilst the roll of honour lists all of the individuals whose names are inscribed on the National memorial in Staffordshire, it does not confirm the individual's birthplace or whether they died in conflict.

■ Armed Forces: Medical Examinations

Dr Rupa Huq:

[110876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time for (a) processing and (b) concluding medical assessments is for applicants to (i) the armed forces, (ii) the Navy and (iii) the Army (A) before and (B) during the covid-19 outbreak.

James Heappey:

Royal Navy

The average time taken from the submission of an application to join the Royal Navy (Regular Officers and Other Ranks) to having a medical assessment was as follows:

APPLICATION DATE	AVERAGE TIMELINE (DAYS)
1 April 2019 - 22 March 2020	141
23 March 2020 - 1 November 2020	115

Candidates are informed of the outcome by the Military Medical Examiner (MME) on the day of the assessment; this is followed up in writing.

Army

The median average time taken from the submission of an application to join the Army as a Regular Other Rank to having a medical assessment was as follows:

APPLICATION DATE	AVERAGE TIMELINE (DAYS)
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020	149
1 June 2020 – 30 September 2020	181

Note

The Army was only able to reinstate physical medical assessments from June 2020.

Candidates are informed of the outcome by the Military Medical Examiner (MME) on the day of the assessment; this is followed up in writing.

Royal Air Force

The mean average time taken from the submission of an application to join the Royal Air Force (Regular Officers and Other Ranks) to having a medical assessment was as follows:

APPLICATION DATE	AVERAGE TIMELINE (DAYS)
1 April 2019 – 22 March 2020	125
23 March 2020 – 4 November 2020	192

Notes

Only includes applications processed via the digital recruitment system.

Only includes applications with a recorded medical booking date.

Candidates are informed of the outcome by the Military Medical Examiner (MME) on the day of the assessment; this is followed up in writing.

■ Defence: Charities

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[111605]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) financial viability and (b) operational effectiveness of defence charities.

Johnny Mercer:

The Secretary of State for Defence does not have a regulatory role in assessing the finances of Service charities. However, the Government is fully aware of the importance of Service charities and the role they play in society. As such, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Office for Veterans' Affairs within the Cabinet Office have conducted sector analysis through the COVID Impact Fund and via regular engagement with sector partners such as the Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO).

Where the MOD has contracted services in place with providers from the non-profit sector, we have ensured that these have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the wider sector, whilst the issue of operational effectiveness is handled directly by the Service charities, the Government has been working closely with COBSEO's topic-based clusters of charitable partners to develop our knowledge of sector issues and enhance our working relationships with the Service charities. This engagement includes receiving feedback from the COBSEO members' survey on the effects of the pandemic.

■ **Firearms and Weapons: Theft****Mark Pritchard:**[\[109245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of the (a) number and (b) types of small arms and light weapons that went missing from his Department's establishments and facilities in 2018-19.

Jeremy Quin:

The following table lists the number and type of Small Arms and Light Weapons recorded as missing from Defence Establishments and Facilities during 2018-19:

NUMBER AND TYPE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS MISSING FROM DEFENCE
ESTABLISHMENTS AND FACILITIES DURING 2018-19

2018		
(a) Number	(b) Type	
1	Standard Issue Service Rifle (SA80)	Lost - British Army Training Unit Suffield, Canada
1	Standard Issue Service Rifle (SA80)	Lost - In deep water during exercise in Wales
2	.303 Lee Enfield Bolt Action Rifle (Deactivated)	Stolen - Reserve Centre
2019		
(a) Number	(b) Type	

NUMBER AND TYPE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS MISSING FROM DEFENCE
ESTABLISHMENTS AND FACILITIES DURING 2018-19

4	Cadet Drill Purpose Rifle	Stolen - Merseyside Cadet Facility
4	Cadet Small Bore Target Rifle	Stolen - Merseyside Cadet Facility
1	General Purpose Machine Gun	Lost - At sea in bad weather (with blank firing barrel)
4	WW1-era Rifles (Deactivated)	Stolen - Reserve Centre

This information was previously released by my Department in response to Freedom of Information Requests (2018/10985, 2019/01322, 2019/12854 and 2020/07549) and is publicly available on the Gov.UK website.

■ **National Security**

Stephen Morgan: [\[110228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on UK security threats of reducing Army personnel numbers by 7,000.

Stephen Morgan: [\[110229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on UK strategic security priorities of reducing Army personnel numbers by 7,000.

James Heappey:

Our Armed Forces work tirelessly to protect the UK and our interests at home and abroad, and deliver against the UK's strategic priorities. We will always prioritise our response to the threats that the UK faces.

No decisions have been taken on the Integrated Review. In light of the decision to move to a one-year 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.

■ **Type 31 Frigates: Exports**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[110069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what meetings he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the export of the Type 31e frigate.

Jeremy Quin:

The Secretary of State (SofS) for Defence has had multiple meetings with the Prime Minister and other senior Ministers at which shipbuilding and exports have been

central to discussion (Type 31(T31) being a part of these discussions). SofS also chairs both the Defence Security Exports Working Group (DSEWG), which last convened on the 14 October 2020, and the Ministerial Shipbuilding Working Group at which T31 (as a part of the wider shipbuilding portfolio) has been discussed with Cabinet colleagues or their representatives.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles

Adam Holloway:

[\[109223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what counter UAV technology is available to the armed forces on overseas deployments.

James Heappey:

We take a multi-layered approach to the Force Protection of our personnel deployed overseas. This includes intelligence, deterrence, detection and warning, and physical protection measures, alongside capabilities to defeat specific threats. Counter-UAV equipment with specific capability requirements, including Rafael's Drone Dome system, is available to deployed UK forces.

■ Veterans: Military Decorations

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[111438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to notify surviving D-Day veterans of their eligibility for the Légion d'Honneur; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) supports the French in their award of the Légion d'Honneur to D-Day veterans by administering applications on their behalf. The MOD subsequently informs veterans when their application has gone forward to the French Embassy who act as the interface with the French Government whose award this is.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Coronavirus

Chris Elmore:

[\[111585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to provide additional financial support for people working in the creative industries in response to the covid-19 lockdown.

Caroline Dineneage:

We recognise that the new national restrictions will have a significant impact on individuals working in the creative industries sector.

The Secretary of State announced an unprecedented £1.57 billion support package for the cultural sector which will benefit the creative industries by providing support to venues and many other cultural organisations to stay open and continue operating.

So far, over £500m has been announced from the Culture Recovery Fund for over 2,000 organisations across England including venues, festivals and theatres. The Cultural Recovery Fund is devolved, Wales has received £59 million from the Fund under the Barnett formula.

The majority of cultural organisations applied to the Culture Recovery Fund setting out plans to deliver some activity before March 2021. Whilst most of that activity has been disrupted, we know many hope to restart this once the national restrictions end.

We have confirmed that there will be a full package of financial support in place, with the Job Retention Scheme extended until March 2021. Businesses can continue to apply for government-backed loans, and self-employed individuals can access the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, which has been extended until April 2021. The CJRS and SEISS support has been made more generous, with individuals able to receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked/average trading profits respectively.

We are continuing to meet with creative industries stakeholders to provide support and guidance for the sector during this time.

■ **Broadband: Rural Areas**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[103505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) premises in total and (b) business premises in areas without access to broadband services faster than 100mbps and who are in areas ineligible for support from the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme.

Matt Warman:

The Government is investing £5 billion to provide gigabit capable broadband across the country, including those places that are hardest-to-reach.

We estimate that up to 12,911,000 premises are ineligible for the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme and also cannot receive broadband services faster than 100mbps. The majority of these premises are urban premises, which is why they do not qualify for the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme.

Eligibility for the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme is determined at individual site level rather than by area. The Government estimates that 1,001,000 businesses cannot receive broadband services faster than 100mbps and are also ineligible for the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme.

■ **Events Industry: Coronavirus**

Jamie Stone:

[\[109555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has for (a) discussions and (b) other engagement with (i) the British Events Industry Coalition and (ii) other private events industry representatives.

Jamie Stone:

[\[109556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps with the British Events Industry Coalition and other representative organisations on a code of conduct to help certify private events as covid-19 secure.

Nigel Huddleston:

We continue to engage with a broad range of stakeholders - including via the Business Visits and Events Partnership, the Events & Entertainment Working Group and the Events Industry Senior Leaders Advisory Panel - to monitor the situation across the events sector. We encourage events representatives to continue sharing information with relevant sector bodies.

We have 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 ensure that the correct advice and guidance is put in place to help larger events reopen when it is safe to do so.

We will continue to work with the events industries to assess how we can best support their safe reopening.

We also recognise that the new national restrictions will have a significant impact on jobs and the economy, as well as on mental health and wellbeing. We've confirmed that there will be an extensive package of financial support in place, with the Job Retention Scheme extended until March 2021.

Ian Murray:

[\[111483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of insurance for the live events and festivals industry to cover the loss of income during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are aware that concerns have been raised over the challenge of securing insurance for live events and festivals.

We are working with the sector to better understand the nature and scale of the issue before considering whether Government intervention would be necessary or desirable.

We continue to meet with stakeholders to provide support and guidance for venues to re-open and stage live events.

■ Exhibitions: North of England

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[111436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the legacy effect of the Great Exhibition of the North on the economy of the North East.

Nigel Huddleston:

In February 2019, the evaluation of the Great Exhibition of the North was completed and a detailed final report was published by Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, the lead delivery partner, following sign off from local partners and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

The final report identified that the exhibition received 3.8 million visits across 80 days of events, installations and activities, and that 90% of visitors felt that the exhibition had changed their perceptions of Newcastle Gateshead, 84% saying that they would recommend Newcastle Gateshead to friends and relatives and generated £126 million for the local economy in Newcastle Gateshead.

A copy of the final report can be found [here](#)

Film and Television: Coronavirus**Alison McGovern:****[110806]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing an elite definition for professionals working in film and television production similar to that used for sports athletes returning to training.

Caroline Dinenage:

Definitions for professionals working in film and television production have been introduced in order to implement the limited exemption to the quarantine regime for the cast and crew of qualifying productions.

The Government is committed to supporting the continued production of film and television content during the ongoing Covid pandemic. As part of the new Health Protection Regulations, the Government has stated that people who cannot work from home should go to their place of work. This means that even in these circumstances film and television production can continue in line with any additional guidance provided. The Government has supported the sector to develop guidance to allow productions to operate safely, and introduced a limited exemption to the quarantine regime for the cast and crew of qualifying productions, in order to restart those productions which rely on international talent.

Gambling: Advertising**Sir Mike Penning:****[111439]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Betting and Gaming Council to encourage gambling firms to stop all TV and radio advertising during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown to protect people who are affected by gambling disorders.

Nigel Huddleston:

Gambling advertising is subject to strict controls on content and placement which dictate that adverts must never be targeted at children or vulnerable people, or seek to appeal particularly to these groups. Operators who breach these rules are subject

to sanction by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Gambling Commission. The ASA is currently consulting on proposals to strengthen these controls further, including new rules to minimise the potential for adverts to appeal to vulnerable people, or adversely impact them.

The government and the Gambling Commission have been clear that gambling operators must act responsibly during the Covid-19 period and the ASA has warned operators that they must not look to exploit the situation in their adverts or marketing. In June 2020 members of the Betting and Gaming Council committed to ensure at least 20% of broadcast advertising is given over to safer gambling messaging.

The Gambling Commission has monitored gambling behaviour during the Covid-19 period and will continue to do so. Survey data published by the Commission in October indicated that 84% of gamblers spent the same amount or less on gambling during lockdown (mid-March to mid-June 2020) than they had previously. The Commission updated its guidance for operators in May to increase protections for those who may be at heightened risk of gambling harm, directing operators to monitor customer behaviour more closely to identify signs of potential harm, and banning mechanisms by which customers could cancel requests to withdraw money from their account.

Ministers have regular meetings with stakeholders on a range of issues. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the government's website at: https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport.

■ Internet: Safety

Carol Monaghan: [110860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to provide a further Government response to the Online Harms white paper.

Caroline Dinenage:

We will publish a full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation later this year. This will be followed by legislation, which will be ready early next year.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [109233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 24 August 2020 on communication he has had with BT on BT workers' contracts and redundancies.

Rosie Cooper: [109235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 10 July 2020 to the

Prime Minister on a Maritime Coastal Powerhouse Minister, which was transferred to his Department for answer.

Mr John Whittingdale:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the issues the Hon. Member has raised. The department with the policy remit will reply on each matter shortly.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[109234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 12 August 2020 on the Roman Fort in Burscough.

Nigel Huddleston:

A response was issued to the Hon Member on 6th November.

May I apologise for the delay in responding to the issues the hon. Member has raised.

■ **Musicians: Coronavirus**

Stephen Hammond:

[\[111477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether an internationally recognised music artist would be exempt from the covid-19 quarantine rules when entering England for the purpose of filming a global pay per view livestream and DVD recording.

Caroline Dinenage:

At present there are no such exemptions available for musicians coming to the UK.

We continue to work with the cultural and creative sectors to explore all options to support them through this challenging period, including on proposals for exemptions from quarantine. We are continuing to work with the Department for Transport on proposals for an exemption for Performing Arts professionals.

All decisions about exemptions and other measures will need to be considered in light of the wider public health context and the bar for exemptions remains very high.

■ **Skateboarding: Coronavirus**

Munira Wilson:

[\[111639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make it his policy to permit skate parks to remain open during the period of new national covid-19 lockdown from 5 November 2020.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sport and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

Nobody wanted to be in the position of having to introduce further National Restrictions. However as the Prime Minister said, with the virus spreading faster than expected we cannot allow our health system to be overwhelmed. Therefore, from

Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December indoor and outdoor leisure including skate parks will need to close. The National Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions.

In order for these measures to have the greatest impact, we will all need to sacrifice doing some things that we would otherwise like to do, for a short period of time. As soon as we're in a position to start lifting restrictions, grassroots sports will be one of the first to return.

People are still allowed to leave their homes for exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household or on your own, or with one person from another household or support bubble.

■ **Swimming: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[110082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing youth swimming lessons and training to continue where social distancing and hygiene guidelines are followed.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus.

Nobody wanted to be in the position of having to introduce further National Restrictions. However as the Prime Minister said, with the virus spreading faster than expected we cannot allow our health system to be overwhelmed. Therefore, from Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December indoor and outdoor leisure will need to close. The National Restrictions are designed to get the R rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions.

People are still allowed to leave their homes for exercise and recreation outdoors, with your household or on your own, or with one person from another household or support bubble. We will continue to prioritise the wellbeing and long-term futures of our young people, which is why schools will remain open. Children can continue to take part in sport at school, which includes swimming lessons where schools are providing them.

However, we have not introduced further exemptions because it's important that the restrictions are simple to understand. Once you unpick at one exemption the effectiveness of the whole package is compromised.

■ **Telecommunications: Coronavirus**

Ian Murray:

[\[111482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Ofcom on the pricing of landline phone calls during the covid-19 outbreak.

Matt Warman:

In March 2020 the Government and Ofcom worked with the UK's major broadband, landline and mobile providers to develop a package of voluntary industry measures to support consumers, especially those who are vulnerable. Providers agreed to give their customers new and generous offers on mobile and landline services. This includes some providers who gave effect to this commitment by giving free and low cost data boosts, and free calling allowances on landline packages.

Ofcom has also recently published a [vulnerability guide for providers](#), setting out its expectations and good practice on how vulnerable telecoms consumers should be supported. This includes treating those in financial distress fairly, providing them with payment support options, such as payment holidays, and only disconnecting consumers as a last resort option. More broadly, Ofcom is reviewing affordability issues in the communications market, and intends to publish its findings later this year.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Coronavirus**Helen Hayes:**[\[110189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that (a) voluntary and (b) community sector organisations have access to the resources they need to adapt to distanced delivery during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government has made available an unprecedented £750 million package of support, specifically for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE). This funding supports charities to adapt and enhance the delivery of vital services during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Similarly, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Loan Interruption Scheme and Bounce Back Loans help VCSE organisations adapt their services in response to the challenges caused by the Covid-19 outbreak

Furthermore, the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 allows many VCSE organisations to hold Annual General Meetings and other members' meetings online until 30 December which provides them with the flexibility to continue operating at a distance.

EDUCATION**■ Adoption: Ethnic Groups****Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[111532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the time taken for Black children to be found an adoptive family.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[111533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support Black prospective adopters going through the adoption assessment process.

Vicky Ford:

Ensuring the right adopters come forward for the children we have waiting for forever homes remains a priority for the government. That is why we have given Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) £1 million to develop a sector led recruitment campaign during the 2020-21 financial year. This campaign, launched on 16 September 2020, is challenging preconceived conceptions about who can adopt and encouraging more potential adopters to come forward.

Part of the campaign has a specific focus on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities through outreach work in two pilot areas, London and Birmingham. The RAAs are also funding the voluntary sector organisation, Home for Good, to run a triage service to support prospective adopters from these pilot areas. This will include a safe space to explore adoption and ask further questions, but also seek extra support during the process. Lessons learnt from this work will be spread to all RAAs and Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

The Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board regularly monitor adoption data including children who are waiting to be matched with a family. Ensuring children from BAME backgrounds are placed without delay is a priority for the Board.

■ **Coronavirus: Students**

Apsana Begum:

[109717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of not allowing university students to return home for Christmas on preventing the transmission of covid-19.

Michelle Donelan:

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

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced to the House on Tuesday 29 September, the department is working with universities to make sure that all students are supported to return home safely and spend Christmas with their loved ones, if they choose to do so.

We are working through measures to mitigate transmission risks and we are planning to publish guidance on students returning home safely at Christmas shortly.

■ Education: Mental Health Services

Liz Twist:

[109568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to accelerate the roll out of community mental health teams to schools and colleges, and to extend it to universities, as recommended by the Samaritans in their October 2020 report entitled *Pushed from pillar to post: Improving the availability and quality of support after self-harm in England*.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting and promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is a priority for this government. We continue to work closely with schools, colleges, the higher education sector, and local areas to provide support, guidance, and encourage good practice.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has overall policy responsibility for children and young people's mental health. The Department for Education works closely with DHSC to take significant steps to support the mental health and wellbeing support for young people across all education settings.

Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) are an important part of our long term plan to promote and support children and young people's mental health in state-funded schools and colleges, and we remain committed to rolling them out to at least a fifth to a quarter of the country by the end of the academic year 2022/23.

There are 59 MHSTs already established in 25 areas across the country. An additional 123 MHSTs are being set up in a further 57 areas this year, and a further 104 teams have been commissioned to begin training in academic year 2020/21. Once established, MHST support schools and colleges to promote good mental health, identify and manage a wide range of issues relating to mental health and wellbeing, and deliver interventions for mild and moderate needs. This may include thoughts of self-harm and providing support with alternative coping strategies.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to ensure that, by the academic year 2023/24, at least an additional 345,000 children and young people aged 0 to 25 will be able to access support from NHS-funded children and young people's mental health services (formerly CAMHS) and school-based or college-based mental health support teams. Funding for CYMPHS has grown faster than overall NHS and adult mental health spending.

Every NHS mental health trust in England has provided 24/7 crisis helplines for those in all age groups who need urgent help in a mental health crisis, and will continue to do so over the coming months. We provided funding and support to the people and organisations who play a vital role in young people's mental health, with over £10 million of funding to support mental health charities, including Young Minds and Place2Be which specifically support the mental health of children and young people. We have invested £8 million in local authorities to fund mental health and wellbeing

experts to provide advice and resources for education staff to support and promote children and young people's mental health.

We recognise that many university students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, and it is important students can still access the mental health support they need.

My right hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, wrote to Vice Chancellors in October outlining that student welfare should remain a priority, and has convened a working group of representatives from the higher education and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

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

The Office for Students funded Student Space platform bridges gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and is designed to work alongside existing services. Students struggling with their mental health at this time can also access support via the NHS at: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>.

Online resources from Public Health England can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing>, along with support from mental health charity, Mind, available here: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health/>.

■ Financial Services: Primary Education

Layla Moran: [109595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help improve the delivery of financial education in primary schools.

Layla Moran: [109596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the contribution of the provision of financial education from a young age to reducing the additional economic pressures experienced by households as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

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, for the first time, financial literacy was made statutory within the National Curriculum as part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds.

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

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. Our 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>.

Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, with £650 million shared across schools over the 2020/21 academic year, will support education settings to put the right catch-up support in place. Information about our COVID-19 catch-up package is found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-covid-catch-up-plan-to-tackle-impact-of-lost-teaching-time>.

The Education Endowment Foundation have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to direct this funding. Information about our COVID-19 support guide is found here: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/national-tutoring-programme/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/#closeSignup>.

For the longer term, 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 .

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Alex Cunningham:

[110819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 91162, if he will provide an update on when his Department plans to publish the independent evaluation of the 2019 Holiday Activities and Food programme.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[110820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2020 to Question 91763 on Holiday Play Schemes: Free School Meals and the Treasury's News story of 21 October 2020, Spending Review to conclude late November, whether the Government plans to make an announcement on the long-term future of his Department's Holiday Activities and Food programme after that Spending Review on 25 November 2020.

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.

This summer, our £9 million Holiday Activities and Food programme worked across 17 local authority areas, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities, building on the success of the programme in 2018 and 2019.

Future policy and spending decisions will be set following completion of the current Spending Review.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[111515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Tutoring Programme's Tuition Partners pillar, if he will publish the methodology used to allocate the additional provision under that pillar as stated to provide regional support to regions with the largest numbers of disadvantaged pupils and in regions where access to tutoring has historically been lower.

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[111516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Tutoring Programme's Tuition Partners pillar, for what reason the Opportunity North East area has not been allocated additional provision under that pillar alongside his Department's other 12 Opportunity Areas.

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[111517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the National Tutoring Programme's Tuition Partners pillar, if he will publish the methodology his Department plans to use to allocate additional provision to the Opportunity Areas.

Nick Gibb:

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) has been set up as part of the Government's £1 billion response to support disadvantaged pupils to catch up from disruption to their education. The tuition partners pillar, delivered by the Education

Endowment Fund (EEF), has 32 approved tuition partners, selected against a robust set of criteria, to provide high-quality subsidised tuition to schools.

The NTP tuition partners will support schools in all regions of England through a good blend of national and regional providers. Additional places have been allocated to regions with the largest numbers of disadvantaged pupils and in regions where access to tutoring has historically been lower. Regional allocations were determined by taking as a baseline the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium within a region and then adjusting to recognise the disparities in current levels of tutoring provision. This also reflected the allocations made to Opportunity Areas and the North East of England. The programme opened to schools on 2 November and, working with EEF, we will continue to monitor tuition take-up throughout the course of this academic year to ensure that the NTP is taken up by schools with pupils who need the most support.

Further information on how schools can access tuition partner support can be found here: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/faqs>.

■ Office for Students

Andrew Griffith:

[109767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans for a post-covid-19 review of the performance of the Office for Students.

Michelle Donelan:

The performance of the OfS is closely monitored at all times by the department and its board, as set out in the framework document between the OfS and the department and in line with the 'Partnerships with arm's length bodies: code of good practice'.

The framework document between the OfS and the department is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/189e6e2a-65eb-4cc5-9ad3-bfb149185b69/ofs-framework-document-review-2019.pdf>. The 'Partnerships with

arm's length bodies: code of good practice' is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-with-arms-length-bodies-code-of-good-practice>.

■ Overseas Students: EU Nationals

Daniel Kawczynski:

[110757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether EU students studying at UK universities, who started their 2020-21 university course online as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, will need to arrive in the UK before 31 December 2020 to be eligible for a student loan and home student status.

Michelle Donelan:

EU nationals and their family members who start courses in England in the 2020/21 academic year will remain eligible for undergraduate and postgraduate financial support from Student Finance England for the duration of their course, provided they meet the existing residency requirement.

It is expected that EU students will travel to England to study if it is safe and sensible to do so. However, where eligible students are prevented, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, from residing in England whilst studying on a designated course, they will be considered temporarily absent and, therefore, resident here. This will allow them to access financial student support and qualify for home fee status. This includes students who have never resided in England, but intended to travel here to undertake a designated course of study during the 2020/21 academic year.

■ Performing Arts: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[110879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether theatrical and music schools in England will be permitted to remain open during the period of the new national covid-19 lockdown restrictions from 5 November 2020.

Nick Gibb:

On Saturday 31 October 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced new national restrictions from Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, to control the spread of COVID-19. On 4 November, the Department for Education published guidance for education and childcare settings on the impact of these restrictions. The guidance can be found through the following link:

www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020.

Schools that provide a full-time education should continue to remain open for all children and young people, as they have since the start of the autumn term for the duration of the national restrictions. This includes schools that specialise in music and/or performing arts, such as Tring Park School for the Performing Arts in Hertfordshire, or the BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology in Croydon. The Department guidance makes clear that music, dance and drama can be undertaken in school, so long as safety precautions are undertaken.

Where educational provision is taking place outside of school, this provision should only operate where it is reasonably necessary to enable parents to work, search for work, or attend education or training, or where the provision is used for the purposes of respite care, including for vulnerable children. This includes provision by supplementary schools offering music or performing arts activities for children on a part-time basis.

Out-of-school activities that are primarily used by home educating parents as part of their arrangements for their child to receive a suitable full-time education (which can include supplementary schools, tuition centres or private tutors) may also continue to operate. All other out of school activities, not being primarily used by parents for these purposes, should close for face to face provision, but can offer remote education for the duration of the national restrictions.

■ Primary Education: Standards

Colleen Fletcher:

[109402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of attainment inequality in primary education across different local education authority areas in England.

Nick Gibb:

The Department publishes attainment in headline measures for state-funded schools in England at the end of Key Stage 2 by local authority and region. The latest figures for the 2018/19 academic year are attached. There is no more recent data to release as primary assessment data was not collected, and tests were not administered in 2020. Further local authority data, including for previous years, is available at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-key-stage-2>^[1].

Due to changes in methodology and headline measures, figures are only comparable between the 2009/10 – 2014/15, 2015/16 – 2016/17 and 2017/18 – 2018/19 academic years. Changes made to the tests in 2015/16 and the writing Teacher Assessment Frameworks in 2017/18 mean that measures of local education attainment rates should not be compared directly across these assessment year groups.

[1] For each year, select the 'revised' publication and then open the 'Local authority and regional tables'. For 2015/16 – 2017/18 the headline measures are the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard and can be found in tables L1, L2 and L3. For 2009/10 – 2014/15 the headline measures are the percentage achieving level 4 or above and can be found in tables 12-16 (2013/14 – 2014/15); tables 12-15 (2012/13); tables 13-15 (2011/12); table 11 (2010/11); table 18 (2009/10 – in the 'national and local authority tables').

Attachments:

1. 109402_table [109402_Attainment_at_the_end_of_key_stage_2_Table.xls]

■ Remote Education: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[109165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the quality of education delivered virtually.

Nick Gibb:

The Department published expectations on remote education for schools on 2 July as part of our guidance for the full opening of schools, and for further education (FE) providers in the autumn term guidance published in August. On 1 October, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, made a temporary continuity direction to clarify that schools have a duty to provide remote education for state funded, school aged children who are unable to attend school due to COVID-19, in line with our guidance and the law. The direction requires schools to adhere to existing remote education guidance on the quality of remote education expected. It

also provides clarity and removes uncertainty about what parents can expect from schools, whilst ensuring that schools are clear about what is expected of them. More information about the temporary continuity direction can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-temporary-continuity-direction-explanatory-note>.

Levelling up digital capability across the education sector is crucial to ensuring equity of access to high quality remote education for all pupils across the country. To support schools and FE colleges in meeting the remote education expectations as set out in the Department's guidance, we announced a further remote education support package on 1 October. The support package includes access to the right technology to deliver remote education, peer to peer training on how to use this effectively, and practical tools, guidance and webinars. This support has been co-designed with schools. A good practice guide for school leaders, accompanying school-led webinars, annotated lesson plans for remote teaching and case studies are available now. Further materials will be available later in the autumn term, including more webinars, case studies on curriculum sequencing, and a resources signposting package designed to help teachers and leaders select the right resources for their school. The Department's remote education good practice guide is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice/remote-education-good-practice#effective-remote-teaching-provision>.

The Department launched the Demonstrator schools and colleges programme – a peer support network offering fully funded advice and training on the ways that technology can be used to meet the remote education temporary continuity direction and the remote education good practice guide. This includes ways to deliver the curriculum remotely, foster better links between teachers and their pupils, track pupil progress and promote wellbeing and protect teacher time. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/edtech-demonstrator-schools-and-colleges-successful-applicants/about-the-programme>.

Ofsted's routine inspections are currently suspended but inspectors are carrying out a programme of visits to a sample of schools and FE colleges. The visits are based around collaborative discussions about how the school or college is returning to full education for all its pupils or students, including through any remote provision. When routine inspections resume, inspectors will take account of remote education as part of its assessments. Schools are held accountable for the outcomes they achieve by governors and trustees.

Daisy Cooper:

[109695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the updated guidance on the full opening of schools published on 22 October 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential financial effect on schools of the new requirement for remote learning.

Nick Gibb:

On 1 October 2020, the Department announced a further remote education support package to help schools and further education (FE) colleges meet the remote

education expectations set out in the [schools' guidance for full opening](#) published in July 2020, and the [FE colleges' autumn term guidance](#) published in August 2020. Alongside this, the Department published a Temporary Continuity Direction which makes it clear that schools have a duty to provide remote education for all state funded, school age children who are unable to attend school because of COVID-19, in line with guidance and the law. This has been in effect since 22 October 2020.

The remote education support package includes access to the right technology to deliver remote education, peer to peer training on how to use this effectively, and practical tools, guidance, and webinars.

The Government has also announced a catch-up package worth £1 billion, including a Catch-Up Premium worth a total of £650 million, to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. School leaders have discretion over how to use this funding to best support the needs of their pupils.

The Department has invested over £195 million to support remote education and access to online social care, delivering over 220,000 laptops and tablets during the summer term for disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have had access to a digital device. The Department is adding to this support by making over 340,000 additional laptops and tablets available to support disadvantaged children that might face disruption to their education. The support package also includes £1.5 million of additional funding to expand the EdTech Demonstrator programme, which provides peer-to-peer support for schools and colleges.

Alongside this, the Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy both for the summer term of last academic year, and for the 2020-21 academic year, to provide video lessons for a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. Oak will remain a free optional resource for 2020-21.

Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Following last year's spending round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner:

[109411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have made successful bids for additional funding from the fund for exceptional costs associated with coronavirus in (a) Cambridgeshire and (b) the UK from March to July 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The first window for schools to claim funding back for exceptional costs due to the COVID-19 outbreak incurred between March and July closed on 21 July. Payments against claims made within the scope of the fund were made for schools and academies in September.

Claims were also permitted for costs outside of the published scope of the fund. An assessment is currently being undertaken to determine which of these other costs can be included. To avoid a further delay in paying the standard costs in any claim still being assessed, we paid those to schools and academies in November. We expect to write out to schools and academies in November to confirm the outcome of the assessment and will arrange further payments at that time.

The data in the following table shows the number of claims made in total in both England and Cambridgeshire. The table also shows how many of those claims have had some level of payment made against them, and how many claims contain an element that is currently being assessed. As such, there are no unsuccessful claims at this stage. As education is a devolved power, the claims data is only representative of schools in England.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMS RECEIVED	NUMBER OF CLAIMS WITH SOME LEVEL OF PAYMENT MADE	NUMBER OF CLAIMS WITH SOME ELEMENT OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT
Cambridgeshire	189	184	56
England	14,075	13,420	6,435

■ Schools: North West Durham

Mr Richard Holden:

[109728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much (a) covid-19 catch-up premium and (b) National Tutoring Programme funding has been allocated to schools in North West Durham constituency.

Nick Gibb:

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for 5-16 year olds is an ambitious scheme that will provide additional, targeted support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils who need the most help to catch up. The NTP has two pillars which can be accessed by schools. Firstly, schools will be able to access high quality, subsidised tuition from a selection of approved Tuition Partners. The partners will offer a variety of tuition models for schools to choose from, including online and face-to-face, and the cost of tutoring will be subsidised by the Department by 75%. The NTP went live on 2 November 2020 and we will have further information about participating schools as they begin to request tutoring support over the coming weeks. Schools can access Tuition Partner support here: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/ntp-tuition-partners>.

The second pillar of the NTP supports schools in the most disadvantaged areas to employ in-house academic mentors who can provide small group and one-to-one tuition to selected pupils. Eligible schools can request academic mentors. The first cohort saw 188 mentors start in schools on 2 November 2020, and a further two cohorts will follow in January and February 2021. If schools in North West Durham

would like to register interest for a mentor, they can do so here:

<https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/hire-academic-mentors>.

Alongside the NTP, the catch-up premium, worth £650 million, provides universal funding to support schools to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time during the 2020/21 academic year. Schools should use their catch-up premium funding as a single total from which to prioritise support for all pupils, guided by the level of individual need. The attached table shows that £916,880 worth of catch-up premium funding has been provisionally allocated to the North West Durham parliamentary constituency for the 2020/21 academic year. These allocations are based on the published rates and school census data from October 2019. The final allocations will be re-calculated once the October 2020 school census data is available.

Attachments:

1. 109728_table [109728 table_showing_NTP_funding_allocation_in_Durham_LA.xls]

■ **Secondary Education: Remote Education**

Richard Burgon:

[111579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of students of secondary school age who would be, due to lack of access to technology, unable to engage in remote learning in (a) Leeds East constituency, (b) Leeds (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) nationwide.

Richard Burgon:

[111580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of students of primary school age who, due to lack of access to technology, would be unable to engage in remote learning in (a) Leeds East constituency, (b) Leeds (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) nationwide.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

The Department allocated a number of devices to each school based on how many devices they would need if the school closed fully. To arrive at this allocation, the Department used data on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals in each school along with an estimate of the number of devices the school already owns.

Attendance data suggests most schools are not closing fully, and are instead supporting small groups of children that are not able to attend school because they are self-isolating. The Department changed the number of devices allocated to each

school to reflect this, because original allocations were based on a school's total need should they fully close.

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

■ Sex and Relationship Education: Religion

Stella Creasy:

[111498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 108223 on Sex and Relationship Education: Religion, whether the materials published on the website, A Fertile Heart are permitted to be used in schools according to the Government guidance, Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum, published on 24 September 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department remains committed to supporting all schools in their preparations to deliver the content of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) subjects.

It is for schools to decide which resources they choose to support the teaching of RSHE. The Department's 'Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum' implementation guidance, building on the content of the statutory RSHE guidance, includes clear advice on choosing resources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

The implementation guidance also advises schools to exercise caution when working with external agencies, including ensuring they have full confidence in any agency's approach and the resources it uses. The Department has stated that schools should not work with agencies that take extreme positions, and this should also be reflected in the school's choice of resources.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

Fleur Anderson:

[111643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to provide guidance to schools on the use of the covid-19 catch-up premium for SEND children who do not have an education, health and care plan.

Nick Gibb:

Head teachers have discretion over how to use their catch-up premium funding to best support the needs of their students, but we expect them to prioritise those who need the most catch up support. To help schools make the best use of this funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a support guide for schools with evidence-based approaches to catch up for all students, available here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/national-tutoring-programme/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/#nav-covid-19-support-guide-for-schools1> and a further school planning guide, available here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/guide-to-supporting-schools-planning/>. The EEF support guide provides guidance on interventions to support specific groups of pupils, including those with identified special educational needs or disabilities.

Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 disruption on the attainment and progress of all pupils, including those with additional needs, is a research priority for the Government, and we have commissioned an independent research and assessment agency to consider catch up needs and monitor progress over the course of the year.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Apsana Begum:

[109783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) financial and (b) mental health support he will put in place in the event that students are required to remain at university during Christmas 2020-21 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

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

The department is working with universities to make sure that all students are supported to return home safely and spend Christmas with their loved ones, if they choose to do so. Where students choose to stay in their university accommodation over Christmas, universities should continue making sure that they are well looked after. The department is working with the sector to publish guidance on students returning home safely at Christmas.

The government has worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by the COVID-19 outbreaks. Providers can use OfS Student Premium funding, worth around £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans.

I wrote to Vice Chancellors in October outlining that student welfare should remain a priority and have convened a taskforce on mental health and wellbeing to address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The OfS funded Student Space platform bridges gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and is designed to work alongside existing services.

Students struggling with their mental health at this time can also access support via the NHS and online resources from Public Health England, along with support from mental health charity Mind. NHS mental health support is available here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>.

Online resources from Public Health England are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

Support from mental health charity Mind is available here:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health/>.

■ **Students: Mental Health services**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[109763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on mental health support for people in student accommodation.

Michelle Donelan:

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

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has overall policy responsibility for young people's mental health. We continue to work closely with them to take steps to develop mental health and wellbeing support. I work closely with my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Patient Safety, on student mental health, and officials at the department continue to work with DHSC officials in this vital area.

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

Since August, Student Space has been available to provide support for students in England and Wales, providing students with a trusted place to access direct one-to-one support, access psychoeducation resources, and a directory to explore what support is available to them locally at their place of study. Funded with up to £3 million by the Office for Students (OfS) and led by Student Minds, it is designed to work alongside existing mental health services. Student Space has now been extended to cover the 2020-21 academic year. Ensuring students have access to quality mental health support is my top priority, which is why I asked the OfS to look at extending the platform.

■ Union Learning Fund: Coronavirus**Claire Hanna:**[\[110928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will rescind its plans to cease funding the Union Learning Fund in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

We are focusing on a much larger and more comprehensive package of training support. This includes the establishment of a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund to help adults get the skills they need, including the Lifetime Skills Guarantee which will support any adult who does not yet have an A level equivalent qualification to obtain one. This is in addition to the existing entitlement for adults without English and maths level 2 qualifications or Basic Digital Skills level 1 to get fully funded support to gain these essential qualifications.

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

The government has no plans to reverse this decision.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Staff****Adam Afriyie:**[\[110762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether agricultural workers will be able to continue to go to work during of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Victoria Prentis:

Agricultural workers are the foundation of our nation's food supply. The new Lockdown Regulations that were approved on Wednesday 4 November by Parliament make allowances for those who cannot work from home to continue attending the workplace. This includes agricultural workers and those working across the food supply chain. Provisions for safe working should be in place at their places of work to ensure that they are COVID-secure, with guidance for both employers and workers to follow available on the GOV.UK website.

■ Air Pollution**Geraint Davies:**[\[109137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on using taxation to improve air quality.

Rebecca Pow:

Air pollution poses the biggest environmental threat to public health and improving air quality remains a top priority for the government. In delivering against our stretching

air quality commitments, we regularly hold discussions with Ministers and officials across Government departments, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer and HMT.

■ Air Pollution: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[109401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of air quality around schools in Coventry.

Rebecca Pow:

Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality and to take action where there are high levels of air pollution. Local authorities have discretionary powers to restrict car access to schools and enforce anti-idling laws outside schools.

The Government's Air Quality Grant Programme provides funding to local authorities for projects in local communities to tackle air pollution and reduce emissions which may include action targeting schools. The Government has awarded over £64 million in funding since the air quality grant started in 1997.

The Government has put in place a £3.8 billion plan to improve air quality and reduce harmful nitrogen dioxide roadside emissions. Our Clean Air Strategy sets out measures we are taking to improve air quality and reduce emissions of pollution, improving public health.

■ Air Pollution: Motor Vehicles

Ruth Jones:

[\[109649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the level of air pollution from motor vehicles since covid-19 lockdown restrictions were eased in August 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

NO2 levels have risen again following the initial period of lockdown as traffic levels increased. We continue taking urgent action to curb the impact air pollution has on communities across England through our ambitious Clean Air Strategy and our £3.8 billion plan to clean up transport and tackle NO2 pollution. The Government continues to engage with local authorities to help them deliver interventions such as Clean Air Zones. Our landmark Environment Bill will enable greater local action for tackling air pollution and deliver key parts of the Clean Air Strategy by establishing a duty to set a target on PM2.5 alongside a further long-term target on air quality as part of the wider framework for setting legally binding environmental targets.

Air quality is a devolved matter. Each of the devolved administrations has or is currently developing a strategy which, like the Clean Air Strategy in England, will provide a robust framework to contribute delivery of UK national emission ceilings.

■ Animal Welfare

Marsha De Cordova:

[109630]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to maintain animal welfare after the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

This Government is committed to high standards of animal welfare. We are working to deliver a number of manifesto commitments that will strengthen our position as a world leader in this field at the end of the Transition Period.

We have committed to introduce tougher sentences for animal cruelty. To deliver this, we are currently supporting the passage of a Private Member's Bill, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, which increases the maximum custodial penalty for the worst animal cruelty offences from six months or an unlimited fine to five years or an unlimited fine.

We will take advantage of our departure from the EU to deliver our manifesto commitment to end excessively long journeys for slaughter and fattening of livestock. We have previously run a call for evidence on the topic and will launch a full consultation before the end of the year.

We are continuing to work on delivering our other manifesto commitments, including developing new laws on animal sentience and cracking down on the illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies. We will also be consulting in the near future on our commitments to ban pet primates, introduce mandatory cat microchipping and implement the Ivory Act. We have also committed to ban imports from trophy hunting of endangered animals. We ran a call for evidence and consultation on this issue and the Government will be publishing our response to this as soon as we are able to do so.

In addition to supporting the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, we are considering the best legislative vehicle to bring forward these reforms in the near future.

■ Barbecues

Luke Pollard:

[109640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities on the safe use of disposable barbecues in (a) public spaces, (b) the countryside, (c) national parks and (d) parks and green open spaces in urban areas.

Rebecca Pow:

Fire prevention is a matter for the Home Office while Defra is responsible for measures relating to wildfire mitigation across our natural landscapes.

I can confirm that the Government has not issued advice to local authorities on the use of disposable barbecues.

The Government is working with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Park Authorities and the National Fire Chiefs Council to educate users about travelling to and spending time outdoors safely in green spaces and in the wider countryside. This includes an updated Countryside Code which advises not to have barbeques or fires.

This guidance is available at the following links:

Green space access: www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-on-accessing-green-spaces-safely

The Countryside Code: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code

■ Barbecues: Public Places

Luke Pollard:

[109638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on banning the use of disposable barbecues in public spaces.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has no plans for additional legislative proposals to introduce a seasonal ban on the use of disposable barbecues. Current 'Byelaw' legislation allows for local authorities to restrict and enforce the use of disposable barbecues in parks and public spaces. There are existing powers in legislation which can be used by authorities to regulate and prohibit the lighting of fires on Access Land in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks.

The Government is working with AONBs, National Park Authorities; and other Government departments to educate users about travelling to and spending time outdoors safely in green spaces and in the wider countryside. This includes an updated Countryside Code which advises not to have barbecues or fires. This guidance is available at the following links:

Green space access: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-on-accessing-green-spaces-safely>

The Countryside Code: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code>

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Richard Fuller:

[109266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will list the chemicals that have been banned from use in the UK as a result of EU legislation over the last five years.

Richard Fuller:

[109267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will list the chemicals that have been withdrawn by their manufacturers as a result of investigation by the (a) EU and (b) Chemicals Regulation Division.

Victoria Prentis:

EU legislation requires that pesticides can only be sold or used if the active substance has been approved by the EU and the product containing it has been authorised nationally. Approval and authorisation depend on scientific assessment of risks to health and the environment. The assessment is based on the information available at the time and, if approval or authorisation is refused, it remains open for a fresh application to be made if new data addresses the safety concerns.

Information on approvals and on active substances that are no longer approved, can be found on the European Commission's database at <https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/eu-pesticides-database/public/?event=homepage&language=EN>. Information on UK authorisations can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/databases/index.htm>. This does not include information about authorisations that have been withdrawn.

Companies that see limited sales from a pesticide can of course withdraw an active substance or product at any point. These cases cannot readily be identified from the databases.

Richard Fuller:

[109268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether an impact assessment was carried out by the Chemicals Regulation Division on each of the chemicals that were withdrawn by manufacturers during investigation of those chemicals by the (a) EU and (b) Chemicals Regulation Division; and what the (i) economic and (ii) environmental findings were of each of those impact assessments.

Victoria Prentis:

The Chemicals Regulation Division of the Health and Safety Executive assesses applications for UK authorisation of pesticides against the legal requirements concerning risks to human and environmental health and product efficacy. If an application is withdrawn or if a manufacturer asks for an authorisation to be ended, no further assessment is carried out.

Richard Fuller:

[109269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of chemical bans by the (a) EU and (b) Chemicals Regulation Division in the last five years on (i) crop yields, (ii) costs of alternative chemicals, (iii) prices to consumers and (iv) farm profitability in the UK since the implementation of those bans.

Victoria Prentis:

The removal of banned pesticides from sale can adversely affect crop yields if alternative crop protection products or techniques are less effective. Alternative pesticides can sometimes be more expensive. Often these problems may reduce over time as new products become available or farmers find and adopt new approaches. The impact on consumer prices will depend on the degree to which overall market supply is affected. The impact on farm profitability will depend upon a number of factors including yield changes, farm gate price changes and input costs.

The Government's review of the National Action Plan for the Sustainable use of Pesticides will take a holistic approach centred on Integrated Pest Management which can reduce dependence on chemical pesticides and help farmers to combat pest resistance and support agricultural productivity. The Plan aims to support measures to minimise pesticide use and to reduce risks to human health and the environment. We will consult on the updated Plan later in the year.

Bill Esterson:[\[111494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will carry out an economic impact assessment on the UK not being subject to EU REACH chemical regulations after the end of the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

At the end of the Transition Period the UK will have in place its own independent chemicals regulatory framework, UK REACH. UK REACH will retain the principles and fundamental approach of the EU REACH system, with its aims of ensuring a high level of protection of human health and the environment, as well as enhancing innovation and competitiveness.

Businesses will incur costs as a result of the transition to an independent UK regime, and to maintain their access to EU markets. However, it is impossible for a single model, number or scenario to capture the complexity or represent the varying impacts that will be felt across different parts of the economy as a result

We will continue to support businesses through the transition through our range of transitional measures, and seek to minimise cost and burden on industry as far as possible.

Bill Esterson:[\[111495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of chemical regulation data from EU REACH after the end of the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

UK REACH will adopt the same information requirements as are currently in place under EU REACH meaning there will be no difference in the nature of the available data under the respective regimes.

To support businesses to meet the separate regulatory requirements of the UK and EU markets, we aim to agree data and information sharing mechanisms with the EU,

in line with the relevant provisions set out in UK and EU regulation and existing third-country mechanisms. We continue to push for this, but the EU has so far rejected sectoral annexes.

We have introduced a phased timescale for the submission of this data that should facilitate more complete and better-quality registration dossiers. This approach also mitigates against further risk to human health and the environment because information on the higher tonnage and higher risk chemicals is provided first, with lesser tonnage and lower risk chemicals following.

■ Flood Control: Finance

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[110888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of flood defence funding has been allocated to (a) Yorkshire and Humber, (b) the South East, (c) London, (d) the North West, (e) the East of England, (f) the West Midlands, (g) the South West, (h) the East Midlands, (i) the North East and (j) England in each year since 2009.

Rebecca Pow:

Capital flood defence grant-in-aid per Office of National Statistics region is shown in the table in the attached document. Actual expenditure for 2019/20 and 2020/21 are not yet available and are allocations only, based on the Environment Agency's latest consented Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management investment programme.

■ Flood Control: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to improve flood prevention on the River Arun and River Adur in West Sussex.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) has completed Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) schemes totalling approximately £90 million at Littlehampton and Arundel on the River Arun and at Shoreham on the River Adur during the current 6 year capital investment programme (2015-2021).

Further capital investment is planned over the following 6 years, subject to confirmation of funding. On the River Adur, works to benefit communities at Beeding and Bramber will involve 'upstream' natural flood management with habitat creation. The EA will also repair and refurbish flood defences at Burgess Hill. For the River Arun catchment, investment is scheduled at Liss, at the Warnham Mill reservoir at Horsham and along the west bank of the Arun at Littlehampton. The EA is also supporting Local Authority works at Shoreham and Angmering.

The EA will continue to carry out maintenance at 'high flood risk' locations along the Arun and Adur rivers, and to provide advice to landowners undertaking their own watercourse maintenance.

■ Floods: Insurance

Stephanie Peacock:

[110887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Blanc review into the affordability of flood insurance is planned for publication.

Rebecca Pow:

The report was published on Thursday 5 November.

This link can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flood-insurance-review-2020-blanc-review>

■ Food Supply

Justin Madders:

[110164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the security of food supply in the event of the UK and EU not agreeing a deal on the future relationship before the end of the transition period.

Justin Madders:

[110165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the commercial food industry on ensuring an adequate supply of food after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain. Our thorough preparations for leaving the EU in 2019, alongside the lessons we have learned during the Covid-19 response provide a robust foundation for end of Transition Period planning on food supply. We are working alongside industry and across Government, including with the Devolved Administrations, to plan for the end of this year.

The Government has well established ways of working with the food industry who are experienced in dealing with situations that can cause disruptions to supply.

Our overall assessment of risk within a reasonable worst case scenario of food supply at the end of transition is that there will not be an overall shortage of food in the UK, and consumers will continue to have access to a wide range of food products.

■ Food: Coronavirus

Bim Afolami:

[109580]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much money has been disbursed by each local authority out of the £63 million that the Government allocated in June 2020 to be distributed by local authorities to help those struggling to afford food and other essentials as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Local Authorities (LAs) are best placed to understand the needs of the people they serve and respond in the most appropriate way. My officials worked closely with colleagues in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Local Authorities to design the grant scheme in a way that ensured support was delivered quickly to those in need while maintaining appropriate controls and oversight. They did this through issuing guidance on what the money should be used for in general terms (for example, vouchers for food and essential supplies). Reporting requirements were designed to be light touch to make sure the money was spent on supporting people not administration. LAs are reporting expenditure to MHCLG as part of their normal processes and Defra will be collecting further evidence on how the money was spent.

Hydrogen Sulphide: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Aaron Bell:**[\[109739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of hydrogen sulphide in the air in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra's national monitoring network does not monitor hydrogen sulphide levels.

The Environment Agency (EA) monitors specific sites within the Newcastle-under-Lyme area. In particular, on the Walley's Quarry Landfill site, the EA carried out an ambient air monitoring study between January 2019 and June 2019. The EA deployed a Mobile Monitoring Facility (MMF) to the north of Walleys landfill site between 15 January 2019 and 12 February 2019. Comparison of the hydrogen sulphide data with the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines showed that concentrations were below health limits but exceeded odour limits for 6% of this monitoring period. The MMF was then relocated approximately 60 metres to the east between 28 February 2019 and 25 June 2019. Comparison of the hydrogen sulphide data with the WHO guidelines showed that concentrations were below health limits but exceeded odour limits for 1% of the monitoring period.

The EA will be continuing with its regular odour assessments and site inspections and will take appropriate action as part of its regulation of the Walley's Quarry Landfill site, should it identify any areas where the Operator is not compliant with their permit conditions.

Landfill: Newcastle-under-Lyme**Aaron Bell:**[\[109740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on air quality levels in Newcastle-under-Lyme of the environmental permit variation application to increase the annual waste inputs from 250,000 tonnes to 400,000 tonnes at the Walleys Quarry landfill site.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) conducted an emissions to air assessment of the new application and is satisfied that air quality levels will not be impacted and there will be no additional emissions from landfill gas or risk of additional odour.

The operator's Odour Management Plan complies with EA guidance and reflects the industry best practice. The EA is satisfied it will minimise the risk of odour pollution, and that they have sufficient controls within the permit conditions to enable further measures to be implemented if required. The benefit of the variation is that the Operator could complete the landfill sooner (by 2024 not 2026) accelerating the progressive capping of the site.

The operator's gas management plan complies with the relevant landfill directive and permit conditions and the EA does not consider emissions from the installation will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health. The increase in annual tonnages at the site would not change the amount of gas produced but would bring forward the peak gas production rate. The site is already permitted to operate a gas utilisation plant which has the capacity to combust the maximum volume of gas which will be produced.

■ Landfill: Odour Pollution**Aaron Bell:****[109741]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the fitness for purpose of odour regulations as they relate to landfill sites.

Rebecca Pow:

No recent assessments have been made of odour regulations. The government considers that current provisions under the Environmental Permitting and Statutory Nuisance regimes provide adequate protection.

Landfill sites in England must be operated in accordance with an environmental permit, regulated by the Environment Agency. Where issues could be a statutory nuisance under Section 79(1)(d) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local councils are responsible for investigating these complaints.

Aaron Bell:**[109742]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department provides to local authorities to (a) monitor and (b) tackle issues relating to (i) air quality and (ii) odour caused by landfill emissions.

Rebecca Pow:

Landfill sites are regulated under Environmental Permitting Regulations by the Environment Agency (EA). The EA operates a national network of air quality monitoring sites on behalf of Defra. These are designed to provide a representative sample of air quality across the UK, and will not be specific to individual regulated sites. In addition to its statutory air quality activities, the EA can use air quality

monitoring equipment in some circumstances to monitor for certain trace gases that form odorous compounds. This is carried out using the EA's mobile monitoring facilities.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper: [\[109236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 14 August 2020 on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for West Lancashire.

Rebecca Pow:

I apologise for the delay in responding. I replied to the hon. Member on 3 November 2020.

■ **Moorland: Fires**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[109727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to (a) review and (b) amend the regulations on the burning of heather and protected blanket bog.

Rebecca Pow:

The government has always been clear of the need to phase out rotational burning of protected blanket bog to conserve these vulnerable habitats, and we are looking at how legislation could achieve this. Real progress is being made in promoting sustainable alternatives. We have urged landowners to adopt these and continue to work with them constructively.

■ **Nature Reserves and Wildlife Trusts: Finance**

Ruth Jones: [\[109650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial viability of wildlife trusts and nature reserves.

Rebecca Pow:

My department constantly keeps under review the financial health of Defra-related sectors, including in relation to how sectors are faring in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. We continue to engage with Defra-related sectors on this.

In September, the Government launched the Green Recovery Challenge Fund which brings forward up to £40 million for environmental charities and their partners to kick-start a pipeline of nature-based projects while creating and retaining jobs in the sector. The funding is being made available quickly for projects that are ready to deliver, providing investment when the sector most needs it as part of our green recovery from Covid-19.

■ Odour Pollution: Complaints

Aaron Bell:

[\[109738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many odour complaints the Environment Agency received about each of the sites it regulates in each month since January 2019.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency receives reports of odour from members of the public via the National Pollution Reporting Hotline. The numbers in the table below represent all reports received since January 2019 from members of the public across England, rather than those that have been assessed by a local Environment Agency officer and confirmed to be correctly attributed to a site that the Environment Agency regulates. The Environment Agency does not collate figures centrally for that number.

	YEAR												YEAR
YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTALS
2019	883	1,311	755	1,122	1,223	1,265	2,267	2,219	1,571	1,034	1,093	1,867	16,610
2020	4,160	2,181	1,474	1,468	1,212	1,755	1,673	1,854	2,223	992	NA	NA	18,992

■ Organic Food: Certification

Sarah Olney:

[\[111587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure mutual recognition between the UK and EU on organic food certification.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government proposed an organics equivalence agreement in its Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) proposals. Organics is currently included in the UK's proposed CFTA legal text as a technical annex and the negotiations are ongoing.

In addition, the six UK control bodies have applied to the EU for recognition as equivalent for the purpose of trade. We understand that these applications by the individual organic control bodies are progressing.

To ensure a smooth transition process, we will recognise the EU as equivalent for the purpose of trade in organics until 31 December 2021. This temporary measure will give certainty to the organic sector and it remains our objective to negotiate a durable, long-term organics equivalence agreement with the EU.

■ Pate de Foie Gras: Animal Welfare

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[109226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of scientific evidence of (a) physical and (b) psychological pain

experienced by animals in the production of foie gras made by force-feeding; and if he will publish his Department's assessment.

Victoria Prentis:

The production of foie gras by force feeding is banned in the UK as it is incompatible with our domestic legislation (Animal Welfare Act 2006), which makes it a criminal offence to allow an animal to suffer unnecessarily.

The Government has made clear that the production of foie gras using forcing feeding raises serious welfare concerns.

■ **Pate de Foie Gras: Imports**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[109225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what powers he has to ban the importation and sale in of foie gras made by force-feeding in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare, and we have made clear that the production of foie gras using forcing feeding raises serious welfare concerns.

However, until the end of the Transition Period, we are required to observe the relevant EU law which places restrictions on the introduction of measures that impair the movement of goods, such as foie gras.

Once our future relationship with the EU has been established there will be an opportunity for the Government to consider further the steps it could take in relation to the import or sale of foie gras.

■ **Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs**

Luke Pollard:

[\[109637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs were imported into the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme in 2019 via (a) Eurotunnel, (b) the Port of Dover and (c) other UK ports which holds records of entry.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of dogs imported under the Pet Travel Scheme in 2019 was as follows:

Eurotunnel – 174,395

The Port of Dover – 59,415

Other sea ports – 59,415

The data regarding the Pet Travel Scheme covers pets entering Great Britain and is based on information provided by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals.

The information provided is a true reflection of the information that Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) has access to. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this

data, as APHA can only rely on the information that has been input into the pets returns by a third party.

Kenny MacAskil: [\[111636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs entered the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme in May 2020.

Kenny MacAskil: [\[111637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs entered the UK via the Pet Travel Scheme in each month from August 2020 to October 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

4,433 dogs entered Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme in May 2020.

33,413 dogs entered Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme in August 2020. Data for September and October 2020 is not yet available.

The data regarding the Pet Travel Scheme covers pets entering Great Britain and is based on information supplied by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals.

This response has been compiled by the Animal and Plant Health Agency from data provided by third parties, and as such is reliant on the providers for the accuracy of the information.

Kenny MacAskil: [\[111638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Intra-Trade Animal Health Certificates were issued for dogs entering the UK in (a) September 2020 and (b) October 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of Intra-Trade Animal Health Certificates (ITAHCs) issued for dogs entering the UK was 5,206 in September 2020 and 5,287 in October 2020.

The data for commercial dog imports was extracted from the Trade Control and Expert System via the data warehouse facility by searching for canis familiaris imports.

This response has been compiled by the Animal and Plant Health Agency from data provided by third parties, and as such is reliant on the providers for the accuracy of the information.

■ **Pets: Travel**

Ronnie Cowan: [\[109477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on the future of pet travel between the UK and the EU after the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

There will be no change to the current health or documentary requirements for pets entering GB from the EU from 1 January 2021, in the immediate term. This is to ensure a smooth transition.

The Department has submitted an application to the European Commission to become a 'Part I' listed third country in relation to non-commercial movement of pet dogs, cats and ferrets from the UK into the EU. Acceptance of this application would mean very similar documentation and health requirements to those that are required now for pet owners and users of assistance dogs travelling to the EU. The Commission is considering our application.

The requirements for entry to the EU after the end of the transition period are dependent on the UK's listed status and information on requirements will be communicated via further updates on GOV.UK. It is the duty of a responsible Government to adequately prepare those who travel with pets to the EU under any listing scenario, including in the event that GB becomes an unlisted third country. We issued guidance in early August to ensure that those who wish to travel with their pet on the 1st January 2021 will be able to do so. We have recommended that pet owners visit their vet four months in advance of travel to the EU.

Luke Pollard:[\[109636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the summary of responses to the consultation on the review of the Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011 (as amended) published by his department in June 2017, what his timescale is for publication of the findings of the Post Implementation Review of that Order.

Victoria Prentis:

After the Transition Period, we will have new opportunities to manage our pet travel rules and we intend to use this opportunity to review our current requirements and legislation, including the Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011 (as amended). The Post Implementation Review of the Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals Order 2011 (as amended) should be published after the Transition Period.

■ Poultry: Animal Welfare**John Spellar:**[\[109156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the welfare standards for the production of chicken in (a) Poland, (b) the Netherlands and (c) the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

As members of the European Union, Poland and the Netherlands will need to comply with the European regulations concerning animal welfare standards, including Council Directive 2007/43/EC which lays down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production. As we leave the EU, we are committed to

maintaining our position as one of the world leaders in animal welfare and want to improve and build upon that record, working in partnership with farmers to support healthier, higher welfare animals.

■ **Protective Clothing: Environment Protection**

Alex Sobel:

[109613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the increase in use of face masks on progress to reduce single-use plastics.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not carried out an assessment on the effect of the increase in use of face masks on progress to reduce single-use plastics. During the Covid-19 outbreak facemasks, often made from single-use plastics, have played a vital role in reducing transmission of the virus.

Face coverings required indoors are not the same as the single-use surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of their PPE. These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace. Instead, the latest government advice on face coverings provides instructions on how people can make and care for reusable face coverings at home using scarves or other washable textiles, and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Reusable cloth face coverings are also available to buy from a wide range of retail outlets, including online.

We remain absolutely committed to turning the tide on the widespread, and often unnecessary, use of single-use plastics and the threat they pose to our natural environment. We are increasing the single-use carrier bag charge to 10p and extending to all retailers and have restricted the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton-buds. We are seeking powers in the Environment Bill to charge for single-use plastic items, make recycling more consistent; and reform packaging waste regulations.

■ **River Severn: Flood Control**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[109241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the robustness of the flood defences being implemented along the River Severn; and what their estimated lifespan is.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency, along with other members of the River Severn partnership, is currently investigating options to reduce flood risk along the River Severn. As well as the potential for new measures, this is taking into account the role and lifespan of

existing flood risk management assets and how these might be affected by climate change.

The lifespan of any new flood risk management asset forms a key part of the assessment of their benefits when considering the expenditure of public funds.

The Environment Agency routinely maintains its existing flood risk management assets and has dedicated teams in place to operate them 24 hours a day. So far this financial year 4,260 asset inspections have been carried out across the Severn catchment, ensuring they remain operational, protecting the communities they are designed for.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[109242]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to ensure that farmers' land is not affected by the implementation of flood prevention measures along the River Severn.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency, along with other members of the River Severn partnership, is currently investigating options to reduce flood risk along the River Severn. The partnership is taking a catchment based approach, looking at a range of options, both traditional and innovative, to better manage water across the Severn Basin.

The effects of any proposal, in terms of both its benefits and impacts, are carefully considered as part of the development process in order to ensure they are acceptable to all stakeholders and do not increase risk to others.

■ Sri Lanka: Waste

Ruth Jones:

[109651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Sri Lankan counterpart on the 21 containers of waste returned to the UK from that country in September 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA), as the competent authority for waste shipments for England, is proactively engaging with the authorities in Sri Lanka on these containers and is leading the response on this matter.

The 21 containers arrived back in England on Wednesday 28 October. The containers, which were shipped to Sri Lanka in 2017, were found by Sri Lankan authorities to contain illegal materials described as mattresses and carpets which had been exported for recycling. With the shipment now back on English soil, EA enforcement officers will seek to confirm the types of waste shipped, who exported it and the producer of the waste. Those responsible could face a custodial sentence of up to two years, an unlimited fine, and the recovery of money and assets gained through the course of their criminal activity.

■ Wines: Imports

Theresa Villiers:

[\[109198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether businesses importing fine wine from the EU will be required to use wine import certificates from 1 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government will legislate for a temporary easement of the requirement for VI-1 certification for imports of EU wine. Wine imports from the EU will not require VI-1 certification until 1 July 2021 and sensible exemptions will be made, including for shipments of less than 100 litres.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[109199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to minimise new compliance costs connected with the importation of fine wine from the EU after 1 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises that the VI-1 requirement will be a new cost to EU operators. However, despite VI-1 certification being an existing requirement for non-EU wines they remain competitive at retail. There are a number of practical exemptions from the requirement, including for shipments of less than 100 litres.

■ World Wine Trade Group

Theresa Villiers:

[\[109200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of joining the World Wine Trade Group.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK is rejoining the International Organisation of Vine and Wine in January 2021 after an absence of approximately 16 years. This will give the UK international influence over decisions on wine practices and processes and continued credibility in the international trade in wine. UK membership of other international organisations, including the World Wine Trade Group, is being kept under review.

■ Zoos Support Fund

Alex Sobel:

[\[111608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which zoos and safari parks have accessed the Zoos Support Fund set up in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Zoo Support Fund, which ran from 4th May to 19th July 2020 approved 57 applications.

Please see list of businesses which successfully accessed the fund:-

1. Teen Spirit
2. Jurassic Encounters T/A Ark Wildlife Park
3. Shepreth Wildlife Park
4. Tamar Otter & Wildlife Centre
5. Cumbria Zoo
6. Becky Falls Ancient Woodland Park Limited
7. Predator Experience
8. The Leaf Foundation
9. Island Amazon Adventure
10. Wild Discovery
11. Avon Valley Country Park Ltd
12. Woodside Wildlife Park
13. Dartmoor Zoological Society
14. Oasis Camel Park
15. Brazilia Ltd
16. The Falconry Centre Ltd
17. Chew Valley Animal Park Ltd
18. Sealife Adventure
19. Combe Martin Wildlife & Dinosaur Park
20. Exmoor Zoological Park
21. White Post Farm
22. Lake District Wildlife Park
23. Ventura Wildlife park
24. The New Forest Wildlife Park
25. Green Dragon Rare Breeds Farm
26. Trust for Sustainable Living
27. Hoo Farm animal Kingdom
28. Porfell Wildlife Park & Sanctuary
29. National Centre for Birds of Prey
30. Exotic Zoo Wildlife Park
31. Raptor Foundation
32. Battersea Park Children's Zoo

33. Cheshire Falconry Ltd
34. All Things Wild Ltd
35. Ilfracombe Aquarium Ltd
36. The Whitehouse Centre
37. Old Macdonalds Farm & Fun Park Ltd
38. The Essex Pig Company
39. Wildwood Escot
40. Hamerton Zoological Park
41. Coda Falconry
42. Xtreme Falconry
43. Noahs Ark zoo
44. Tropiquaria Zoo
45. Ponderosa R T C
46. The Parrot Zoo Trust
47. Bendalls Leisure Ltd
48. Libertys Owl Raptor & Reptile Centre
49. Simply Native Ltd
50. Zoo2U
51. Haven Falconry Bird of Prey Centre
52. The English School of Falconry
53. HR Phillpot & Son Barleylands Ltd
54. Kirkleatham Owl Centre
55. Smithills Open Farm Ltd
56. Paradise Park Cornwall
57. Screech Owl Sanctuary

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Cameroon: Food**

Harriett Baldwin:

[110813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of food insecurity in the northwest and southwest region of Cameroon.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon, where high levels of violence are having a tragic impact on civilians. There are currently 1.4 million people in the regions suffering from moderate and severe food insecurity.

In September I announced £4.5 million in additional funding to humanitarian efforts in Cameroon, which will provide vulnerable people with vital food packs, sanitation provisions, medical supplies and fund training for health workers. This will bring our total humanitarian support to Cameroon to £13.5 million for 2020. We continue to call for an end to the violence, unhindered humanitarian access to the affected populations and inclusive dialogue which addresses the root causes of the crisis.

Cameroon: Humanitarian Aid**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[110815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his French counterpart on the humanitarian situation in northwest and southwest Cameroon.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon, where high levels of violence are having a tragic impact on civilians. We regularly discuss the crisis, including the humanitarian situation, with international partners such as France. Our senior officials raised the issue with their French counterparts on 30 October. I intend to travel to Paris when circumstances allow, to discuss areas of mutual interest across the continent where we can work together. Cameroon will be high on that list.

Cameroon: Schools**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[110814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of levels of school attendance in northwest and southwest Cameroon.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon, where high levels of violence are having a tragic impact on civilians. Over the past three years, insecurity, displacement of teachers, threats and attacks on infrastructure and education personnel have left 850,000 children out of school. As we noted publicly on 4 November, we are appalled by the recent attacks on educational institutions in the Anglophone regions including in Kumba, Kumbo and Limbe. Every child has the right to a safe education and every teacher has the right to safety at work. The UK

Government continues to call for the perpetrators of these acts to be held accountable.

Through the British High Commission in Yaoundé we will continue to work alongside local partners in Cameroon to promote the safe resumption of children's education in the North-West and South-West regions, conflict resolution, youth peacebuilders and human rights monitoring.

■ **China: Uighurs**

Chris Evans:

[\[109308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support independent (a) tribunals and (b) assessments on China's treatment of its Uyghur population.

Nigel Adams:

We have serious concerns about gross violations of human rights occurring in Xinjiang and welcome any additional analysis on the situation in Xinjiang that is rigorous, balanced and raises awareness of the situation faced by Uyghurs and other minorities in China. At the UN Human Rights Council and UN Third Committee, the UK has repeatedly used both its national statements and joint statements with international partners to call on China to grant unfettered access to Xinjiang for UN experts and observers, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. We did so alongside 38 countries at the UN Third Committee on 6 October.

Chris Evans:

[\[109309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Chinese Government on allowing Human Rights Monitors access to Xinjiang's camps.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is deeply concerned about the gross human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the UK's longstanding calls for China to allow unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent experts, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Xinjiang directly with his Chinese counterpart in July. We have also repeatedly called on China to allow UN experts unfettered access to Xinjiang at the UN, including in a recent joint statement with 38 other countries at the UN Third Committee on 6 October.

■ **Detainees: Dual Nationality**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[110249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made on reuniting (a) Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, (b) Anoosheh Ashoori and (c) other arbitrarily detained dual British nationals with their families.

James Cleverly:

HMG remains extremely concerned about all dual British nationals detained in Iran, including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori. Iran does not recognise dual nationality and therefore does not permit UK Government access to British-Iranian detainees. We continue to urge the Iranian Government immediately to release all dual British nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran to enable them to return to their families in the UK. The welfare of British-Iranian citizens in Iran is of paramount importance, and we call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to treat all detainees in line with international standards. We continue to raise all our dual British nationals' cases at the most senior levels, and discuss it at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. The Foreign Secretary has done so repeatedly with Foreign Minister Zarif. We raised their cases again when we summoned the Iranian Ambassador on 29 October, and our Ambassador in Tehran consistently raises all our dual national detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

■ Developing Countries: Abortion**Carla Lockhart:**[\[109750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports that the Marie Stopes International franchise in Nairobi has been forced to close after police found that illegal abortions were being performed by staff who were not registered medical professionals, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the UK does not fund illegal and dangerous abortions in developing countries.

Carla Lockhart:[\[109751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports that Marie Stopes International franchise in Nairobi has been forced to close after police found that illegal abortions were being performed by staff who were not registered medical professionals, if his Department will reduce the funding allocated to Marie Stopes International UK.

James Duddridge:

FCDO has robust monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure UK taxpayers' money is achieving the results we expect, and that funds are spent in compliance with FCDO guidance and local law. FCDO funds cannot be used to fund any illegal activities and we treat allegations of any improper use of funds extremely seriously.

All of our reviews demonstrate confidence in the quality of MSI's services in developing countries. We have no plans to reduce approved funding to MSI.

The majority of our investment in reproductive health is in programmes that aim to increase access to quality voluntary family planning information, services and supplies, so women and girls can avoid unwanted pregnancy in the first place. Only in countries where abortion is permitted, do we support programmes that make safe abortion more accessible. FCDO programmes in Kenya have not been supporting the provision of safe abortion service delivery.

The UK is dedicated to supporting women to fully exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to lead healthy, fulfilling and prosperous lives.

■ **Embassies: Wines**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure British Embassies and High Commissions serve sparkling wine produced in Great Britain at their events.

Nigel Adams:

British High Commissions and Embassies serve wine produced in a range of locations, including Great Britain, but we do not centrally hold details of the wine that is served or procured by our Posts overseas. However, I fully support the UK wine industry and will encourage our Posts across the globe to stock UK products.

■ **EU Countries: Visas**

Anna McMorris:

[\[111595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress the Government has made in discussions with EU representatives on whether UK citizens will require a visa to travel to the EU for stays of over 90 days after the end of the transition period.

Wendy Morton:

The Government has discussed arrangements with the EU for UK nationals travelling to the Schengen Area. Regrettably, the EU has consistently maintained that UK nationals will be treated as Third Country Nationals under the Schengen Borders Code from 1 January 2021. UK nationals will only be able to travel visa-free for short stays for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. This is the standard length of stay that the EU offers to nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation.

UK nationals planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State. This may require applying for a visa and/or permit. Information about travel to Europe after the transition period is available on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/visit-europe-1-january-2021>

■ **Feronia: Working Conditions**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[110214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report, Development banks must be held accountable for their disastrous oil palm plantation investments, published by the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt in the Congo on 25 September 2020, whether CDC Group has investigated reports of racist abuse and illegal public whipping against workers at plantations operated by Feronia Inc.

James Duddridge:

The allegations in the referenced web article are unsubstantiated. Feronia's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) team undertook an investigation into the allegations alongside Groupe d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement (GASHE), a respected DRC-based NGO, which aims to protect the natural environment and its resources while supporting the communities who live within them. They found that no grievances had been lodged with the company and, after extensive engagement with local communities, uncovered no mention of any whipping incident in any circumstance either inside the plantations or in the community.

Gender: Equality**Zarah Sultana:**[\[110921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the UK Government committing additional Official Development Assistance to help support progress in gender equality throughout the world in response to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on women and girls.

Wendy Morton:

Across the world we are seeing the devastating impact of COVID-19. FCDO's response has been informed by the latest evidence and data which showed, early on, the disproportionate impact the pandemic would have on girls and women. For example, UNFPA estimate that there will be 15 million more cases of domestic violence for every three months of lockdown and that there will be 13 million more cases of child marriages before 2030. FCDO continues to work to ensure the needs and priorities of women and girls are central to every aspect of our response, while supporting women's participation and leadership, including through women's rights organisations.

FCDO have so far committed over £1 billion of UK aid to counter the health, humanitarian, and socio-economic risks, and to support the global effort to find and distribute a vaccine. In addition to being the largest funder to UNFPA we provided a further £10 million in funding to maintain vital gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls in need. Our Gender-Responsive Social Protection and Better Assistance in Crises programmes are also providing expert advice to FCDO country offices, governments and partner organisations on how to strengthen social protection measures in the COVID-19 response, including how to deliver more effectively for women and girls. Our leadership on girls' education is more urgent and important than ever, with school closures. The UK has announced £20 million for the UN Children's Fund crisis appeal, which includes education, and a further £5 million to the Education Cannot Wait fund to support emergency education in fragile contexts.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[110769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will take steps to support the realisation of guaranteed access for frontline health workers globally by committing to share a portion of the vaccines they obtain through advanced purchase agreements with the COVAX Advance Market Commitment from the time of the first vaccine shipment.

Wendy Morton:

Ensuring that frontline health workers across the world have access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines will be a critical part of accelerating an end to the pandemic. The UK has supported this objective through funding of up to £548 million for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC). This funding will contribute to the supply of 1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses for up to 92 developing countries by the end of 2021, subject to vaccines securing stringent regulatory approval.

The UK supports the role of the World Health Organisation in providing robust technical guidance on specific COVID-19 vaccine use strategies to ensure maximum public health, and wider impact. This includes prioritised access to vaccines for health and social care workers.

■ Iran: Sanctions

Scott Benton:

[\[109718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the requirement to invoke the snapback of sanctions against Iran under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.

James Cleverly:

Our position regarding the US notification to snapback sanctions pursuant to UNSCR 2231 has been very clearly expressed to the UN Security Council Presidency and all UN Security Council members. E3 Foreign Ministers have made clear that the US ceased to be a participant to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) following their withdrawal from the deal on 8 May 2018. We cannot therefore support the US' action, which is incompatible with our current efforts to support the JCPOA. We remain committed to the JCPOA and have always said we regret the US' withdrawal from the deal.

However, Iran's continued non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA remains deeply concerning and seriously undermines the non-proliferation benefits of the agreement. We have called for a ministerial Joint Commission meeting to address Iran's non-compliance and find a way forward. We are clear that Iran must engage seriously with this process, and that its current actions put the JCPOA at risk.

■ Lebanon: Hezbollah**Scott Benton:**[\[109719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what effect Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon has on the UK's policies in that region.

James Cleverly:

Hizballah's destabilising influence threatens regional stability and endangers Lebanon and its people. The UK has long had a no contact policy with the whole organisation. Hizballah was proscribed in its entirety in March 2019 and an asset freeze put in place against the entire organisation in January 2020. The UK does not provide any assistance or funding directly to Hizballah, Hizballah-led ministries or Hizballah-led institutions. Following proscription, we went through a due diligence process with all our programme implementing partners to ensure that they were fully aware of the implications of the UK decision to proscribe Hizballah in its entirety. We regularly raise our concerns about Hizballah at the UN Security Council, and call on all parties to abide by the provisions of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

■ Maternity Services**Scott Benton:**[\[110923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the finding of the 2018 ICAI report that the Department for International Development's policies focused on family planning rather than strengthening health systems to provide good quality maternal care, what steps his Department has taken to prioritise quality maternal care since that report was published.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has a strong track record of investment in maternal and newborn health through strengthening health systems, alongside other essential services, including family planning. Since the 2018 ICAI report, we have taken a series of steps to improve our approach, embedding a focus on quality, respectful maternity care. These were recognised and commended by ICAI in their 2020 follow-up review.

The UK Government has a manifesto commitment on ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children by 2030. We have invested in staff knowledge and skills, and are supporting our partners, including the World Health Organisation, to promote, deliver, and measure quality maternal health care. We support the Global Financing Facility for women, children, and adolescent health in its efforts to strengthen quality and sustainability of services in 36 countries. This action is more important than ever given the negative indirect impacts of COVID-19, which is reducing access to maternity care, and other essential health services.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: EDO MBM Technology**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[110885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the compliance with the 1992 OSCE arms embargo on

Nagorno-Karabakh of the supply of equipment by EDO MBM Technology Ltd to Turkey; and what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports that that equipment has been used in drones in the Nagorno-Karabakh area since September 2020.

Wendy Morton:

HMG considers all export applications against the Consolidated Criteria which provides a strict assessment framework and we keep all licences under careful and continual review. HMG complies with the OSCE arms embargo relating to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is considered as part of our export licensing process. We have not issued licences contrary to the arms embargo. We continue to monitor developments in the region closely.

■ **Overseas Aid**

Chris Law:

[\[111556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 102832 on Overseas Aid, which Departments applied for the 31 projects in 2018-19 not covered by Overseas Security and Justice Assessments; and how many projects each Department applied for.

James Cleverly:

I refer the Honourable Member to my response of 27 October to question 106365.

Chris Law:

[\[111557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 106362 on Overseas Aid, which Departments applied for the 31 projects in 2019-20 not covered by Overseas Security and Justice Assessments; and how many projects each Department applied for.

James Cleverly:

During the 2019/20 financial year the Integrated Activity Fund, now named the Gulf Strategy Fund, received applications for funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for International Trade, the Department of Health, the Home Office, HM Revenue and Customs and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Chris Law:

[\[111558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many applications over £1 million were made to the Integrated Activity Fund in the (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21 financial years; which Departments submitted those applications; how many of those applications were approved; and which (i) minister or (ii) director approved those applications in each of those financial years.

James Cleverly:

Six Integrated Activity Fund applications over £1 million were approved in 2019/20. Six programme applications over £1 million were originally made to the 2020/21 Gulf Strategy Fund by the Foreign and Commonwealth office, the Department for

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Four applications were approved. Currently only two programmes over £1 million will be delivered in 2020/21 following an in-year review of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office programme budgets.

Chris Law:

[\[111559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many projects were applied for by the Ministry of Defence under the Integrated Activity Fund in the (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19 and (d) 2019-20 financial years; and what the (i) allocated budget and (ii) actual spending was for each project.

James Cleverly:

We do not disclose information related to Integrated Activity Fund projects to maintain the confidence and confidentiality of our Gulf partners.

■ **Poland: Family Planning**

Stella Creasy:

[\[111497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Polish counterpart on the restrictions on the reproductive rights of Polish citizens.

Wendy Morton:

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

■ **Tanveer Ahmed**

Sarah Owen:

[\[111640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to ensure the safety of British Kashmiri journalist, Tanveer Ahmed who was arrested in August 2020 and is on hungerstrike in Mipur Central Jail.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO staff have monitored Mr Tanveer Ahmed Rafique's health and welfare through phone calls, as he was detained during the Covid-19 pandemic so physical access to Mirpur Central Prison is not possible. We will raise any welfare concerns with local

authorities with Mr Rafique's consent in line with our public guidance set out in the FCDO guide: Support for British Nationals Abroad. We regularly remind the Pakistani Government of its human rights obligations.

■ Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Neil Coyle:

[\[110840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the findings of the Stop TB Partnership's assessment entitled, The TB response is heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, published on 8 April 2020, what steps he is taking to improve global detection of tuberculosis cases during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

We knew from previous health emergencies that COVID-19 would disrupt health services for diseases like TB. As the Stop TB Partnership's assessment highlights, TB case notifications have decreased this year, due in part to TB laboratory capacity being diverted to COVID-19 testing.

The UK has pledged over £1 billion of aid to fight COVID-19. We are working with organisations we fund to adapt their TB activities in light of COVID-19. For example, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria is supporting countries to detect TB in a way that avoids individuals gathering in one place. The Global Fund is also helping countries procure additional diagnostic machines to ensure adequate testing capacity for TB. The UK has pledged up to £1.4 billion to the Global Fund to 2022.

The UK Government also supports developing countries to make their domestic health systems, including their TB programmes, stronger and more resilient.

■ Uganda: Human Rights

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[109670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department in response to the ongoing human rights abuses in Uganda.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government follows the human rights situation in Uganda closely. Human rights are universal and should apply equally to all people. We continue to call on Uganda to guarantee freedoms enshrined in the Ugandan Constitution. At the 43rd Human Rights Council on 19 June, the UK International Ambassador for Human Rights welcomed the agreement between the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Uganda to renew the mandate of the UN Human Rights office in Kampala. At the UN Security Council on 13 October, we called on the Government of Uganda to ensure their upcoming elections are peaceful, free and fair as reports of shrinking democratic space are concerning. The British High Commissioner in Kampala has raised the importance of free and fair elections and respect for human rights in recent calls with senior Government Ministers. We will continue to monitor the situation.

■ Veronica Koman**Alex Sobel:**[\[109605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to counterparts in the Indonesian Government on the exile of human rights lawyer Veronica Koman.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of the situation of Veronica Koman. It would not be appropriate to comment on this case during the ongoing judicial process but we continue to monitor developments. The United Kingdom respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, which includes Papua, and within this framework we support the Indonesian Government's right to enforce the law in its own territory.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion: Down's Syndrome****Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[105407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many abortions have been carried out to date in 2020 on the grounds of a prenatal diagnosis of Down's syndrome.

Helen Whately:

Between January and June 2020 there were 339 mentions of Down's Syndrome on HSA4 Abortion Notification Forms. This figure includes all legal abortions performed in England and Wales. This data should be treated as provisional, meaning that it may be subject to revision if the Department receives further information from hospitals and clinics on missing information from HSA4 forms, or more forms are received.

■ Aortic Aneurysm: Screening**Paul Bristow:****[R]** [\[92907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many screenings for abdominal aortic aneurysms have taken place in the NHS, as part of the NHS AAA Screening Programme, in each month since April 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[94442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time taken is for patients to receive their smear test results in each NHS trust area.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 28 September 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[97685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Apple and Google on the incompatibility of the NHS covid-19 app with operating systems older than iOS 13.5 and Android 6.0 Marshmallow.

Helen Whately:

Officials have on-going discussions with Google and Apple to support app development. The app currently supports Apple iOS versions 13.5 and higher, and Android version Marshmallow (v6.0) and higher. This is because the app needs the Exposure Notification framework developed by Apple and Google, which is only available in these versions.

This is the same in all countries with apps using the Google and Apple exposure notification API for contact tracing.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[86097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to give permission for local directors of public health to run a localised tracing system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: We are working with local authorities to support NHS Test and Trace Services in their local communities. Local contact tracing aims to use local knowledge about communities and individuals to increase the percentage of successful contacts made by contact tracers. Local contact tracing is currently only contacting those people who have tested positive and NHS Test and Trace have been unable to reach within 24 hours.

Local authority contact tracers are council employees and in some cases volunteers who are working under the supervision of Local Health Protection teams.

Each individual local authority will agree the terms of the service they will provide, so processes will vary regionally.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[95227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the 119 covid-19 hotline is fully accessible.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 September 2020]: The Coronavirus Testing Contact Centre can be contacted on 119 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 0300 303 2713 in Scotland between the hours of 7am – 11pm, seven days a week. The service can be

accessed by people with hearing or speech difficulties by calling 18001 119 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or 18001 0300 303 2713 in Scotland. There is a service for deaf people to speak to the Contact Centre using a sign language interpreter. This operates via a video link. More information on how to access the service is available at the following link:

www.interpreternow.co.uk

There are also pathways for non-digital users to book a test through the Contact Centre.

For those that do not speak English as a first language, the Contact Centre uses the Language Line interpreter service and staff are trained to manage language barriers, including through use of this service.

Justin Madders: **[98716]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of calls (a) made to, (b) answered by and (c) that were answered within 60 seconds by the 119 covid-19 NHS test and trace service in September 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 October 2020]: In September 2020, 1,686,294 calls were made to the 119 Test and Trace Contact Centre. Out of these, 939,020 calls were answered with 46% of calls answered within 60 seconds.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Barry Gardiner: **[40462]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific and medical advice that he received up to 1 April 2020 on the merits of antigen and antibody testing for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

COVID-19 testing is core to the Government's response to the virus, helping to provide care to those who need it, protect the most vulnerable and find new cases to help break the chains of transmission.

The Government continues to be guided by the latest expertise in this area and receives a range of scientific and medical advice, including from Public Health England (PHE) and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), which have consistently advised on the importance of testing. SAGE meeting minutes are published on GOV.UK.

Assessments of the various antibody testing assays, including those now in use were performed by PHE, are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-laboratory-evaluations-of-serological-assays>

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Stephanie Peacock:

[98269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been instructed to isolate through track and trace to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 October 2020]: Since NHS Test and Trace was launched on 28 May, in total, as of 14 October, 1,133,094 people have been reached by the service and instructed to self-isolate. This figure includes both those testing positive and their contacts.

Weekly statistics for NHS Test and Trace can be found on GOV.UK at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Jonathan Ashworth:

[83820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 public testing sites are operating in England; and how many of those sites are (a) walk in and (b) drive in sites.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: The Government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history, including, as of 2 September:

- 72 drive-through sites;
- 53 walk-through sites;
- 21 satellite test sites;
- 236 mobile testing units, home testing and satellite kits; and
- Five lighthouse laboratories.

Hywel Williams:

[94338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what measures has his Department taken, in cooperation with the Welsh Government, to ensure that the covid-19 testing application system is available in Welsh; and what proportion of service users are able to access the service through the medium of Welsh.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 28 September 2020]: Our Welsh sites operate with bilingual guidance which is handed out to patients in their test kits. We also aim to ensure that ingress and egress signage on the sites is bilingual, and that bilingual staff where available are on hand in our local testing sites or regional testing sites to assist patients with any queries about testing.

We have also worked with the Welsh Government to deliver the National Health Service COVID-19 contact tracing app with Welsh language support from launch. This presents citizens with another means of accessing a test through the medium of Welsh.

■ **Dental Services: Staff**

Alex Cunningham:

[98218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) dentists and (b) dental health staff has the same access to covid-19 tests as other NHS staff.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 October 2020]: We have made it our priority to provide testing for National Health Service front line staff, including dentists and dental health staff, when symptomatic. A number of tests are reserved for essential workers and all symptomatic frontline staff can request a test as an essential worker via GOV.UK or 119. Essential workers can order five test kits for themselves and other symptomatic members of their households. However, for households of more than five, 119 can raise an order on their behalf.

■ **Health Professions: Quarantine**

Daisy Cooper:

[106500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exempting NHS and care workers from quarantine restrictions so that they can visit families abroad without having to sacrifice their annual leave entitlement for their time in self-isolation when they return.

Helen Whately:

The exemption from the requirement to self-isolate for registered health and care professionals traveling to the United Kingdom to provide essential healthcare was removed, following a review of the latest evidence, on 31 July. This was to ensure consistency with the wider public, to protect public health and protect the healthcare workforce, as we cannot risk onward chains of transmission that might infect the wider workforce.

The Government has removed the requirement to self-isolate if travelling from a country in the approved list of travel corridor locations. We continue to keep the removal of this exemption under review. NHS Employers published guidance in July 2020 on their website regarding alternative arrangements that NHS organisations may offer to staff who need to quarantine after travelling abroad, including visiting families abroad. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/staff-terms-and-conditions/quarantine-and-self-isolation-on-entering-or-returning-to-the-uk>

■ Health: National Parks

Sir Gary Streeter:

[94330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of access to national parks on (a) mental and (b) physical recovery from illness.

Jo Churchill:

The Government wants people to remain fit and active at all times. The Chief Medical Officer is clear that being physically active is important to long-term health and crucial for keeping people healthy during the ongoing pandemic. Evidence suggests that regular physical activity can promote good physical health and help manage stress and anxiety.

Throughout the pandemic, parks and outdoor green spaces have remained open. People are able to go outdoors for a walk, run, cycle or any other independent way they normally get active. The Government has published detailed guidance for members of the public on how they can exercise outdoors and for outdoor facilities on re-opening.

■ Heart Diseases: Diets

Jim Shannon:

[93591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of promoting the Mediterranean diet to people at risk of heart disease.

Jo Churchill:

There is no clear definition of a Mediterranean diet. However, patterns of intake consistent with descriptions of this in the literature involve high intakes of vegetables, fruit, legumes, cereals, fish, a high ratio of mono- to saturated fatty acid intake, a low intake of dairy products and meat.

In 2019, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition carried out an evidence review on saturated fats and health which concluded that higher intakes of saturated fats were associated with an increased risk of heart disease, and therefore saturated fats in the diet should be swapped for unsaturated fats. This advice is in line with Mediterranean-style dietary patterns.

In the United Kingdom, the Eatwell Guide is used to define government recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet. The Eatwell Guide is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

The dietary recommendations of the Eatwell Guide broadly align with the Mediterranean dietary pattern.

■ Leukaemia: Diagnosis

Robert Halfon:

[91004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to make an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the early diagnosis of leukaemia and the outcomes for people treated for leukaemia since March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: No assessment has been made. The full extent of the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on early diagnosis rates or outcomes will not be known until the pandemic is over, and until the data is fully available.

NHS England and NHS Improvement is continuing the roll-out Rapid Diagnostic Centres (RDCs) across the country to bring together diagnostic equipment and expertise. RDCs will initially focus on diagnosing cancers where patients often present with non-specific symptoms, such as blood cancer, and may go to their general practitioner many times before being sent for appropriate tests. RDC compliant pathways should be in place for all patients, including children, by 2023/24.

■ Nutrition: Children

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[97522]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to end the marketing of high-sugar and high-fat foods to infants and children.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives', published in July, sets out our intention to restrict the promotion and advertising of foods high in fat, salt and sugar. We have consulted on these measures and listened carefully to the feedback. We will publish full responses to the consultations as soon as possible.

We will also consult on proposals to improve the marketing and labelling of commercial food and drink products for infants and young children, so that parents and carers have clear and honest information that aligns with the Government's advice on the products they feed their babies.

'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives

■ Obesity: Health Services

Alex Norris:

[95734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support the aims of the obesity strategy and (b) ensure that local authorities have sufficient (i) funding and (ii) resources to deliver obesity prevention initiatives.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 30 September 2020]: 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity, takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan and sets out measures to get the nation fit and healthy, protect against COVID-19 and protect the National Health Service.

We have invested £3.279 billion in local authority public health services through the Public Health Grant in 2020/21, in addition to what the NHS spent on preventative interventions such as our world-class immunisation and screening programmes.

■ Oral Cancer: Coronavirus**Derek Twigg:**[\[99528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the cancellation of dental check-ups as a result of the covid-19 outbreak on the early detection of mouth cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: No assessment has been made about the effect of the cancellation of dental check-ups as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak on the early detection of mouth cancer.

■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:**[\[97608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the covid-19 outbreak on the long-term funding requirements of community pharmacies.

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.

■ Pregnancy: Air Pollution**Geraint Davies:**[\[91564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the research published in September 2018 by Queen Mary University of London showing that inhaled pollution particles reach the placenta.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: Public Health England's strategy for 2020-2025 highlights that poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health. The ambition is to make the case for critical action to address air pollution so that people in England enjoy cleaner air and healthier lives, especially those who are most vulnerable, such as pregnant women.

The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has established a subgroup to consider the evidence on the effects of maternal exposure to ambient air pollution on adverse birth outcomes. A report is currently being prepared and it will include consideration of relevant and recent studies, including the research conducted by Queen Mary University of London showing that inhaled pollution particles reach the placenta.

Geraint Davies:[\[91565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to protect the health of pregnant women from air pollution.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: Public Health England (PHE) continues to make the case for critical action to address air pollution so that people in England enjoy cleaner air and healthier lives, especially those who are most vulnerable such as pregnant women.

The Government's Clean Air Strategy, aims to reduce exposure to polluted air and lower rates of ill health attributable to air pollution and to provide better health outcomes for vulnerable groups most affected by poor air quality, including pregnant women.

To assist with the Government's Clean Air Strategy, the Department commissioned PHE to undertake a review of the evidence for effective and cost-effective air quality interventions and provide practical recommendations for actions to improve air quality that will significantly reduce harm from air pollution.

The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has established a subgroup to consider the evidence on the effects of maternal exposure to ambient air pollution on adverse birth outcomes.

■ Social Services: Protective Clothing

Helen Hayes:

[\[106434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish updated guidance on the use of medical gloves in social care settings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The updated guidance on how to work safely in care homes and domiciliary care is currently going through the Department's approval process and will be published shortly.

HOME OFFICE

■ Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[109132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she plans to publish the Government response to the consultation on the review of section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, published in May 2014.

Victoria Atkins:

The government is actively working on publishing the response to the consultation on the review of Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and it will be published in due course.

■ Asylum

Kate Osamor:

[\[109521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason there are no service standards for the processing of asylum applications.

Chris Philp:

Until October 2018, there was a published service standard in place to decide 98% of straight-forward cases within six months from date of claim. Whilst the operation consistently achieved this for three years, the number of non-straight forward cases awaiting a decision grew rapidly and it became clear that the former service standard no longer best served those that used our services. For these reasons, former Ministers agreed that we should move away from the service standard to reprioritise cases, whilst we come to longer term arrangement for service standards that meet the needs of all parties.

As a result, we moved away from the 6-month service standard to concentrate on older claims, cases with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Additionally, we are prioritising cases where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required. This prioritisation has been successful as we made 3,114

decisions on claims from UASC in the year ended December 2019, a 45% increase on the previous year.

For the year 2020, we continue to prioritise claims in the same way, including UASCs, however there have been some operational challenges resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak that has impacted our decision making across all claims. We are continuing to formulate plans on a new service standard for all asylum claims, which should provide asylum seekers and partners with clear expectation of how and when a decision should be made. The Home Office does however continue to publish information on the total number of cases awaiting an initial decision broken down by specific periods of time. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-august-2020> (Asy_02)

■ Asylum and Immigration: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor:

[109520]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what circumstances relating to the covid-19 pandemic have caused delays in her Department processing asylum and indefinite leave to remain applications; and what steps she is taking to mitigate those delays.

Chris Philp:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, customers in the UK were unable to attend their substantive asylum interviews and asylum operations made the decision to cease these on 19 March 2020 in line with government guidance.

In response, Asylum Operations secured a mobile digital and video interviewing solution to support remote interviewing and restarted remote video interviewing for adults from 17 July 2020 and on 21 September 2020 recommenced with face to face substantive interviews for adults. On the same date, we also commenced remote video interviewing for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). We are also able to offer in person interviews for UASC should they be required.

Asylum Operations were able to continue to make decisions on asylum applications during this time but were unable to serve these due to government guidance to 'stay at home' as the operations relied on the postal service to deliver these causing delays. The department have since agreed a process to enable the service of decisions via email and post which has been shared through the Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA) and the Law Society. Asylum Operations is now working to deliver on recovery plans to return interviewing and decisions to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Asylum in the UK should continue to be sought at the first available opportunity, however for those who have failed to claim on arrival, or whose circumstances have changed since arrival, claims are usually registered in Croydon, but appointments were limited due to restrictive measures. The Home Office have temporarily introduced additional locations to register claims across the UK.

In relation to Indefinite Leave to Remain applications, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and government and public health restrictions put in place, the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UKVCAS), which allows customers within the UK to enrol their biometrics, was suspended from the end of March to 1 June 2020.

As the UKVCAS service reopened, in parallel UKVI began reusing existing fingerprint biometrics for some customers which meant that instead of attending a service point in person to re-enrol, UKVI could reuse the fingerprints already recorded against a previous application.

Once a customer has submitted their biometrics to UKVI, either through a physical appointment or verifying their identity in order that their existing biometrics can be reused, UKVI is able to make a decision. UKVI are processing decisions as quickly as possible.

■ **Asylum: Coronavirus**

Stuart C McDonald:

[109420]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the Home Affairs Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2019-21, Home Office preparedness for COVID-19 (Coronavirus): institutional accommodation, published 28 July 2020.

Chris Philp:

The government's response was published on 03 November 2020.

This can be found at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/184/home-office-preparedness-for-covid19-coronavirus/publications/>

■ **British Nationality: Assessments**

Jamie Stone:

[110891]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to establish English Language and Life in the UK test centres in Caithness, Sutherland, and Easter Ross constituency.

Kevin Foster:

There are no current plans to open either an English language test centre or a Life in the UK test centre in the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross constituency.

A life in the UK test centre is planned to open in Inverness by 31 March 2021.

■ **British Nationality: Windrush Generation**

Patrick Grady:

[110851]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of applying the British Nationality Act Remedial Order to British born Windrush descendants whose families gained the right to settle in the UK via 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.

■ Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody Independent Review**Helen Hayes:****[110875]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress the Government has made in implementing the recommendations of the Angoloni Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody, published 30 October 2017.

Kit Malthouse:

We are committed to delivering meaningful and lasting change to prevent deaths in custody. Good progress has been made in addressing Dame Elish's recommendations, although there is more to be done.

We have significantly restricted the use of police stations as places of safety, for those experiencing a mental health crisis. The National Police Chiefs' Council are driving progress on national training and assessing the health of detainees and the Government is making significant investment in mental health. The Home Office have created an annual statistical publication showing data on police use of force, broken down by ethnicity.

In February 2020, the Government implemented reforms to provide the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) with a power to investigate matters on its own initiative, without the need for a referral from the police. Legislative reforms to the IOPC's corporate structure and governance, implemented in January 2018, have helped to improve the timeliness of IOPC investigations.

To support families, we have made inquests more sympathetic to their needs, undertaken a review of the provision of legal aid for inquests, and improved the information available immediately after a death in custody.

The Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody continues to oversee and drive progress on this work.

■ Emergency Services Network

Liz Saville Roberts:

[109523]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much additional technology funding will be made available in the next Spending Review for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP); how much the overspend is on that programme to date; how many deadlines that programme has missed to date; what plans she has made to ensure confidence in the delivery of the ESMCP; and what assessment she has made of the effect of the delay of the delivery of the ESMCP on public services.

Kit Malthouse:

The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) is replacing the current Airwave radio system, used by the emergency services, with the Emergency Services Network which runs over the commercial EE network with priority and pre-emption for emergency service users.

The Spending Review is ongoing and it would be wrong to prejudge the outcome.

Programme costs are separated into 3 categories; first the cost of building and rolling out the new ESN system; second costs borne locally by users for things like devices and accessories that they'll need to use the ESN, and; third the cost to maintain Airwave until ESN has been adopted by all users and Airwave can be switched off.

The costs for maintaining Airwave are by far the most significant and, subject to commercial negotiation, the annual cost of extending Airwave beyond the current contract end date of December 2022, is likely to be in excess of £450m per annum, taking into account local Airwave costs.

The programme set itself an original target of transitioning all users from the current Airwave system onto the ESN and switching Airwave off by December 2019. We are now targeting an Airwave switch off date no later than 2025. The investment case for the programme remains positive even with this later Airwave switch off timescale.

Both during and since the programme reset in 2018, it has undergone extensive assurance both internally within the department and externally through Cabinet Office and HMT. The programme has also been scrutinised by the National Audit Office and Parliament (Public Accounts Committee and Home Affairs Select Committee). An Independent Assurance Panel chaired by a Non-Executive Director from HMRC and made up of several industry experts also regularly assures the programme and provides advice to the Permanent Secretary and Ministers. I, (Home Secretary) receive regular updates on the programme.

The Department remains committed to completing delivery of the ESN and switching off Airwave as quickly as possible. We stand by our commitment to the Emergency Services that we will only transition from Airwave to ESN when it is operationally safe to do so. In the meantime, Airwave continues to provide a resilient service.

■ **Greater Manchester Police: ICT**

Graham Stringer: [908415]

What recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Greater Manchester Police's Integrated Operational Policing System.

Kit Malthouse:

We are concerned about the issue in Manchester and are keen for Greater Manchester Police to resume publishing and sharing crime data in full as soon as possible.

It is the responsibility of the Labour Mayor, Andy Burnham to hold the Chief Constable and force to account and he is democratically accountable to the public for this.

An initial HMICFRS report made recommendations which the force responded to. We await the findings of the latest HMICFRS inspections to assess GMP's progress.

■ **Home Office: Staff**

Marsha De Cordova: [109629]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the staffing complement of her Department was in (a) October 2020 and (b) October 2019; and what assessment she has made of the adequacy of her Department's resources to tackle the backlog in Tier 2 visa applications.

Kevin Foster:

The latest available data regarding staffing numbers for 2020 is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-management-information-2020>.

For staffing data for October 2019, the data is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-management-information-2019>

UKVI has diverted significant resources to work through the stock of applications which built up whilst the UK was subject to lockdown restrictions, this has seen a significant increase in the volume of applications decided. The levels of cases outstanding are reducing and output is consistently exceeding the number of new applications submitted.

As such we consider the resources available to undertake decision making in Tier 2 to be adequate.

■ Immigrants: Detainees

Alison Thewliss:

[109453]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many transfers of people (a) from a prison to an Immigration Removal Centre and (b) from one Immigration Removal Centre to another have taken place in the last 60 days.

Chris Philp:

The Government published statistics relating to COVID-19 and the immigration system at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-covid-19-and-the-immigration-system-may-2020> on gov.uk on 28 May and the latest Immigration Statistics publication includes the numbers of individuals detained under immigration powers in prisons. Statistics on people in immigration detention during the second quarter of 2020 (April to June) was published in August in the immigration statistics quarterly release <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020>

Management information indicates that in the period from 1 September to 1 November 2020, 397 people have entered the immigration estate from the HM Prison Estate. This number includes those placed in the immigration estate temporarily prior to voluntary removal. All entrants to the immigration estate are placed in reverse cohort units in line with Public Health England guidance and those with particular health vulnerabilities offered the opportunity to 'shield'.

During this period there have also been 665 moves between immigration removal centres, with most of these internal moves within the Heathrow centres (Harmondsworth and Colnbrook) and the Gatwick centres (Tinsley House & Brook House).

The safety and health of people in the detention estate are of the utmost importance. We are following all Public Health England guidance and have robust contingency plans in place. As of 2 November 2020, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in immigration removal centres.

■ Knives: Crime

Andrew Griffith:

[109776]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce knife crime in Sussex.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is determined to turn the tide on knife crime in all areas, wherever it occurs. Across England and Wales, we are recruiting 20,000 more police officers over the next three years and increasing sentences for violent criminals. We have made it easier for the police to use enhanced stop and search powers and we will introduce a new court order, Serious Violence Reduction Orders, to make it easier for the police to stop and search those who have been convicted of knife crime. In addition, we have legislated through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 to give the

police more powers and to ensure knives are less likely to make their way on to the streets and we will introduce new Knife Crime Prevention Orders, a preventative order which will provide an additional tool for police to help steer those most at risk away from serious violence. We will also be introducing new legislation to place a duty on the police, councils and health authorities to work together to prevent and tackle serious violence.

Over the last 12 months, we have increased police funding, by £1 billion this year and announced that the amount of funding available to the policing system in 2020 to 2021 will increase by more than £1.1 billion. Sussex Police have received £309.9 Million in 2020-21, an increase of 7.6% from 2019-20 and have recruited 114 additional officers under uplift (as at end of June 2020).

We have also announced a targeted £25 million to tackle county lines drug gangs, given the links between drugs, county lines and serious violence.

This government has committed £76.5 million in 2020/21 to address the drivers of serious violence at the local level and significantly bolster the police response in the 18 Police Force areas most affected by serious violence across England and Wales. This builds on the £100 million invested in the previous year. Of this, Sussex Police has been allocated £2.2 million over two years to pay for a surge in police operational activity, such as increased patrols in greater numbers for longer periods of times, as well as new equipment and technology, improved intelligence and targeting, and an enhanced investigative response. A further £1.8m from the Fund was invested in developing Sussex Police's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

VRUs will be distributing a further £2.9 million to hundreds of frontline charities working on violence prevention projects which support vulnerable children and young people. More than 300 charities will share in the financial assistance, which is part of the £750 million package of support for charities announced by the Chancellor in April. Sussex VRU received £74,720 and is also supporting 9 charities.

In addition to the Serious Violence Fund, in 2018 we invested £200 million in early intervention and prevention support initiatives over 10 years to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). In Sussex, one project has been offered funding for £93,500 under the Covid grant round.

■ Mining: Industrial Disputes

Jonathan Edwards:

[908433]

If she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent inquiry into the policing of the miners' strike in 1984-85.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to undertake an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent inquiry into the policing of the miners' strike in 1984-85 in England and Wales.

■ Police: Recruitment

Sarah Jones:

[106461]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much has been spent from the public purse on encouraging under-represented groups to join the police through media outlets that serve BAME communities in the last 10 months.

Kit Malthouse:

Attracting a broad range of talent, cultures and backgrounds to a career in policing is a core ambition in our drive to recruit 20,000 extra police officers, therefore reaching under-represented audiences is a key element of the Police Recruitment campaign strategy.

The national advertising campaign is planned and bought to reach a wide range of people from all backgrounds. Evaluation of campaign activity in May and June 2020 suggests that campaign messages reached almost 94% of 18-54 year olds from ethnic minority communities.

Campaign activity includes TV and radio advertising on channels which serve minority ethnic communities, such as BET, Brit Asia TV and Colourful Radio. To date, over £38k has been invested in these channels. In addition, £74K has been set aside to date for reaching under-represented groups through partnerships with media outlets which specifically serve minority ethnic communities.

We also continue to work with Police Associations to encourage under-represented audiences from their communities to consider a career in policing. This includes working with them to develop new communications content for them to use on their no-cost channels which will also be used to support new individual tailored web pages for each Police Association on the www.joiningthepolice.co.uk campaign website.

■ Police: Standards

Fleur Anderson:

[105569]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve police response times.

Kit Malthouse:

Law enforcement, including response times, is an operational matter for the police. It is for local policing bodies, in the case of London the Mayor, and Chief Constables and Commissioners to decide how best to manage their communications and response to the public based on their knowledge and experience of the communities they serve.

The police funding settlement for 2020/21 sets out the biggest increase in funding for the policing system since 2010. The Government will provide a total police funding settlement of up to £15.2 billion in 2020/21, which is an increase of up to £1.1 billion compared to 2019/20.

The Metropolitan Police Service are receiving up to £2,939.9m in funding in 2020/21, an increase of up to £193m on 2019/20.

■ Slavery: Victims

Carolyn Harris:

[\[908419\]](#)

What steps she is taking to (a) protect and (b) support victims of modern slavery.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK is a world-leader in the fight against modern slavery.

We have lifted thousands of modern slavery victims out of situations of exploitation and supported them to rebuild their lives.

The 2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery, published last month, sets out actions taken in the UK to tackle modern slavery, including:

- Publishing the statutory guidance for the identification and support for victims;
- Introduced innovative methods of support during the pandemic;
- Published the world's first government modern slavery statement covering the government's supply chains.

■ Visas: Coronavirus

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[908413\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the application process for visa extensions.

Kevin Foster:

The global travel and health restrictions in the first lockdown impacted our application processes, especially the temporary closure of our biometric collection centres in the UK.

Subsequently, biometric capture services reopened in a phased and socially-distanced way and alongside this UKVI began reusing existing fingerprint biometrics for individuals where possible.

■ Visas: Ministers of Religion

Mike Kane:

[\[908420\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with representatives of the Catholic Church on visas for religious workers.

Kevin Foster:

This Government recognises the importance of faith across our communities in the UK and we welcome members of religious institutions from around the world.

I met with representatives of the Catholic Church in July and confirmed that the existing dedicated arrangements for Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers will continue in the future immigration system.

■ Visas: Sports Competitors

Nick Smith: [110771]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what meetings she has had with governing bodies of sport on the granting of visas to self-employed professional athletes entering the UK after 1 January 2021.

Nick Smith: [110772]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the multiple governing bodies for many sports played in different nations throughout the Union, which of those governing bodies her Department consults when formulating policy on visa requirements for professional athletes.

Nick Smith: [110773]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to consult governing bodies of sports not recognised by the home nations on visa requirements for professional athletes after the end of the transition period.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office officials are in regular contact with each of the recognised Sports Governing Bodies [SGB], including annually reviewing the bespoke criteria that applies to each sport. This process of review ensures we strike the right balance between enabling top level international athletes to come to the UK, whilst protecting opportunities for resident sportspeople, based on the expertise of the SGB. The Home Office approved SGBs are listed at Appendix M of the Immigration Rules: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-m-sports-governing-bodies>.

Any sport seeking to employ migrant professional sportspeople must be listed within Appendix M of the Immigration Rules.

■ Visas: Turkey

Barbara Keeley: [110767]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2020 to Question 73764 on Visas: Turkey, when she plans to publish guidance for ECAA applicants who have been unable to return to the UK or renew their leave because of illness or travel restrictions due to covid-19.

Barbara Keeley: [110768]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that ECAA entry clearance applications received prior to 31 December 2020 are processed in accordance with the rules in force prior to 31 December 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The Government remains committed to ensuring people are not unfairly impacted in terms of their immigration status as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Further guidance for European Communities Association Agreement (ECAA) applicants who have been unable to return to the UK or renew their leave because of illness or travel restrictions due to Covid-19 will be published shortly.

Under the EU Withdrawal Agreement, the UK's commitments to Turkish nationals exercising rights under the ECAA will continue throughout the transition period. Turkish workers, business persons and their family members will be able to apply for entry clearance or extension of their stay in the UK until the end of 2020 under existing arrangements.

All applications, provided they were submitted before 11pm GMT on 31 December 2020, will be decided in accordance with the existing rules and guidance.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Housing: Cambridgeshire

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[109416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the remaining £45 million of the £100 million in Affordable Housing Programme funding allocated to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will be made available by the Government.

Christopher Pincher:

The 2017 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Deal provided the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority with £170 million to support delivery of at least 2,500 additional affordable housing starts across the area, of which £70 million was ringfenced for Cambridge City. The release of the remaining £100 million is subject to annual review by MHCLG to assess delivery progress and value for money. Ministers will communicate the outcome of this year's review to local partners once it has been finalised.

■ Building Safety Fund

Royston Smith:

[\[109489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessments his Department undertook before setting the threshold for the Building Safety Fund as a residential building with unsafe cladding at 18 metres and over in height.

Christopher Pincher:

In developing the Building Safety Fund, the Government considered the view of experts, including Dame Judith Hackitt, who support setting the Fund's height eligibility criterion at buildings 18 metres and above. This reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height. There will be a small degree of flexibility to allow the fund to cover buildings that have been built just under the 18 metres threshold.

■ Carbon Emissions: Local Authorities

Alex Sobel:

[109608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending powers available to local authorities to help deliver the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

Christopher Pincher:

All levels of Government have a role to play in meeting our net zero goal, and local authorities are rising to this challenge. In August MHCLG published the Planning for the Future consultation, which aims to ensure the planning system supports our efforts to combat climate change, by ensuring the National Planning Policy Framework targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively address climate change mitigation and adaptation and facilitate environmental improvements.

Last month the Government announced plans for a Net Zero Strategy that will set out our vision for transitioning to a net zero economy by 2050, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK. Councils are well positioned to align local needs, opportunities and resources to deliver strategic interventions at all scales. We are working closely with BEIS on the development of the Net Zero strategy, to ensure it reflects this unique role.

We are also working with the Committee on Climate Change, as well as local authorities and other expert organisations to determine what steps can be taken to help local authorities ensure that local delivery matches local ambition.

■ Change of Use

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[109673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of embedding the reuse of existing buildings into the proposed Planning for the Future reforms.

Christopher Pincher:

Making effective use of land and buildings is a key aspect of the Government's existing planning policy, and one which we intend to retain as wider reforms to the planning system are implemented. Our proposed changes to plan-making would bring additional certainty to how land is expected to be used, through the local identification of areas for growth, renewal or protection.

The changes we made to the Use Classes Order from 1 September will support our high streets and town centres by enabling more effective use of existing buildings. More premises will be able to change use without the need for a planning application.

■ Coastal Areas: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[109591]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to coastal communities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

This Government recognises the unique challenges facing coastal communities and is committed to levelling up all areas of the UK. Through our £229 million Coastal Communities Fund we are supporting communities across England. Now, through the £3.6 billion Towns Fund we are investing up to £25 million in 23 coastal towns - including Towns Deals recently announced for Blackpool and Torquay.

On top of this, the Government has provided £6.4 billion to councils for their ongoing work to support communities during the pandemic.

■ Collective Worship: Coronavirus

Jane Stevenson:

[110914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will reverse the decision to prohibit public worship during the period of the new national covid-19 lockdown restrictions from 5 November 2020.

Luke Hall:

Restrictions were brought on 5 November to urgently limit the spread of Covid-19.

This meant that we had to close places of worship for communal worship, along with other premises where people gather and interact.

These restrictions have not been introduced lightly. We recognise that religious practice is of fundamental importance to millions of people which is why we are enabling individual prayer in places of worship for those religions who practice in this way.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Steve Reed:

[111530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how his Department calculated the £14 per head that will be distributed to local authorities to support clinically vulnerable residents under the local shielding framework.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG is providing councils with over £32 million to support Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people for the 28-day period that the additional guidance is in place for CEV individuals. Funding is calculated per CEV individual on the Shielded Patient List (SPL) within the council boundaries, irrespective of whether they request support. The funding level is based on experience to date. It is designed to give councils flexibility to provide support to CEV individuals, such as access to food and to local support services, enabling them to stay as safe as possible over this period.

■ Covid-19 Hardship Fund

Yvonne Fovargue:

[\[110792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much of the £500 million allocated from the Hardship Fund was spent in England and Wales between March and October 2020.

Luke Hall:

The £500 million Hardship Fund has been made available to councils in England to provide support to economically vulnerable people and households, including through reductions in council tax to recipients of working age local council tax support. The management of those allocations is a matter for local councils.

■ Empty Property: Shops

Stuart Anderson:

[\[109665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of empty shop units in (a) Wolverhampton South West constituency and (b) the UK.

Kelly Tolhurst:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Since March, the Government has implemented a range of measures to support commercial property tenants, and help prevent further empty shops. The objective of these measures is to preserve tenants' businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic and to give time and space to landlords and tenants to agree reasonable adjustments to rent and lease terms, including terms for the payment of accumulated rent arrears.

Our immediate response to Covid-19 builds on an ongoing programme of interventions. This includes the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, where we brought forward over £80 million funding this year to support immediate improvements in 101 towns selected for deals. Wolverhampton is shortlisted for the Future High Streets Fund, and was one of 101 towns invited to put together proposals for a town deal.

Government is also providing support through the High Streets Task Force, helping places like Wolverhampton to develop data-driven innovative strategies to tackle issues such as empty properties and connect with relevant experts. The High Streets Task Force is rolling out its expert, training and data offer across the country, and has launched a range of online support.

Government has also recently consulted on further reforms to planning procedures in town centres as set out in the white paper 'Planning for the Future', which sets out how Government will streamline and modernise the planning process to be more responsive to community needs and provide more homes in and around town centres and high streets.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus**Tim Farron:****[108215]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his policy is on eviction for private rental tenants in (a) Tier 1, (b) Tier 2 and (c) Tier 3 local covid-19 alert areas.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Bailiffs have been asked not to enforce evictions across England whilst the new, toughened national restrictions apply from 5th November. The only exceptions to this will be the most egregious cases, including cases of illegal occupation, fraud, where tenants have demonstrated anti-social behaviour or are the perpetrator of domestic abuse in social housing and where a property is unoccupied following the death of a tenant. We also intend to introduce an exemption for extreme pre-Covid rent arrears and will provide more detail in due course.

Together with the pause on evictions starting in December, this means that evictions will not be enforced in England until the 11 January at the earliest, except in the most serious circumstances. We believe this strikes the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, whilst ensuring landlords can access and exercise their right to justice for the most serious cases.

To further protect renters over winter, we legislated in August to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but the most serious circumstances. This means that most tenants served notice now would not be asked to leave until at least May 2021.

We have worked closely with the judiciary on new court arrangements to ensure appropriate support to all parties as the courts restart possession proceedings. These arrangements include new court rules which require landlords to set out any information they are aware of in relation to how their tenant, or any dependent of their tenant, has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic when bringing a possession claim to court. Landlords are also required to notify the court and their tenant where they wish to continue pursuing a possession claim that was already in the system before 3 August. These new arrangements apply in all courts across all tiers.

The listing of the cases is a matter for the judiciary, but they will be prioritising the most serious cases, including anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, and extreme rent arrears. Again, this will apply across all tiers of local COVID alert areas.

Prior to the introduction of national restrictions, the Government had announced additional surge funding to support areas moving into the second alert level as well as the third. Areas moving into the Tier 2 (alert level 'high') will receive £3 per person, with a further £5 per person (totalling £8 per person) provided for areas moving into Tier 3 (alert level 'very high').

In addition to this, on Thursday 22 October the Government announced details of the further £1 billion of financial support for local authorities to support their communities through this pandemic. This further support reaffirms the Government's continued

support to councils during this unprecedented time. Over £900 million will be provided in an un-ringfenced grant in line with previous tranches of funding, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 service pressures in their local area – including supporting renters.

This brings the total funding given directly to councils during the pandemic, so far, to £6.4 billion. This includes £4.6 billion in un-ringfenced funding, £1.1 billion from the Infection Control Fund, and £300 million to support Test and Trace, as well as funding allocated to councils from the new Local Alert Level system and a number of grants to support communities and vulnerable people.

These measures build on the Government's major economic package of support to help renters continue to meet their housing costs. This includes the Chancellor's recent announcement to extend the Job Retention Scheme to March 2021 and over £9 billion boost to the welfare system, including an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[110859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Lord Chancellor on resuming the suspension of housing possession claims, which ended on 20 September 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

Housing possession claims are able to be heard through the courts, but evictions will not be enforced apart from in the most serious cases. The Government believes this strikes the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, whilst ensuring landlords can access and exercise their right to justice.

Bailiffs have been asked not to enforce evictions across England whilst the new national restrictions apply from 5 November. The only exceptions to this will be the most egregious cases, including cases of illegal occupation, fraud, where tenants have demonstrated anti-social behaviour or are the perpetrator of domestic abuse in social housing, and where a property is unoccupied following the death of a tenant. We also intend to introduce an exemption for extreme pre-Covid rent arrears and will provide more detail in due course.

Together with the pause on evictions starting in December, this means that evictions will not be enforced in England until 11 January at the earliest, except in the most serious circumstances. To further protect renters over winter, we legislated in August to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but the most serious circumstances. This means that most tenants served notice now would not be asked to leave until at least May 2021.

These measures build on the Government's major economic package of support, including assistance for businesses to pay wages which has now been extended to March 2021; boosting the welfare safety-net by more than £9 billion; increasing Local

Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile; and providing £180 million funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, for local authorities to distribute to support renters needing additional help.

■ Flats: Insulation

Royston Smith: [109488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to assist leaseholders whose homes are in high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding but below 18 metres in height.

Christopher Pincher:

It remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings of all heights. We have provided advice from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel on the measures building owners should take to ensure their buildings are safe, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-advice-for-building-owners-including-fire-doors>.

■ Forests: Planning

Tracey Crouch: [109288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to strengthen the protection for ancient woodland from inappropriate development as part of his Planning White Paper.

Christopher Pincher:

In *Planning for the Future* we make clear that, under the reforms proposed, local authorities would use the plan-making process to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of areas important for biodiversity, including ancient woodland. After carefully considering all the consultation responses, the Government will publish its conclusions and intentions, setting out any decisions and how they would be implemented.

We have already strengthened the protections for irreplaceable habitat, including ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees, in the National Planning Policy Framework. Any development that could affect such habitat should be 'wholly exceptional'.

■ Homelessness: Veterans

Justin Madders: [109443]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of people with no fixed abode are armed forces veterans.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Our veterans have played a vital role in keeping our country safe and we owe them a duty to ensure they are provided with all the support they need.

The annual Statutory Homeless Release for April 2019 to March 2020 showed that, of the total number of households assessed as owed a homelessness duty, 0.7 per cent had a support need relating to having served in Her Majesty's armed forces.

The Homelessness Reduction Act requires certain public authorities to refer members of the regular forces in England they consider to be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days to a local housing authority, with the individual's consent. A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular armed forces has a priority need for accommodation.

■ **Housing Market**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[109399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to increase the strength of the housing market.

Christopher Pincher:

We recognise the importance of the housing market to people across the country which is why we are keeping it open and allowing people to buy, sell and view properties during this period of national restrictions, supported by our temporary cut to Stamp Duty Land Tax for home buyers until the end of the financial year. This is underpinned by our guidance for consumers and industry on how the process can operate while minimising the risks presented by the virus.

We have set out an ambitious package of measures to ensure we build the right homes in the right places and level up opportunities across the country. This package includes, at £12 billion, the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in a decade; a once in a generation reform to the planning system and plans for a £10 billion Single Housing Infrastructure Fund to tackle barriers to housebuilding.

■ **Landlords: Coronavirus**

Justin Madders:

[\[109446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with landlord associations on the effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

We regularly engage with a range of stakeholders representing both landlords and tenants on different issues relating to the private and social rented sectors, including the impacts of Covid-19.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[109231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 10 September 2020 on local government reorganisation in Lancashire.

Luke Hall:

A response to the hon. Member's letter was sent on 3 November 2020.

Rosie Cooper:[\[109232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 14 September 2020 on leasehold investigations and enforcement by Competition and Markets Authority.

Kelly Tolhurst:

A response to the hon. Member's letter was issued on 3 November 2020.

■ Mortgages**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[109721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will take steps to prevent mortgage providers requesting EWS1 forms for properties in buildings without combustible cladding or combustible material on balconies; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) designed the EWS1 process in conjunction with mortgage lenders to assist with valuation of high-rise residential buildings.

The EWS1 process is not a Government regulatory requirement and the Government does not support the blanket use of EWS1, especially for lower rise blocks. EWS1 forms are not needed for buildings under 18 metres – unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Department is encouraging lenders to take a more proportionate approach to use of the EWS1 process and to accept a broader range of evidence to assure themselves of a building's safety.

■ Multiple Occupation: Coronavirus**Julian Sturdy:**[\[109329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether all tenants of houses of multiple occupation count as separate households for the purposes of forming support bubbles during the covid-19 outbreak; and what guidance on managing covid-19 infection risks his Department is providing to people in that situation.

Christopher Pincher:

Tenants in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) cannot act as separate households for the purpose of forming support bubbles. As set out in our guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities, all occupants of an HMO should act as a single household if one or more occupants have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). Our guidance for landlords and tenants includes guidance on steps to minimise the spread of infection, including within HMOs.

Guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>.

■ Planning Permission: Local Press

Bob Blackman:

[109304]

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

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities are required to publicise certain types of planning applications in local newspapers as set out in Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. In response to coronavirus restrictions, temporary regulations have been introduced to supplement the existing statutory publicity arrangements for planning applications. Local planning authorities now have the flexibility to take other reasonable steps to publicise applications if they cannot discharge the specific requirement for newspaper publicity – for instance, if the local newspaper is not now in circulation. These steps can include the use of social media and other electronic communications, such as local online news portals, and must be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development. However, if a local planning authority is required to publicise a planning application in a local newspaper, and that paper is still in circulation, then they must continue to do so.

■ Private Rented Housing: Standards

Apsana Begum:

[109704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the level of substandard housing in the private sector in (a) Poplar and Limehouse constituency and (b) the UK.

Christopher Pincher:

My department publishes the English Housing Survey, which provides information on the housing stock in England including the decency of homes in the private rented sector. The survey reported that in 2008 44 per cent of privately rented homes did not meet the Decent Homes Standard, but that this had improved to 25 per cent by 2018. English Housing Survey results can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>.

The English Housing Survey does not provide data at a constituency level and this information is not held by this department. However, local authorities have an obligation under the Housing Act 2004 to keep housing conditions in their area under review for all tenures, including the private rented sector, so this information may therefore be held by the relevant local authority.

Apsana Begum:

[109707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to introduce minimum property standards to require landlords to register and prove their property is in an acceptable condition.

Christopher Pincher:

We are exploring the introduction of minimum standards for privately rented properties as part of our comprehensive review of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), the tool used by local authorities to assess standards in the private rented sector.

This review has begun and is looking into new minimum standards for all hazards, including fire, damp and excess cold. This will make the system easier to understand for landlords and tenants, correct the disconnect between the HHSRS and other legislative standards, and facilitate the effective enforcement of housing standards by local authorities.

Regarding a requirement for landlords to register, we want to strike the right balance between supporting good landlords and tackling criminals. In April 2018, using powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, we introduced a national database of rogue landlords and letting agents for local authorities to target the worst offenders and prevent them from operating, to better protect tenants. Our consultation on how to open up and extend information on the database to tenants closed on 12 October 2019 and we will respond in due course.

Apsana Begum:

[109708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department takes to (a) monitor and (b) regulate the standard of housing in the private rental sector; and if he will place in the Library the criteria used as part of that monitoring process.

Christopher Pincher:

(a) Standards of housing in the private rented sector are monitored through the English Housing Survey, which my Department publishes and which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>. The survey reports that in 2008 44 per cent of privately rented homes did not meet the Decent Homes Standard, but that this had improved to 25 per cent by 2018.

(b) Local authorities have strong powers to tackle poor standards in the private rented sector. These powers were strengthened by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which introduced financial penalties of up to £30,000, extended Rent Repayment Orders and introduced Banning Orders for the most serious and prolific offenders.

In addition, the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 has empowered tenants, for the first time, to take action in the courts for breach of contract on the grounds that the property is unfit for human habitation. The remedies available to the tenant are an order by the court requiring the landlord to take action to reduce or

remove the hazard and damages to compensate them for having to live in a property which was not fit for human habitation.

■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[110797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether a risk assessment was carried out in respect of the decision to close places of worship during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

The Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, in particular the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic.

In view of the increase in the R Rate, we had to take action to reduce the level of infection to protect our communities and save lives which is why we made the decision to close a broad range of premises, including places of worship for communal prayer. These measures are designed to limit the number of interactions that people have and therefore reduce the risk of spread.

Data and scientific advice informing the fight against COVID-19 are published on gov.uk and specific relevant findings are shared in presentations accompanying significant policy announcements.

The regulations now in force will expire on 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to ease restrictions.

Felicity Buchan:

[110927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish data on the transmission rate of covid-19 in places of worship; and what discussions he had with faith leaders before the proposed closure of places of worship for communal prayer in November 2020.

Luke Hall:

The Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, in particular the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic. SAGE advice continues to inform the decisions made by the Government, and data and scientific advice informing the fight against COVID-19 are published on gov.uk and specific relevant findings are shared in presentations accompanying significant policy announcements.

The Places of Taskforce met on 2 November. In addition, roundtables have been held with our major faith groups to discuss the revised guidance.

Discussions with our faith groups at these meetings, as they have been throughout the pandemic, have proved to be extremely helpful in sharing information with our

faith groups, as well as hearing of their concerns, and we will continue to draw on the expertise of Taskforce members.

Fleur Anderson: [111644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to enable places of worship to remain open for services during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Luke Hall:

Although places of worship are closed for communal prayer, they are permitted to open for individual prayer, and to record or livestream services so that worshippers can participate at home. In addition, funerals are also permitted and can be attended by a maximum of thirty people.

The regulations now in force will expire on 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to be able to ease restrictions.

■ Remembrance Day: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [110886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will issue guidance on holding Remembrance Sunday ceremonies in a covid-secure manner under the forthcoming national lockdown restrictions.

Luke Hall:

Guidance on holding outdoor Remembrance Sunday services has been published and can be found at; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-preparations-for-remembrance-sunday/local-authority-preparations-for-remembrance-sunday>. Services at war memorials and local cenotaphs can take place providing all reasonable measures have been taken to limit the spread of the virus.

Services should be adapted to take account of social distancing guidelines, and event organisers should keep numbers of those attending and participating to a minimum.

Communal services of remembrance inside places of worship are not possible due to the new national restrictions that came into force on 5 November.

■ Rented Housing

Apsana Begum: [109709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to introduce a cap on rent rises that is linked to inflation.

Christopher Pincher:

Landlords cannot in general increase rent without their tenant's permission, and there are no plans to change the rules regarding rent rises.

The Government does not support the introduction of rent controls to set the level of rent at the outset of a tenancy. Historical evidence suggests that these would

discourage investment in the sector, and would lead to declining property standards as a result, which would not help landlords or tenants.

■ Rented Housing: Coronavirus

Duncan Baker:

[\[107115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps his Department has taken to support renters; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a (a) compulsory and (b) permanent ban on rental increases in (i) private, (ii) public and (iii) shared ownership housing after the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: The Government has no plans to ban rent increases and we have put in place an unprecedented package of support to protect renters during this period.

We have legislated to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but the most serious circumstances and bailiffs have been asked not to enforce evictions across England whilst the new, toughened national restrictions apply from 5 November. The only exceptions to this will be the most egregious cases, including cases of illegal occupation, fraud, where tenants have demonstrated anti-social behaviour or are the perpetrator of domestic abuse in social housing and where a property is unoccupied following the death of a tenant. We also intend to introduce an exemption for extreme pre-Covid rent arrears and will provide more detail in due course.

Together with the pause on evictions starting in December, this means that evictions will not be enforced in England until 11 January at the earliest, except in the most serious circumstances.

These measures build on the Government's major economic package of support to help renters continue to meet their housing costs, including the Chancellor's recent announcement to extend the Job Retention Scheme to March 2021 .

We have also strengthened the welfare safety-net with an over £9 billion boost to the welfare system, which includes an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents. For renters who require additional support, there is also an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year, which is for councils to distribute to support renters needing additional help.

■ Repossession Orders: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[110858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Financial Conduct Authority on resuming the ban on lender repossession of homes, which expired on 31 October 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

To protect homeowners from repossession, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) announced a moratorium on lender repossession until 31 October 2020. On 2 November 2020, the FCA launched a consultation on new draft guidance to their members that states that there will be a moratorium on the enforcement of lender repossession until 31 January 2021, except for in exceptional cases (such as a borrower requesting proceedings continue). This will protect homeowners from lender repossession over this period and will enable them to stay in their homes.

The guidance also details that the mortgage holidays will be extended, with applications open to 31 January 2021. Borrowers that have been affected by Coronavirus and have not yet had a mortgage payment holiday will be entitled to a six-month holiday, and those that have already started a mortgage payment holiday will be able to top up to six months without this being recorded on their credit file.

The FCA has been clear that for borrowers who have taken six months' holiday and continue to face ongoing financial difficulties, firms should continue to provide support through tailored forbearance options. This could include granting new mortgage payment holidays. Mortgage customers in this situation should speak to their lender to discuss their options.

■ Urban Areas: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[109404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of steps his Department has taken to support high streets during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

High streets are critical to the economic recovery of our towns and cities and the £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) is playing an important role in getting people back to work, supporting high street businesses and helping to reinvigorate our local communities.

The RHSSF is in addition to Government's unprecedented package of support for business, including more than £11 billion delivered under the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF) to over 897,590 business premises in England. In addition, up to £617 million was made available via the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) to support thousands more businesses.

This funding builds on longer-term funds already in place to support the revival of our high streets and town centres, including the £3.6 billion Towns Fund and the Future High Streets Fund competition. As part of this, we have brought forward £81.5 million from the Towns Fund for investment into capital projects that would have an immediate impact as we work to recover from Covid-19.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Members: Correspondence

Bill Esterson:

[\[110800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to answer the letter of 23 September 2020 from Adam Mansell of UK Fashion and Textiles.

Graham Stuart:

The response to this letter was sent to UK Fashion and Textiles on Tuesday 27 October.

■ Overseas Aid: Gulf States

Chris Law:

[\[111560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to 106364, how many projects were applied for by the Department of International Trade under the Integrated Activity Fund in the (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19 and (d) 2019-20 financial years; and what the (a) allocated budget and (b) actual spending was for each project.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Integrated Activity Fund (IAF) provides funding in support of a range of programmes across the Gulf Region. The Department for International Trade has led or been involved in programmes that include, but are not limited to, activities focusing on education; sport and culture; and healthcare. All of our work is in line with international standards and aims to share the United Kingdom's expertise and experience.

It is government policy to not disclose specific information related to individual IAF projects to maintain the confidence and confidentiality of commercial interests and our Gulf partners.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the projected economic value of the trade deal signed with Japan to (a) Sussex and (b) England.

Greg Hands:

The published final stage impact assessment shows that all UK regions and nations are estimated to increase output as a result of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (UK-Japan CEPA). Government analysis indicates that the UK-Japan CEPA could boost the economy in the South East by approximately 0.07% in the long-run (equivalent to £177 million based on 2017 gross value added). It should be noted that these monetised value estimates are to be interpreted as indicative magnitudes not precise estimates or forecasts. The analysis

does not include a breakdown of the economic value of the deal for Sussex nor an aggregated economic value for England.

■ Trade Fairs: Internet

Bill Esterson:

[\[111493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether WTO rules permit subsidies being paid to businesses taking part in online trade shows.

Greg Hands:

The WTO Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM) applies to trade in goods only and prohibits two types of subsidies – those contingent on export performance, and those contingent on the use of domestic over imported goods. All other subsidies may be permitted, but if another WTO member can show that they have caused adverse trade effects, they can raise a dispute with the WTO dispute settlement body and seek removal of the subsidy or impose countervailing duties.

■ Trade Promotion

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[111412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will list (a) the countries to which the Government appoints Trade Envoys and (b) the name of each person in post as a Trade Envoy on 1 November 2020; and when the vacant posts will be filled.

Greg Hands:

A written ministerial statement was made in both Houses on 5th October 2020, UIN: [HCWS483](#), listing all the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys. As of 1 November, there are 30 Trade Envoys covering 69 markets.

There is no fixed list of countries to which the Prime Minister appoints Trade Envoys.

JUSTICE

■ Child Arrangements Orders

Hilary Benn:

[\[109168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2020 to Question 46555, if he will publish further guidance that clarifies that Child Arrangement Orders can be with extended family members as well as with a parent.

Alex Chalk:

Extended family members may apply for a child arrangements order with the permission of the court. General information about making family court applications that involve children and who may apply is published in leaflet CB1 published by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service and available on Gov.Uk.

A child arrangements order can make provision for a child to live with or spend time with a parent or an extended family member, such as a grandparent. In the context of covid-19 and compliance with a child arrangements order that has been made,

guidance issued by the President of the Family Division on 24 March 2020 continues to apply. This is available at <https://www.judiciary.uk/announcements/coronavirus-crisis-guidance-on-compliance-with-family-court-child-arrangement-orders/>

■ Courts

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[111602]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his planned timescale is for rolling out problem-solving courts in England and Wales if the trial of those courts is judged to be effective.

Chris Philp:

We have committed to creating pilots for problem-solving courts that will focus on individuals where their offending is related to drug or alcohol misuse, mental health issues or domestic abuse, where their offence could have been punished with up to two years custody. We will also pilot a problem-solving court for women. Legislation to enable this will be brought forward in the near future. The location of the pilots, the timing of their commencement and the criteria against which they will be evaluated are currently being developed. Any further roll out of problem-solving courts will be decided based on the evaluation of the pilots.

■ Courts: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham:

[111502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on what date (a) protective screens and (b) other covid-19 protective measures were installed in each court in England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS has in place a range of measures, developed in line with, and validated against, relevant public health standards. This ensures our buildings are Covid secure and enables HMCTS to run its vital public services, maintaining access to justice, throughout the pandemic.

The installation of screens is an example of one of these measures. By the end of October, we had installed screens in 229 court rooms and 148 deliberation rooms across England and Wales. The table below sets out the court buildings into which we have installed screens, along with the month of installation.

Other measures have been introduced across the court and tribunal estate, according to local risk assessment, since the 16th March 2020. Steps being taken include significantly increasing the cleaning regime, with additional cleaners brought in to sanitise frequently touched surfaces and making handwash and sanitiser available to anyone within the buildings. Courts and tribunals have also introduced revised entry and search procedures for all court users, public concourses marked out with socially distanced floor markings and appropriate guidance signage. In addition, it is a requirement to wear a face covering in all public and communal areas of our courts and tribunals, unless you are exempt, which helps further reduce the risk of onward transmission of Covid-19 in the most used parts of our buildings.

MONTH OF INSTALLATION	COURT BUILDING
Aug/Sep 20	Amersham Law Courts
Aug/Sep 20	Aylesbury Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Basildon Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Birmingham Crown Court (QEII Law Courts)
Aug/Sep 20	Bolton Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Bournemouth Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Bradford Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Brighton Crown
Aug/Sep 20	Bristol Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Cambridge Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Canterbury Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Cardiff Crown
Aug/Sep 20	Chelmsford
Aug/Sep 20	Chester Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Croydon Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Derby Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Durham
Aug/Sep 20	Exeter Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Grimsby Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Harrow Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Hove Trial Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Inner London Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Ipswich Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Isle of Wight Combined (and Magistrates) Court
Aug/Sep 20	Isleworth Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	King's Lynn Crown Court

MONTH OF INSTALLATION	COURT BUILDING
Aug/Sep 20	Kingston-upon-Thames Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Kingston-upon-Hull Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Leeds Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Leicester Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Lewes Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Lincoln Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Liverpool QEII Law Courts: Liverpool Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Luton Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Maidstone Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Manchester Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Newcastle Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Newcastle upon Tyne Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Northampton Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Norwich Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Nottingham County Court and Family Court (and Crown)
Aug/Sep 20	Oxford Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Peterborough Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Portsmouth Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Preston Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Salisbury Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Sheffield Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Shrewsbury Crown Court / Shrewsbury Justice Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Snaresbrook Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Southampton Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Southwark Crown Court

MONTH OF INSTALLATION	COURT BUILDING
Aug/Sep 20	St Albans Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Stafford Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Stoke-on-Trent Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Swansea Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Taunton Combined Court
Aug/Sep 20	Teesside Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Truro Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Warwickshire (South) Justice Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Wolverhampton Combined Court Centre
Aug/Sep 20	Wood Green Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Woolwich Crown Court
Aug/Sep 20	Worcester Combined Court
Oct-20	Carlisle Combined Court Centre
Oct-20	Central Criminal Court - Old Bailey
Oct-20	Doncaster Crown Court
Oct-20	Guildford Crown Court
Oct-20	Leeds Magistrates Court
Oct-20	Merthyr Tydfil Combined Court Centre
Oct-20	Newport Crown Court
Oct-20	Royal Courts of Justice
Oct-20	Swindon Combined Court Centre
Oct-20	Winchester Combined Court Centre
Oct-20	York Crown Court

Alex Cunningham:

[111503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many courts in England and Wales have recorded covid-19 outbreaks of (a) one to three people, (b) four to six people and (c) seven people or more.

Chris Philp:

Since 18 August we have recorded all confirmed positive incidents of COVID-19 affecting HMCTS buildings centrally.

We take swift and robust action for each suspected or positive case.

When there are two or more confirmed positive cases within 14 days in a particular building, we also refer the incident to the Public Health England/Wales local health protection team. There should be no assumption that a referral indicates that there has transmission within a court building.

Since 18 August, we have made 39 referrals. Of the referrals 24 involved 2-3 people, 11 involved 4-6 people and 4 involved 7 people or more. There are 341 court and tribunal buildings in the HMCTS estate.

Incidence rates amongst court staff have consistently been trending lower than the national average for England and on 2 November this was 137.8 cases per 100,000 compared to the English reported position of 228.1 positive cases per 100,000.

All data is internal and not subject to the same level of checks as official published statistics. Although care has been taken when processing and analysing this, the details may be subject to revisions inherent in any large-scale manual system.

Courts: Risk Assessment**Alex Cunningham:****[111501]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to produce and publish a national risk assessment for court buildings.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all members of its staff, and takes its duty of care towards members of the judiciary, contractors and to court and tribunal users extremely seriously.

On 15 May 2020 the HMCTS Organisational Risk Assessment was published, setting out our approach to keeping the court and tribunal estate Covid-secure. It is available [here](#). The assessment is currently in the process of being updated, and we anticipate the revised version will be published in November 2020.

Courts: Video Conferencing**Alex Cunningham:****[111504]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will introduce a national protocol for remote court hearings.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS has produced national guidance on remote participation in court and tribunal hearings across jurisdictions. The use of remote hearings is subject to judicial discretion and the interests of justice.

<https://www.judiciary.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hmcts-telephone-and-video-hearings-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

<https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/news/remote-hearings-challenge-fairness-empathy>

■ Criminal Justice Royal Commission

Dr Matthew Offord:

[109306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the proposed Royal Commission on Criminal Justice announced in the Queen's Speech of December 2019 will begin taking evidence.

Kit Malthouse:

The Royal Commission presents an opportunity to undertake a significant independent review to investigate some key challenges in the criminal justice system alongside building greater resilience following the impact of this pandemic.

We are therefore carefully considering the precise remit and timing of this Commission and will update the House in due course.

■ Crown Court: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[111601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect on the crown court backlog of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Chris Philp:

Crown courts will continue to operate within COVID-secure guidelines during national lockdown restrictions in England and the national fire-break in Wales. Covid-19 has been an unprecedented challenge for the criminal justice system but HMCTS has worked closely with the judiciary to keep courts open and cases flowing through the system.

We continue to make significant progress on Criminal Courts Recovery in the Crown Court and there are now over 250 rooms safely open for jury trials. We are listing over 200 jury trials and conducting thousands of other hearings each week.

■ Dangerous Driving: Sentencing

Andrew Griffith:

[109769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to increase sentences for those that cause death by dangerous driving.

Chris Philp:

As set out in the government's White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, published on 16 September, we will be increasing the maximum penalties for causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs to life imprisonment. We will also create a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving. We will introduce legislation on these changes in the near future.

■ Euthanasia

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[110736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the Government document outlining the call for evidence on assisted dying that was prepared in 2019.

Alex Chalk:

We have no plans to publish a draft document prepared for the previous government which was not issued, and no plans to review the law on assisted suicide or issue a call for evidence.

The government's view remains that that any change to the law in this area must be for individual Parliamentarians to consider as an issue of conscience, rather than a decision for Government.

■ Family Courts

Mr David Lammy:

[110726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many social service referrals were made to the family courts in each of the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

Data on the number of referrals made by local authorities to the family courts is not held.

Information relating to the number of children involved in applications made under Parts IV and V of the Children Act 1989 to the family courts is published by the Ministry of Justice on a quarterly basis. Such applications would routinely be made by a local authority, but the Act provides that applications may also be made by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, or another person authorised by order of the Secretary of State to make an application.

The table below details the latest published statistics on the number of children involved in such applications.

Local authorities may also apply to the family courts for forced marriage protection orders (under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007) and for female genital mutilation protection orders (under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003). Details of the number of such local authority applications made in the 12 months from July 2019 to June 2020 are included in the table below.

The latest Family Courts Statistics Quarterly publication can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2020>

ORDER TYPE:	QUARTER 3- JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019	QUARTER 4- OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2019	QUARTER 1- JANUARY- MARCH 2020	QUARTER 2- APRIL- JUNE 2020
Local Authority Care or Accommodation: Care (or substitute supervision for care) Secure accommodation	5,856123	5,706129	5,627121	5,92694
Local Authority Supervision or Assessment: Supervision order Authority to refuse contact with a child in care Education supervision Education supervision - extension Child assessment order	6609522018	589959033	6021216017	654782020
Emergency Protection: Emergency protection Emergency protection - extend or discharge Warrant to assist emergency protection	327150	377200	32990	28960
Forced marriage Protection Orders (application made by relevant 3 rd party i.e. Local Authority).	56	44	46	12
Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders (application made by relevant 3 rd party i.e. Local Authority).	17	15	12	4

■ Magistrates

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[111600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the number of magistrates who are (a) BAME or (b) under the age of 30.

Chris Philp:

As of 1st April 2020, there were 13,177 magistrates across England and Wales. 1,539 magistrates (13% of those who declared their ethnicity) identified themselves as from a Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority Background and 153 (1%) are under the age of 30. This data is published in the annual Judicial Diversity Statistics.

■ Magistrates: Retirement

Justin Madders:

[\[109437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the timetable is for the publication of the outcome of the Judicial Mandatory Retirement Age consultation.

Alex Chalk:

The Judicial Mandatory Retirement Age consultation closed on 16 October. Over 1000 responses were received from the magistracy, the judiciary and the legal profession and analysis of the responses is underway. We intend to publish the Government's response to the consultation in the near future, with a view to legislate for any changes we decide to make at the earliest opportunity.

■ Magistrates: Sentencing

Alex Cunningham:

[\[111505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect that increasing magistrate's sentencing powers to 12 months would have on the size of the (a) prison population and (b) court backlog.

Chris Philp:

The Government has no current plans to increase magistrates' custodial sentencing powers and has made no recent assessment of the impact of doing so on the prison population and court backlog.

■ Personal Injury: Compensation

Andy Slaughter:

[\[109218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans the Government has to reduce the small claims limit for (a) employer liability and (b) public liability injuries to a maximum of £2,000 for (i) vulnerable road users, (ii) children, (iii) protected parties and (iv) other claimants.

Alex Chalk:

The Government consulted on increasing the small claims track (SCT) limit for all personal injury claims in November 2016. Following consideration of the responses received, the Government announced its decision in February 2017 that the SCT limit

for road traffic accident (RTA) related personal injury claims would be increased from £1,000 to £5000 and for all other personal injury claims, including employment and public liability, from £1,000 to £2,000 in line with inflation.

This issue was raised and debated in both Houses during the Parliamentary passage of the Civil Liability Act 2018, where the Government re-stated its position.

The RTA related personal injury claims SCT limit will be increased to £5,000 in April 2021.

■ Prisoners' Release: Homelessness

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[111464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to provide support for prison leavers at risk of homelessness in the next three months.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[111466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government and (b) Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for prison leavers at risk of homelessness during the next three months.

Lucy Frazer:

Ministry of Justice ministers meet regularly with a range of ministers across Government to discuss issues impacting prison leavers, including homelessness.

As part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Justice secured £8.5 million to support individuals at risk of homelessness on their release from prison and help them to move on to permanent accommodation. The scheme initially ran between 18th May and 31st August and provided up to 56 nights' accommodation per individual. In light of the recent introduction of national restrictions across England from Thursday 5th November and the Welsh Government's introduction of a 'firebreak', the Government has reinstated this accommodation support. This started from 22nd October 2020 and will be subject to monthly reviews.

The Ministry of Justice, through Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), has also set up seven Homelessness Prevention Taskforces to work with local authorities and other partners to find accommodation for offenders released from prison; these taskforces continue to be active.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Barbara Keeley: [\[110764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to support prisons in the event of a covid-19 outbreak among staff.

Barbara Keeley: [\[110765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that prison staff have adequate PPE during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

We have well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks and infectious diseases, including COVID-19. This means prisons are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified. Our measures so far have included restricting regimes, minimising inter-prison transfers and compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals.

We are, however, prepared for continued staffing challenges and are driving forward with recruitment campaigns and using many of the tried and tested staffing interventions that worked effectively before, which will allow us to supply establishments with staff at short notice. These measures include enabling operationally qualified staff in HQ and non-operational roles to return to prisons and inviting retired and resigned former staff to return to work on temporary contracts.

There is currently adequate stock and forward supply of all PPE items in accordance with public health advice. We are making preparations and keeping demand for PPE under regular review as we move through each phase of managing the outbreak. We have issued a face mask strategy for staff which, in line with public health advice, sets out when face masks must be worn in HMPPS settings.

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

All of these measures collectively contribute to preventing the spread of coronavirus and protect staff, residents and the public and it is important to continue to follow all of the guidelines in place.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[111465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the most recent Public Health England advice on (a) the covid-19 outbreak and risks of further infection in prisons and (b) the assessed efficacy of individual covid-19 control measures used in prisons during the first months of the outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) in developing our policies and procedures in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes our overall strategy as well as the response to any outbreak in individual prisons.

We are committed to transparency in our approach. PHE advice on preventing and controlling outbreaks in prisons is available on gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-prisons-and-other-prescribed-places-of-detention-guidance>.

All of the interventions in place are interlinked and cannot be considered in isolation. An assessment of the impact of the HMPPS population management strategy was previously made by PHE, and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-population-management-strategy-for-prisons>. We continue to work closely with PHE to develop our response to the pandemic and understand how to refine it.

Closed settings such as prisons pose particular challenges in managing outbreaks, but we have well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks and infectious diseases, including COVID-19. This means prisons are well prepared to take immediate action whenever cases or suspected cases are identified. Our measures have included adapting prison regimes to support social distancing and PPE usage, expanding the estate with new temporary units, and compartmentalising our prisons into different units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable and quarantine new arrivals.

■ Remand in Custody: Community Orders

Liz Saville Roberts:

[111584]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people (a) are currently on remand and (b) have been remanded into custody in each of the last six months for breach of community orders, by (i) ethnicity and (ii) nationality.

Lucy Frazer:

A Community Order (CO) is a sentence of the court and is made up of one or more requirements to be carried out in the community instead of prison. A Community Order can run for up to three years and is made up of 12 requirements that can be applied.

Effective enforcement of any sentence of the court is essential in ensuring sentencer and public confidence in the management of offenders. We are committed to ensuring that the enforcement of Community Orders is both appropriate and timely.

Offenders who fail to comply with the requirements of their orders can be returned to court for breach of their community orders. As a sanction, the courts can then amend the CO so as to impose more onerous requirements or revoke the order and resentence.

In some instances, where an offender has breached his community order, a magistrate's court may commit him to custody until he can be brought or appear before the Crown Court.

Information relating to the number of offenders who are committed to custody for breaching a CO could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[109782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for the offence of sexual assault by penetration under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 were made in cases where the victim had experienced county lines exploitation in each year since 2015.

Alex Chalk:

The Government recognises the devastating impact of county lines activity on children and vulnerable people which can include both sexual and criminal exploitation. Prosecutions data involving offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 held centrally by the MoJ does not include such detailed information about the victim to indicate whether they had been a victim of county lines exploitation previously. This information may be held on court record, however to identify it would require access to detailed court records and transcripts, which would incur disproportionate cost.

However, the Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions, up to December 2019, for the following offences: 'Sexual assault on a female – penetration', 'Sexual assault on a male – penetration', 'Sexual assault of a male child under 13 - penetration', 'Sexual assault of a female child under 13 – penetration' and 'Causing sexual activity without consent – penetration'. These are available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool:

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

■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Justin Madders:

[109431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of when face-to-face social security tribunals can safely recommence during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Madders:

[109432]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many social security appeals are waiting to be listed; and what the average waiting time is for a social security appeal hearing to be scheduled.

Chris Philp:

Face to face hearings have recommenced in the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS).

Throughout the pandemic, appeals continued to be decided on the papers, or heard using telephone, and other remote technology. HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has also now introduced safety measures so that face to face hearings can be held for any cases which cannot be decided on the papers or heard remotely.

The decision as to how a hearing is conducted is a matter for the judge, who will determine how best to uphold the interests of justice.

Information about the number of SSCS appeals waiting to be listed is not currently available: data issues have been identified as the Tribunal was being migrated to a new operational system. The data will be available as soon as this is resolved and the data quality assured.

The average waiting time for a hearing to be scheduled is not held centrally: HMCTS statistics are not calculated from receipt of the appeal to the hearing, but from receipt of the appeal to the disposal of the case. An appeal is not necessarily disposed of at its first hearing. The final disposal decision on the appeal may be reached after an earlier hearing had been adjourned (which may be directed by the judge for a variety of reasons such as to seek further evidence), or after an earlier hearing date had been postponed (again, for a variety of reasons, often at the request of the appellant). An appeal may also have been decided at an earlier date by the First-tier Tribunal, only for the case to have gone on to the Upper Tribunal, to be returned once again to the First-tier, for its final disposal.

■ Victims: Compensation

Steve McCabe:

[\[110732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether victims of assault are entitled to compensation in circumstances where the perpetrator did not complete their court-mandated rehabilitation programme.

Alex Chalk:

Where a person is convicted of an offence, criminal courts in England and Wales may make – and in some circumstances are required to consider making – a compensation order in cases involving personal injury, loss or damage.

Community orders consist of one or more requirements decided by the court. These can include rehabilitation activity requirements, treatment requirements or programme requirements, which specifically address offender needs.

Where an offender fails to comply with any requirement of a community order, the court has wide powers: it can amend the order to make the requirements more onerous, impose a fine, or revoke the order and resentence the offender to any sentence that would have been available for that offence.

Sentencing in individual cases is entirely a matter for the independent courts taking into account the circumstances of the case.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Anniversaries: Northern Ireland

Sir John Hayes:

[\[111425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to mark the 100-year anniversary of Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

In the New Decade, New Approach deal, the Government committed to marking this important national anniversary, recognising that it offered an opportunity to reflect on the past as well as to build for the future, in Northern Ireland, across the UK and internationally.

In August, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Centenary Forum, and a Centenary Historical Advisory Panel, facilitating the inclusion of diverse perspectives in our planning for the centenary.

The programme of centenary events being developed allows for reflection on this profoundly significant moment in the history of the United Kingdom, while also celebrating Northern Ireland's people, business, culture, arts, and young talent, looking forward to a positive future.

■ Coronavirus: Northern Ireland**Ian Paisley:**[\[109355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what estimate he has made of the number of false positive test results from covid-19 testing in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I are working closely with the First Minister, deputy First Minister and the rest of the Executive on the response to Covid-19.

As my honourable Friend will be aware, health is a devolved matter. In May, the Department of Health published the Covid-19 Test, Trace and Protect Strategy, which is led by the Public Health Agency.

Testing has always been a critical part of the UK's response. The Testing Strategy in Northern Ireland is aligned with the UK strategic approach, and through working with a number of key stakeholders and delivery partners across the Health and Social Care Sector, local universities and industry, testing capacity has increased significantly.

As with any diagnostic test there is always the small possibility of a false negative or a false positive result. All tests have been assessed as performing to manufacturers' specifications before being used.

■ Economic Situation: Northern Ireland**Andrew Griffith:**[\[109768\]](#)

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

Mr Robin Walker:

Northern Ireland Office Ministers have engaged extensively and regularly with Northern Ireland business representatives and businesses through a programme of

business roundtable events; individual business engagements; and webinars to inform the UK Government response to Covid-19 and economic recovery in Northern Ireland. When Covid restrictions have allowed, we have also visited Northern Ireland businesses to hear first-hand their experience and the experience of employees at this challenging time.

This Government will do everything it can to help people and businesses through this extraordinary time and businesses in Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from the Furlough Scheme, VAT reductions and the extension of bounce back loans, which have all been extended to the end of March 2021.

Businesses in Northern Ireland have always exhibited a tremendous resilience and ability to bounce back from adversity, and I have been impressed by their resilience and adaptability through this crisis. We will continue to work closely with businesses, with the Northern Ireland Executive and other local partners to get the Northern Ireland economy back up and running, to lay the foundations for economic growth and to seize the opportunities ahead.

■ **Pets: Northern Ireland**

Claire Hanna:

[\[109737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what progress his Department has made on identifying the Travel Points of Entry for pet travel into Northern Ireland after the end of the transition period.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government's clear position is that there is no rational justification for pet movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland not to continue in a very similar way to how they do today. Discussions are ongoing with the EU on this point and further information will be provided subsequent to those discussions.

TRANSPORT

■ **Aerospace Industry**

Jane Stevenson:

[\[111621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the importance of the aerospace sector to the UK's transport infrastructure; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

Aviation has a complex supply chain, with airports and airlines being the central nodes, aerospace supplying and maintaining the sector's aircraft and engines, and other sectors providing services that facilitate operations, such as baggage handling, air traffic management and insurance. Before the COVID-19 crisis, the aviation sector contributed at least £22 billion to the UK economy annually and supported around

half a million jobs spread across the UK, of which a significant proportion was in the aerospace sector.

■ **Aviation: Employment**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support pilot training and aviation sector employment.

Robert Courts:

The UK Government recognises the impact Covid-19 has had on the aviation sector. In addition to the unprecedented cross-economy package of support, which the aviation sector has utilised extensively, we have put in place several measures to help the sector.

The department has worked closely with the Civil Aviation Authority to develop temporary regulatory exemptions around licensing and training in light of Covid-19 restrictions, including that enable Pilots to maintain currency through virtual classroom training and flight simulator devices.

The department is working to maximise the use of the existing support measures such as DWP's Flexible Support Fund and Rapid Response Service to support aviation workers, and working with industry on options to support skills.

■ **Aviation: Quarantine**

Gavin Robinson:

[\[110839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of travel corridors on the the aerospace sector.

Robert Courts:

Ministers and officials in the Department for Transport have held extensive discussions about the effect of travel corridors on the aerospace sector with their counterparts across Government, including in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

BEIS is a member of the Global Travel Taskforce, which is tasked with considering robust and sustainable proposals that will facilitate safer international travel.

Specialist aerospace engineers and specialist workers responsible for ensuring the safe operation of aircraft are exempt from self-isolation measures.

Additionally, Department for Transport officials are working closely with BEIS officials as part of the Aerospace Growth Partnership Group.

■ Bus Services: Disability

Daniel Zeichner: [\[109412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons the Government has not brought forward secondary legislation to require bus operators to provide accessible information to passengers in (a) audible and (b) visible formats on bus services in England, Scotland and Wales, as set out in section 17 of the Bus Services Act 2017.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[109413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to bring forward secondary legislation to require bus operators to provide accessible information to passengers in (a) audible and (b) visible formats on bus services in England, Scotland and Wales, as set out in section 17 of the Bus Services Act 2017.

Rachel Maclean:

We want disabled people to travel independently and with confidence. It is important to have enough information when travelling on buses for that to become the reality.

In 2018 we consulted on Accessible Information Regulations with plans to require the provision of accessible on-board information on local bus services throughout Great Britain.

We continue to consider the implementation options informed by the feedback received and will publish the response in due course.

In the meantime, we are supporting smaller operators to provide audible and visual information with £2 million of targeted funding.

■ Bus Services: Job Support Scheme

Paul Maynard: [\[109272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the guidance to avoid travel into and out of a tier 3 local covid alert level area on (a) the coach travel sector and (b) that sector's ability to access the expanded job support scheme for businesses legally required to close.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department regularly meets with the Confederation of Passenger Transport and representatives of the coach travel sector to assess the impact of travel guidance across local COVID alert areas and the sector's ability to access financial support.

■ Cycling and Walking

Colleen Fletcher: [\[109398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the proportion of journeys made by (a) walking and (b) cycling.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On 28 July the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost cycling and walking, with the aim that half of all journeys in towns and cities are cycled or walked by 2030.

This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over the next 5 years, which is the largest ever boost for cycling and walking, and will deliver transformational change. The plan contains 33 commitments including a major roll-out of new cycling and walking infrastructure; a new body ("Active Travel England") to audit and enforce design standards and manage investment; and the creation of a national e-bike support programme.

■ **Cycling and Walking: Leeds**

Alex Sobel:

[\[109607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to incentivize walking and cycling in Leeds.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

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

£2,513,00 million was allocated to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area in June from tranche 1 of the Active Travel Fund. Tranche 2 allocations will be announced shortly. Decisions on allocating the remaining funding this parliament will be confirmed in due course.

■ **Cycling and Walking: Wolverhampton South West**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[109662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to help ensure that people in Wolverhampton South West constituency can access safe cycling and walking travel options.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

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

£3,850,997 million was allocated to the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority area in June from tranche 1 of the Active Travel Fund. Tranche 2 allocations will be announced shortly. Decisions on allocating the remaining funding this parliament will be confirmed in due course.

■ **Driving Licences**

John McNally:

[\[109448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of extending the time period to two years for foreign driving licence holders to exchange those licences for GB driving licences; and what his timetable is for making that decision.

Rachel Maclean:

Holders of driving licences issued outside of the European Union who become resident in Great Britain can drive small vehicles (motorcars and motorcycles) for up to one year from the date they become resident.

To continue driving after this period the driver must either exchange their licence, if it was issued by a country which has been [designated for licence exchange purposes](#), or apply for a provisional driving licence and pass both a theory and practical driving test. There are no plans to review these arrangements.

■ Driving Licences: EU Nationals**Ben Lake:**[\[110893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether EU nationals whose driving licences are valid in the UK will need to amend or exchange their driving licenses after the transition period.

Rachel Maclean:

Department for Transport officials are engaging in bilateral discussions with individual EU Member States to agree the arrangements that will apply from 1 January 2021. These discussions are still ongoing. We intend to publish the future arrangements that are agreed with Member States in respect of driving licences before the end of the transition period.

■ Electric Scooters: Government Assistance**Selaine Saxby:**[\[109757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish details of the e-bike national support programme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are developing a national programme of support to boost e-bike uptake to the levels seen in many other countries. Details will be announced in spring 2021, subject to the outcome of the Spending Review process. Ahead of this, the Department will consult key stakeholders on the programme, including those representing bicycle retailers and manufacturers. The Department is also planning to support a number of pilot e-bike support schemes in the current financial year to help build an evidence base on the type of approaches which are most effective in increasing take-up of e-bikes.

■ Global Travel Taskforce**Paul Maynard:**[\[109271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what future discussions he has planned with the Global Travel Taskforce.

Robert Courts:

The Secretary of State for Transport jointly chairs the Global Travel Taskforce with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. They and other Ministers have very regular discussions about its work with officials and industry partners.

The Taskforce has undertaken extensive consultation with the transport industry, international partners, the tourism sector, business leaders, and the private testing sector, and invited submissions from all of these partners on its work.

The Taskforce will submit its recommendations to the Prime Minister in November.

Jane Stevenson:[\[111622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Global Travel Taskforce plans to publish its recommendations.

Robert Courts:

The Global Travel Taskforce, which is chaired by the Secretary of State for Transport, is due to submit its recommendations to the Prime Minister in November.

Public Transport: Bexleyheath and Crayford**Sir David Evennett:**[\[109180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to improve public transport in Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and delivered by Transport for London.

Ministers and officials in the Department for Transport hold regular discussions with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Transport, Transport for London, Network Rail and Train Operating Companies on a range of transport matters, including improvements to the public transport network across London.

Railway Stations: Northwich**Mike Amesbury:**[\[109619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure Northwich Station is accessible to people with disabilities and mobility restrictions through the Access For All programme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We have extended the access for All programme with a further £350m that will make over 100 more stations accessible by 2024. Northwich was not nominated for the programme but could be proposed for the future.

The Government is committed to improving access at all stations, and will continue to seek further funding to make more improvements. However, if the industry carries out any station infrastructure work this will need to comply with current accessibility standards.

■ Sailing Boats: Quarantine**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[109189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether seafarers working on private yachts that enter the UK are required to self-isolate.

Robert Courts:

The list of exemptions to the requirement to self-isolate includes an exemption for 'Seamen and masters as defined in section 313(1) Merchant Shipping Act 1995, maritime pilots as defined in para 22(1) of schedule 3A of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, and inspectors and surveyors of ships appointed under section 256 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 or by a government of a relevant British possession as defined in section 313(1) of that Act.'

It is the responsibility of the individual, or their employer, to determine whether they may qualify for an exemption and, where they do, ensure they travel with the appropriate supporting documentation.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions**Luke Pollard:**[\[109634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the Treasury on the effect the announcement of a one-year spending review will have on investment in maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

I am sure the honourable gentlemen will understand that I cannot discuss detail of the Spending Review at this time. As he will be already aware, the Government has decided to conduct a one-year spending review, prioritising its response to Covid-19 and focusing on supporting jobs.

Government remains fully committed to achieving Net Zero green House gas emissions by 2050, including from domestic maritime activity. Decarbonising shipping is essential to achieve the target of net zero emissions across the economy by 2050.

The Clean Maritime Plan, published in July 2019, outlines the UK's pathway to zero carbon emissions in domestic maritime. Further plans on the decarbonisation of the maritime sector will be included in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, to be published later this year.

Luke Pollard:[\[109635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with local government leaders in coastal communities on the potential merits of investing in maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

My Department has published its assessment of the potential merits of investing in maritime decarbonisation.

In 2015, the Department published the Maritime Growth Study, which considered all aspects of the maritime sector and identified where action could be taken to generate growth. Following the publication of Maritime 2050 in 2019, which builds on the findings of the Maritime Growth Study, the Department published the Clean Maritime Plan, which identified the potential for clean economic growth in the UK as a result of the transition to zero emission shipping.

Alongside the Plan, the Department published an assessment of the value of potential economic opportunities from low and zero emission shipping. This review provided a framework for assessing the scale of the opportunity generated by emission reduction technologies, including a mapping of the relevant supply chain, an assessment of the global uptake of these technologies, the economic footprint of the UK firms in the supply chain and the UK's share of global export of these technologies.

■ **Shipping: Exhaust Emissions**

Emma Hardy:

[109593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with local government leaders in coastal communities on the potential benefits of investing in maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

My Department has published its assessment of the potential merits of investing in maritime decarbonisation, as set out below.

In 2015, the Department published the Maritime Growth Study, which considered all aspects of the maritime sector and identified where action could be taken to generate growth. Following the publication of Maritime 2050 in 2019, which builds on the findings of the Maritime Growth Study, the Department published the Clean Maritime Plan, which identified the potential for clean economic growth in the UK as a result of the transition to zero emission shipping.

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■ **Transport for London: Finance**

Sir David Evennett:

[109181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Mayor of London's management of Transport for London finances since 2016.

Rachel Maclean:

My Department works closely with Transport for London to ensure essential services continue to operate in the capital. The Mayor of London's fares freeze has cost TfL an estimated £640m over the last four years and during this time TfL's debt has increased by almost 30%.

However, the financial impact of COVID on TfL has been significant. That is why the Government has recently agreed a further funding package for TfL of up to £1.7bn to ensure the continuation of public transport services.

Travel: Coronavirus**Paul Maynard:**[\[109270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions the Government has had with (a) Germany, (b) Canada, (c) the UAE and (d) other countries that are trialling or have put in place covid-19 testing regimes for international arrivals.

Robert Courts:

Through the Global Travel Taskforce the Government has engaged with a large number of international partners to develop a shared understanding of the challenges of restarting international travel, to exchange best practice, and to develop longer term structures for the future. These discussions have included different testing models for international arrivals, as well as non-testing-based measures designed to help restart international travel.

Additionally, we continue to work in ICAO to ensure global compliance and coordination with their 'Take Off' guidance and Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce recommendations on health measures.

Julie Elliott:[\[109354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the travel industry; and what support he plans to provide to travel companies during that pandemic.

Robert Courts:

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

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

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

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

Selaine Saxby:

[\[109755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of walking, cycling and local traffic reduction schemes delivered under Tranche 1 of the Emergency Active Travel Fund; and what progress he has made in distributing Tranche 2 funding.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department will be undertaking a full evaluation of the Active Travel Fund in due course, which will inform decisions on subsequent capital investment programmes for cycling and walking. Local authorities who received funding under tranche 1 of the scheme were required to complete an evaluation survey which will be used to help measure the effectiveness of schemes in their areas. The Department plans to confirm tranche 2 allocations shortly, once it is satisfied that the funding will support schemes which are properly thought out and which will deliver benefits to all road users.

TREASURY

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[\[109609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of enforcing aviation companies to sign up to binding commitments to help deliver the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050 when disbursing Government funding to support aviation companies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government continues to take its environmental responsibilities very seriously and is committed to meeting its climate change targets.

In the Chancellor's letter to the aviation sector at the start of the pandemic, he made it clear that the government would consider bespoke financial support for firms as a last resort, once all other options had been exhausted. This means firms must have exhausted the comprehensive package of economy-wide measures we have put in place and all other funding options, including with shareholders and commercial debt providers. In order to protect the interests of taxpayers, any support would need to represent value for money. Companies receiving such support would also need to agree to appropriate conditions, including conditions relating to climate change, as well as tax, supplier payment terms, and corporate governance.

■ Aviation: Taxation**Sarah Olney:**[\[110884\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of a flyer levy for international flights in order to (a) reduce the climate impact of flying by reforming the taxation of international flights to focus on people who fly the most and (b) reduce costs for people who take one or two international return flights per year.

Kemi Badenoch:

The aviation sector currently contributes to the cost of public services through Air Passenger Duty (APD). The government has committed to consult on aviation tax reform and will provide an update on timing in due course. The consultation will take into account the UK's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.

■ Aviation: Training**Henry Smith:**[\[109294\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has bring the UK's application of VAT on professional pilot training programmes into line with the VAT applied to (a) those programmes in the EU and (b) other vocational educational courses in the UK.

Jesse Norman:

Under the current VAT rules, education and vocational training can be VAT exempt where it is provided by a government institution or certain regulated organisations. Providing an exemption to all pilot training would come at a cost to the Exchequer. Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of pilot training programmes.

■ Bowling: VAT**Alyn Smith:**[\[109655\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason ten pin bowling businesses were not included in the reduction in VAT that was extended to food outlets, cinemas and other competitor businesses in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, which have been severely affected by COVID-19.

Hospitality for the purposes of this relief includes the supply of food and non-alcoholic beverages from restaurants, cafes, pubs and similar establishments for consumption on the premises. It also includes the supply of hot food and non-alcoholic hot beverages to take away.

Where a ten-pin bowling business provides such hospitality, that hospitality will benefit from the reduced rate, although admission to ten-pin bowling itself is not eligible. Further information can be found in VAT Guidance: reduced rate for

hospitality, holiday accommodation and attractions on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/catering-takeaway-food-and-vat-notice-7091>

■ Buildings: VAT

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[109672]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT on refurbishment, repair and maintenance of buildings from 20 per cent to five per cent or below.

Jesse Norman:

Reducing the rate of VAT on refurbishment, repair and maintenance of buildings from twenty per cent to five per cent would be very expensive. For example, such a rate for repair and renovations of buildings would cost the Exchequer approximately £4 billion per year. This would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere. While the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to change the VAT treatment of the repair and renovation of buildings.

■ Business: Insurance

Caroline Lucas:

[109281]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the insurance sector on the effect on businesses of the time taken to process payments against valid claims relating to the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make it his policy to collect data on the number of companies that close their businesses as a result of the time taken by insurance companies to make such payments.

John Glen:

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

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

On 15 September, the High Court published its judgment on the FCA court case for a selected number of key issues, to resolve uncertainty for many customers making business interruption claims. On 2 November, the Supreme Court has granted permission for the FCA and insurers to appeal if it is not possible to resolve the outstanding issues in the coming weeks. The hearing is scheduled to take place from Monday 16 November. The FCA and insurers had agreed that they would seek to have any appeal heard on an expedited basis, given the importance of providing legal clarity to policyholders as soon as possible.

The Government recognises that businesses who do not have appropriate insurance cover will require support and encourages those affected to explore the full package of support set out by the Chancellor.

■ Carer's Allowance: Taxation**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[109683\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of claimants of carers' allowance pay tax on the benefit.

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[109684\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of revenue raised from tax on carer's allowance.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not available.

■ Cash Dispensing**Carla Lockhart:** [\[109752\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the March 2020 Budget, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to protect access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK, which is why it has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and to ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long term. The Government is working at pace, engaging with industry and the regulators – the Financial Conduct Authority, Payment Systems Regulator, and Bank of England – whilst designing legislation.

To inform the development of this legislation, the Government published a Call for Evidence on 15 October seeking views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system.

■ Coinage: Forgery**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[109409\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to tackle the (a) use and (b) distribution of counterfeit currency.

John Glen:

Maintaining a coinage that is robust against the threat of counterfeiting is an important objective for HM Treasury as the issuing authority for UK coins.

Maintaining banknotes that are robust against the threat of counterfeiting is the responsibility of the Bank of England.

The Bank of England develop and issue new state-of-the-art counterfeit resilient notes. This was one of the primary reasons for moving from cotton-paper to polymer banknotes. Furthermore, HM Treasury worked with the Royal Mint to introduce a new 12-sided £1 coin to combat high levels of counterfeiting of the current £1 coin, in 2017.

It is important to have a currency in which there is widespread confidence as well as protecting taxpayers and businesses from the cost of counterfeiting.

The Bank of England, the Royal Mint and HM Treasury have worked together to modernise the currency through the transition to polymer banknotes and the introduction of new coinage.

The Bank of England and the Royal Mint work with law enforcement and educate retailers, banks and the public on identifying counterfeit banknotes and coins. These are important steps in disrupting the use and distribution of counterfeit currency.

■ Credit: Interest Rates

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[109730\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the door-to-door and payday loans market.

John Glen:

The Government has fundamentally reformed regulation of the consumer credit market, including door-to-door and payday lending, giving regulatory responsibility of this area to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in 2014.

This more robust regulatory system is helping to deliver the Government's vision for a well-functioning and sustainable consumer credit market which works effectively for both firms and consumers.

The FCA proactively monitors the market to understand the pressures that firms face, as well as any risks that may arise for consumers. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the FCA and the Treasury have continued to engage with the sector to understand the effect of COVID-19 on the market.

■ Customs Intermediaries: Recruitment

Hywel Williams:

[\[109186\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to prevent companies recruiting already-qualified custom brokers from other companies under the Recruitment Grant scheme.

Jesse Norman:

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

The sector is varied and made up of a number of different business models including specific customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators; all of which will require varied numbers of staff and operate in different ways. The scheme allows maximum flexibility in order to meet the needs of different business models.

The Government continues to monitor the uptake of the scheme and its impact on the market, and keeps the rules for operation under review.

■ Debts**Colleen Fletcher:****[111538]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate his Department has made of the level of household debt in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

John Glen:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produce estimates of household debt in the UK. According to latest available data, median household non-mortgage debt in the West Midlands between 2016 and 2018 was £4,300. This was the fourth lowest of any English region.

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

The ONS does not produce estimates of the level of household debt in Coventry, including the Coventry North East constituency, and for England as a whole.

■ Debts: Coronavirus**Marsha De Cordova:****[109628]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to support families that have experienced an increase in their household debt as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government has delivered unprecedented support for living standards during this challenging time, protecting livelihoods with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and temporary welfare measures amongst other support.

With the resurgence of COVID-19, the Government has extended the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme until 31 March 2021. Eligible employees will continue to receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The Government has increased the overall level of the third grant under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to 80 per cent of average trading profits, meaning that the maximum grant available has now increased to £7,500.

The Government has made changes to the welfare system worth £9.3 billion according to recent OBR estimates. This includes a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element.

To support renters, the Government has provided a nearly £1 billion increase in Local Housing Allowance Rates and has increased notice periods to six months in all but the most egregious cases, and this will remain in place until at least the end of March 2021. This means that renters now served notice can stay in their homes over winter. Evictions will not be enforced whilst national restrictions are in place over the

Christmas period (until 11 January 2021 at the earliest), except for the most egregious cases such as anti-social behaviour.

To support people who may struggle to meet their council tax payments this year, the Government has provided Local Authorities with £500 million. The Government expects that this will provide all recipients of working age local council tax support with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150 this financial year.

Earlier this year, the Government worked quickly with lenders and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to give people access to payment holidays on their mortgages and consumer borrowing. This is giving consumers a much-needed respite period, in which no repayments are due on these credit products.

Draft guidance announced by the FCA earlier this month sets out that payment holidays of up to six months will continue to be available to mortgage and consumer credit borrowers who have been impacted by COVID-19 until at least 31 January 2021. Those who have already taken six months of payment holidays and who continue to experience payment difficulties should speak to their lender to agree tailored support.

The Government recognises that despite these strong protections, some people are struggling with their finances at this challenging time. To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, an extra £37.8 million support package is being made available to debt advice providers this financial year, bringing this year's budget for free debt advice in England to over £100 million.

In May, the Government also announced the immediate release of £65 million of dormant assets funding to Fair4All Finance, an independent organisation that has been founded to support the financial wellbeing of people in vulnerable circumstances. The funding is used to increase access to fair, affordable and appropriate financial products and services for those in financial difficulties.

And from May 2021 the Breathing Space scheme will offer people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges, and will encourage them to seek professional debt advice.

■ Financial Conduct Authority

Charlotte Nichols:

[109722]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will launch a review of the (a) accountability, (b) regulation and (c) cost to the public purse of the Financial Conduct Authority.

John Glen:

HM Treasury engages with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on a regular basis and will continue to do so.

The FCA is accountable to HM Treasury, Parliament, and the public through a variety of mechanisms. These include a requirement for HM Treasury to approve

appointments to the FCA's board, and for the FCA to lay their annual reports and accounts before Parliament.

The FCA is also held accountable for the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness with which it uses its resources. For example, the FCA is subject to full audit by the National Audit Office. However, the FCA is an operationally independent, non-governmental body and as such the government has no role in the FCA's budget or the setting of its fees.

■ Financial Crimes Enforcement Network: Disclosure of Information

Stephen Farry:

[\[109747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the leak of documents from the US Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network in September 2020.

John Glen:

The UK is internationally recognised as having some of the strongest controls worldwide for tackling money laundering and terrorist financing. The allegations contained within the leak of documents are largely historic, and in recent years, the Government has taken a number of actions to strengthen the UK's response to financial crime.

In 2019, the government published the landmark Economic Crime Plan, which brought together the government, law enforcement and the private sector in closer cooperation than ever before to deliver a whole system response to economic crime.

This year, the government has also completed the transposition of the Fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directive into domestic law. This helps to ensure the UK's AML/CTF regime remains comprehensive, responsive to emerging threats, and in line with evolving international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force.

However, we recognise that there is more to be done and are committed to continuing to build on the progress made so far, as we lead the global fight against illicit financial flows.

■ Financial Services: Coronavirus

Adam Afriyie:

[\[110103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the viability of using more FinTech platforms to distribute Government-backed financial loans and support packages alongside established high-street banks and lenders.

John Glen:

The UK is home to a world-leading Fintech sector and an impressive amount of talent and expertise in this area. The government knows that Fintech firms play an important role in the lending market, especially for smaller businesses.

I am grateful for the way the sector has responded to the current crisis by identifying opportunities where technology may support the Government's response.

The British Business Bank (BBB) has so far accredited 28 Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) lenders, including several non-banks and alternative lenders. In addition, the BBB has in excess of 100 accredited lenders for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and this includes several UK Fintechs.

■ Food: Coronavirus

Bim Afolami:

[\[109581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what Barnett consequential have arisen as a result of the £63 million that the Government allocated in June 2020 to be distributed by local authorities in England to help people struggling to afford food and other essentials as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

To give the devolved administrations the upfront certainty to plan and deliver their coronavirus response, the UK Government have guaranteed they will receive at least £14bn in additional funding this year on top of their Spring Budget funding.

The Barnett consequential associated with the funding the UK Government allocated to English local authorities in June 2020 will contribute towards this guarantee.

■ Job Retention Bonus

Ben Bradley:

[\[109617\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether businesses that are closed as a result of Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level restrictions will be eligible for the Job Retention Bonus in January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has always been clear that the Government would keep the situation under review, adapting its approach as the context evolved. The purpose of the Job Retention Bonus (JRB) was to encourage employers to keep previously furloughed staff in work until the end of January. However, as the CJRS is being extended to the end of March 2021, the policy intent of the JRB falls away. As such, the JRB will not be paid in February. The Government will instead redeploy a retention incentive at the right time.

■ Job Support Scheme: Bus Services

Paul Maynard:

[\[109273\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend eligibility for the expanded Job Support Scheme to coach operators based in Tier 3 local covid-19 alert level areas.

Jesse Norman:

Following the announcement of stricter coronavirus restrictions on 31 October, the CJRS is being extended. The level of the grant will mirror levels available under the CJRS in August, so the Government will pay 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500 and

employers will pay employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and pension contributions only for the hours the employee does not work. This is a UK-wide policy to support the whole country through this national crisis.

■ Life Insurance: Suicide

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[111531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2020 to Question 71066 on Life Insurance: Mental Illness, what steps his Department is taking to encourage insurance companies to take into consideration the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on people who have taken their own lives when processing life insurance claims.

John Glen:

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

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them. The Government is working closely with the FCA to ensure that the rules are being upheld and supports the regulator in its role.

In July 2020, the FCA launched further consultation on updated guidance for firms on the treatment of vulnerable consumers. This guidance also takes into consideration the impact of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the vulnerability of consumers. The FCA expects to finalise this guidance by early 2021.

■ Listed Buildings: VAT

Daisy Cooper:

[\[109690\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the provisions of Building and Construction VAT Notice 708 to include zero-rating for restorative construction works on listed buildings.

Jesse Norman:

The zero rate of VAT on restorative work to listed buildings was removed in October 2012 following a consultation, which asked for views of individuals and businesses affected by the change. Evidence showed that at the time, the relief was mainly being used to carry out extension work which was contrary to the intent of the legislation to preserve heritage.

The Government has no current plans to change the VAT treatment of restorative construction work on listed buildings.

■ Members: Correspondence

Afzal Khan:

[\[109625\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter of 28 July 2020 from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton on support for taxi drivers.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury has no record of receiving the letter of 28 July 2020 from the Hon Member on support for taxi drivers. Since receiving this question Treasury officials have contacted the Hon Member's office to request a copy of the letter. We have now received this and will respond as soon as possible.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[111571\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central, dated 4 August 2002 on the furlough claim lodged by Sub Club.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, and apologises for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. The hon. Member's correspondence is receiving attention and will be replied to as soon as possible.

■ Money

David Mundell:

[\[109208\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to give the Financial Conduct Authority responsibility for (a) tracking changes in cash acceptance by UK businesses and (b) evaluating the effect of cash refusal on consumers.

David Mundell:

[\[109209\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of trends in people's ability to pay for goods and services using cash during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps the Government is taking to mitigate the risk of widespread cash refusal.

David Mundell:

[\[109210\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's consultation on protecting access to cash, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) overall responsibility for maintaining a well-functioning cash system; and what discussions his Department has had with the FCA on them taking on that role.

David Mundell:

[\[109211\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the (a) Financial Conduct Authority, (b) Payment Systems Regulator and (c) industry

stakeholders on a minimum service guarantee for cash; and what the timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals on protecting access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK, which is why it has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and to ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long term. The Government is working at pace, engaging with industry and the regulators – the Financial Conduct Authority, Payment Systems Regulator, and Bank of England – whilst designing legislation.

To inform the development of this legislation, the Government published a Call for Evidence on 15 October seeking views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. As set out in the Call for Evidence, the Government considers that there may be benefit in giving a single authority overall responsibility for setting requirements to ensure that the retail distribution of cash meets the needs of consumers and businesses. The government's view is that the FCA may be well positioned to take on the function through legislation.

The Government also remains closely engaged with the financial regulators, including through the Treasury-chaired Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, to monitor and assess risks around cash relating to COVID-19. In order to help control the virus, all businesses and individuals are encouraged to follow the latest Government advice. To work safely, retailers have been recommended to minimise contact around transactions, for example, considering using contactless payments. It remains the individual retailer's choice as to whether to accept or decline any form of payment, including cash or card.

Paul Maynard:

[\[109274\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will appoint the Financial Conduct Authority as the single regulator for (a) cash and (b) monitoring and publishing the detail of acceptance levels by UK businesses.

Paul Maynard:

[\[109275\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the (a) Financial Conduct Authority, (b) Payment Systems Regulator and (c) industry stakeholders on a minimum service guarantee for cash; and when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on protecting access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK, which is why it has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and to ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long term. Government is working at pace, engaging with industry and the regulators – the Financial Conduct Authority, Payment Systems Regulator and Bank of England, including through the Treasury-chaired Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group – whilst designing legislation.

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Mr Richard Holden:

[\[109733\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on the Government's proposals that that regulator be given responsibility for maintaining a well-functioning retail cash system.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[109734\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of trends in cash acceptance by UK businesses during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will appoint the Financial Conduct Authority to track and publish those trends.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK, which is why it has committed to legislate to protect access to cash and to ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long term. The Government is working at pace, engaging with industry and the regulators – the Financial Conduct Authority, Payment Systems Regulator, and Bank of England – whilst designing legislation.

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■ Money Laundering

Stephen Farry:

[\[109748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reviewing banks' compliance with money laundering regulations.

John Glen:

The UK's Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (MLRs), set out the high-level requirements on banks to combat money laundering. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Terrorist Financing (AML/CTF) supervisor for over 20,000 financial services firms in the UK and is committed to ensuring the MLRs are fully adhered to and will not hesitate to take action where they are not.

The FCA actively investigates AML breaches in the financial sector and in recent years this has resulted in fining Commerzbank in 2020, Standard Chartered Bank £102.2 million in April 2019, Barclays over £72m in 2015 and Deutsche Bank £163m in 2017 for AML failings. The Deutsche Bank fine is the largest fine for an AML breach ever imposed by the FCA or the Financial Services Authority. The FCA also makes full use of other powers available to it under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

■ Mortgages

Ian Murray:

[\[110781\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support people in shared appreciation mortgage schemes.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has responsibility for the conduct regulation of mortgages, including shared appreciation mortgages. The FCA sets the rules regarding the information that has to be disclosed before, during and after sale and, in addition, rules in respect of the advice that should be given to consumers.

The Government is determined that lenders should treat borrowers fairly. Any dispute arising between a lender and its customers is usually best resolved by the parties involved. However, if a shared appreciation mortgage holder believes they have been mis-sold a shared appreciation mortgage, they are able to take their complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). The FOS is an independent body set up to provide arbitration in such cases.

The FOS received a number of complaints from people who purchased shared appreciation mortgages and are alert to the issues involved. However, the FOS said in its Annual Review for 2003-04 that in most cases it had not upheld the shared appreciation mortgage mis-selling complaints it had received because it had concluded that the documents were clear and the terms had been fully explained to the borrowers. Therefore, there appear to be no grounds for Government intervention in this instance.

The FOS remains willing to consider all cases on their individual merits, and any customer that has not already been in touch with the FOS may wish to contact the organisation. The FOS can be contacted by post at: Financial Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, London, E14 9SR, by telephone on 0800 023 4567, or through their website at www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk.

■ National Savings: Interest Rates

Martyn Day:

[109504]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2020 to Question 66988 on Personal Savings: Interest Rates, what recent assessment informed his decision to change NS&I interest rate policy.

John Glen:

NS&I must balance the interests of savers, taxpayers and the broader financial services sector.

After around 6 months of offering often market-leading rates, NS&I has announced interest rate reductions that will realign it with the rest of the retail savings market.

NS&I's Net Financing target for 2020-21 was revised from £6 billion to £35 billion to reflect the Government's funding requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic. NS&I raised c. £38.3bn in Net Financing in the first two quarters of 2020/21, making rate reductions necessary.

With gilt yields currently at very low levels, government financing raised through NS&I is much more expensive than that raised through gilt issuance. It is important that HM Treasury takes into account taxpayer value considerations when making financing decisions. As such, the announced rate reductions will deliver better value for the taxpayer by improving the cost-effectiveness of the financing that NS&I raises for the Government.

■ New Businesses: Coronavirus

Adam Afriyie:

[110760]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether businesses who have started trading since the start of the covid-19 outbreak are eligible for financial support made available by the Government in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Winter Economy Plan set out a package of targeted measures in response to the current economic context, which will enable businesses, including new businesses, to protect jobs, and manage their finances in the face of reduced or uncertain demand. This includes the extension of the temporary VAT reduced rate for hospitality and tourism, extending the application window of the access to finance schemes, and further support for employees and the self-employed, through the Coronavirus Job Retentions Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Grant Extension. Although it has not been possible to include those who have started trading since the start of the COVID outbreak in the SEISS, the SEISS is

just one element of a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants. On 8 July, the Government also introduced the new Plan for Jobs which will make available up to £30 billion to assist in creating, supporting and protecting jobs.

More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19.

■ Pool Re: Events Industry

David Mundell: [\[109212\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has instructed Pool Reinsurance Company Limited to discuss with representatives of the insurance industry the matter of insurance for live events during the covid-19 outbreak.

David Mundell: [\[109213\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has authorised Pool Reinsurance Company Limited to engage with representatives of the insurance industry on potential solutions to the current lack of available insurance for live events during the covid-19 outbreak.

David Mundell: [\[109214\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will facilitate discussions between Pool Reinsurance Company Limited and representatives of the insurance industry on potential solutions to the challenges facing the live events sector as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

David Mundell: [\[109215\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions Pool Reinsurance Company Limited has had with representatives of the insurance industry on the matter of insurance for live events in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

David Mundell: [\[109216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions Pool Reinsurance Company Limited has had with live events insurers on the lack of available contingency insurance during the covid-19 outbreak.

David Mundell: [\[109217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on what assessment Pool Reinsurance Company Limited has made of the challenges facing live events insurers during the covid-19 outbreak; and what recommendations that company has made to his Department as a result of that assessment.

John Glen:

The Government is working closely with the insurers, the trade bodies and regulators to understand what more the sector can do to support firms in response to this pandemic. We also continue to gather and monitor information on how different sectors are being affected by the current crisis and the availability of cover.

We would not typically recommend drawing parallels with existing Government-backed insurance schemes given the specific design of any intervention is dependent on the size, frequency and nature of the risk being insured. Further, the Government would need to assess access to insurance alongside any other barriers to a sector re-opening, such as social distancing restrictions, when determining the appropriate course of action.

Event providers are eligible for assistance through the wider Government support package if they are in financial difficulty. We continue to keep the package under close review.

Public Transport: Capital Investment**Hilary Benn:**[\[109167\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to shift capital investment from road building to public transport; and if he will make a statement.

Steve Barclay:

Investing in public transport is a vital part of delivering this Government's ambitions on levelling up and net zero.

The PM committed £5 billion for buses and cycling in February alongside essential improvements to North-South connectivity through HS2, while Budget 2020 committed £4.2 billion for long-term intra-city transport settlements across eight elected Mayors outside London. Altogether this represents an unprecedented investment in local public transport.

Further details on investment plans will be set out by the Chancellor through the Spending Review on 25 November.

Remote Working: Non-domestic Rates**Paul Blomfield:**[\[109314\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the business rates holiday to include the flexible workspace sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

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

A range of measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for business rates relief such as flexible workspaces, has also been made available.

■ Retail Trade: Money**Mark Pritchard:** [\[109244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of cash only proprietors in the retail sector in order to increase revenues for the public purse.

John Glen:

The Government's view is that it remains the choice of individual retailers as to whether to accept any form of payment method, including cash, card or other digital payments.

The Government recognises the importance of cash to the daily lives of millions of people across the UK. That is why Government committed at March Budget 2020 to bring forward legislation to protect access to cash for those who need it. To inform the development of this legislation, the Government published a Call for Evidence on 15 October seeking views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme**Alison McGovern:** [\[110807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate the Government has made of the number of self-employed workers who are ineligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Just over 5 million individuals were assessed for potential eligibility to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme; about 1.6 million of these were assessed to be ineligible.

■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[109192\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to decide the future of Social Investment Tax Relief in 2020.

Tim Farron: [\[109257\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his decision to postpone the autumn Budget, whether a decision on the future of the Social Investment Tax Relief will be made in 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) is intended to encourage investment into social enterprises. Since 2014, about 110 social enterprises and trading charities have used the scheme, raising £11.2 million.

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review in order to ensure they continue to meet policy objectives and represent value for money for taxpayers. The Government committed to a full review of SISR within two years of its expansion, and published a Call for Evidence last year on the use of the scheme to date. A Summary of Responses will be published in due course alongside a decision on the policy's future.

■ **Sunscreens: VAT**

Shaun Bailey:

[\[109669\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of re-classifying sun cream from a cosmetic product to an essential product for the purposes of VAT.

Jesse Norman:

VAT is a broad-based tax on supplies of goods and services, and exceptions are limited and set out in legislation. High-factor sunscreen is on the NHS prescription list for certain conditions and qualifies for a VAT zero rate when prescribed and dispensed by a pharmacist.

Making all sunscreen VAT-free would come at a considerable cost to the Exchequer. While all taxes are kept under review, there are currently no plans to reduce VAT on sunscreen products.

■ **Tax Avoidance**

Justin Madders:

[\[109440\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of people subject to the loan charge have had their settlement offers accepted.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are currently compiling, analysing and assuring the relevant settlement data.

At the time of the independent review of the Loan Charge, about 12,000 employers and individuals still had the opportunity to keep clear of the Loan Charge by concluding settlement, having provided all the relevant information to HMRC by 5 April 2019. Early indications are that as at 2 October about 60% of these have either settled, informed HMRC that they had instead decided to report and pay the Loan Charge, or have been taken out of scope of the Loan Charge following the Government's changes in response to the independent review.

HMRC are continuing settlement discussions with a relatively small number of taxpayers who were prevented from meeting the 30 September deadline by circumstances beyond their control.

Bill Esterson:

[\[110798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the report on the Government's implementation of Loan Charge changes following the Independent Loan Charge Review.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) plan to report to Parliament on the implementation of Loan Charge changes following the Independent Loan Charge Review by the end of 2020.

■ Taxation: Electronic Government**Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[110718\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the costs to businesses of interfacing their accounting software with HMRC in compliance with requirements for the digitisation of reporting.

Jesse Norman:

The costs incurred in the move to digital record keeping and reporting through Making Tax Digital (MTD) will vary from business to business, and are dependent on factors such as business size, complexity, degree of digital capability and the cost and functionality of the software used. There are free software products available for businesses with the simplest affairs.

HMRC's early estimates published on 21 July anticipated that businesses will incur costs of, on average, £175 to make the transition to MTD, with about £20 a year in additional continuing costs. HMRC have since undertaken significant engagement with representative bodies within both the business and accountancy worlds, as well as software developers, in order to further understand the associated costs of future MTD mandation. These costs represent an investment that will yield dividends in terms of increased productivity and turnover. HMRC are working with these bodies in order to ensure estimates are accurate and will do all they can to minimise costs. A new publication with revised estimates will be published in due course.

■ Theatre: Tax Allowances**Tracy Brabin:**[\[110883\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Theatre Tax Relief to cover (a) digital output and (b) community-based artistic activity.

Jesse Norman:

In 2019-20, the Government provided £71 million of support to 3,580 productions through the Theatre Tax Relief. While all tax reliefs are kept under review, the Government is not planning any changes to the Theatre Tax Relief.

The current rules do allow any theatrical production company to claim Theatre Tax Relief if its live performances will be to paying members of the general public or provided for educational purposes. This does not exclude qualifying community-based performances.

The Government has taken action to support the cultural sector during the pandemic through a £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund. To date, £409 million in grant funding

has been awarded to over 2,000 cultural organisations in England including orchestras, music venues, galleries, theatres, museums and festivals.

■ **Tourism: Coronavirus**

Chris Elmore:

[109528]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available for people who are employed in the coach tourism industry whose work has been adversely affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government appreciates this is a difficult time for many businesses, including coach tourism companies. With the resurgence of the virus and tightening of restrictions to protect people's health, we have taken further steps to protect jobs and businesses.

People who are employed in the coach industry can benefit from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which will remain open until 2 December, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

Self-employed individuals in the coach industry can benefit from the Government's recent announcement of more generous support for the self-employed, who will now receive 80% of average trading profits in November. As SEISS grants are calculated over 3 months, this increases the total level of the grant to 55% of trading profits for November to January and the maximum grant will increase to £5,160. We will also be paying this out more quickly by bringing forward the SEISS 3 claims window from 14 December to 30 November.

To support businesses with their cashflow, on 2 November the Chancellor also announced that the application deadline for the government-backed loan schemes have been further extended until 31 January 2021.

■ **Transport for London: Coronavirus**

Gavin Newlands:

[110849]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the funding and financing package agreed between his Department and Transport for London announced on 1 November 2020, what assessment he has made of the effect of comparability factors on the allocation of funding to (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland.

Steve Barclay:

To give the devolved administrations the upfront certainty to plan and deliver their coronavirus response, we have guaranteed they will receive at least £16bn in additional resource funding this year on top of their Spring Budget funding.

Any additional funding provided to the Department for Transport to support Transport for London will result in Barnett consequentials for the devolved administrations and these will contribute towards the guaranteed funding.

Where additional funding is being provided to departments in-year, the devolved administrations generally receive consequential funding using programme comparability rather than overall departmental comparability. Given local transport is devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a comparability factor of 100% will be applied as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

The Treasury is currently working with the devolved administrations to update and publish comparability factors in a revised Statement of Funding Policy alongside the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit: Coronavirus

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[109677\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he 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.

Steve Barclay:

The temporary £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element forms just one part of a wide-ranging package of measures to protect people's jobs and incomes. The welfare measures announced in March, which the Office for Budget Responsibility estimates are worth £9 billion this year, are specifically aimed at providing significant temporary support to low-income families who have seen their income fall due to the immediate impact of Coronavirus.

Making the £20 per week increase permanent would require a substantial ongoing increase in public expenditure, with 2020-21 spending on working-age benefits set to be the highest since records began as a share of national income.

The Government has focused on measures that can be introduced and operationalised quickly – the most straightforward way to increase benefits for claimants during this period was to temporarily increase the Universal Credit standard allowance and the Working Tax Credit basic element. In addition, Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance, and Income Support were increased by 1.7 per cent in April 2020 as part of the annual uprating exercise.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carer's Allowance

Ed Davey:

[\[110722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are (a) entitled to receive and (b) receiving carer's allowance, in the latest period for which data is available, by Parliamentary constituency.

Justin Tomlinson:

As of February 2020, there were around 1070 carers in the Kingston and Surbiton constituency that were receiving Carer's Allowance and in 2019/20 we spent

approximately £3.8 million on Carer's Allowance there. A further 310 carers had a claim to an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance.

Information on the number of people that (a) have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance and (b) receiving a payment for Carer's Allowance by Parliamentary constituency 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>

The latest information on benefit expenditure by parliamentary constituency including Carer's Allowance is also published and available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920543/benefit-expenditure-by-parliamentary-constituency-2019-20.xlsx

■ Children: Maintenance

Simon Jupp:

[109753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Child Maintenance Service cases have been (a) received and (b) overturned by the Independent Case Examiner in each of the last five years.

Guy Opperman:

Details of the number of Child Maintenance Service complaints received and accepted for examination by the Independent Case Examiner's Office in each of the last five full reporting years is detailed in table (a). Table (b) provides details of the number of Child Support Maintenance cases cleared by the Independent Case Examiner's Office during the same period and the type of clearance. The Independent Case Examiner's Office can only accept a complaint for examination once the complainant has exhausted the DWP complaints process.

Official figures show that nearly eight out of ten CMS customers stated that they are happy with the service they receive. In cases where the CMS directly manage payments 70% of money due to be paid in the quarter ending March 2020 was collected, amounting to more than £45 million.

We are clear that it is never acceptable for parents to evade their responsibilities to their children and the CMS will continue to clamp down on people who think they can abuse or dodge the system.

Table (a): Child Maintenance Service complaints received and accepted in each of the last five full report year.

REPORTING YEAR	COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	COMPLAINTS ACCEPTED FOR EXAMINATION*
2015/16	135	85
2016/17	381	118
2017/18	392	83
2018/19	741	198
2019/20	890	196

Table (b): Number of Child Support Maintenance cases clear by the Independent Case Examiner's Office during the last five full reporting years and the type of clearance / outcome.

REPORTING YEAR	WITHDRAWN	RESOLVED / SETTLED TO COMPLAINANTS SATISFACTION	ICE REPORT – FULLY OR PARTIALLY UPHELD	ICE REPORT – NOT UPHELD	TOTAL CLEARED
2015/16	2	13	33	6	54
2016/17	5	22	34	9	70
2017/18	2	12	56	7	77
2018/19	5	46	41	8	100
2019/20	2	48	55	18	123

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[109535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many FTE additional staff her Department has employed since March 2020.

Guy Opperman:

4,026 FTE have joined payroll as at close 30 September 20. In addition, during the period between March 20 and end of September 20 we have had c1,000 loans from other government departments, c2,000 contractors and c1600 agency workers hired.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[110926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has provide financial assistance to clinically vulnerable people in the event that their place of work

remains open but they are unable to attend that place work as a result of health concerns during the period of new national covid-19 lockdown from 5 November 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

BEIS Safer Workplaces guidance advises that workers who can work effectively from home should do so over the winter. If an individual cannot work from home, clinically vulnerable individuals can still attend their workplace as their workplace should be COVID-secure. Employers are required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP informing them of this and may have been advised to shield in the past. Individuals who receive a notification that they need to shield should not go in to work if they are unable to work from home.

Employees who are clinically extremely vulnerable can be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and remain eligible for New Style Employment and Support Allowance, subject to the wider eligibility criteria. Where they are not furloughed, and they cannot work from home, they may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from their employer.

Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to receive Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ **Funeral Payments**

Carolyn Harris:

[109493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether there was a backlog of applications for funeral expenses payments prior to the implementation of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on 23 March 2020.

Guy Opperman:

Prior to the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions on 23 March there was a backlog of Funeral Expense Payments (FEP) claims. In response to this and the COVID-19 outbreak, steps have been taken to significantly speed up the processing of Funeral Expense Payment claims in support of those who need it most.

Carolyn Harris:

[109500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of funeral expenses payments claims made in 2019-20 were cleared in (a) 15 working days, (b) 15 working days plus 2 days and (c) 15 working days plus 5 days.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested, in Great Britain, is reported annually in Appendix 1 of the Social Fund Annual Report, up to 2017/18:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-fund-annual-report-2017-to-2018>

The information requested for 2019/20 will be published in due course, and so cannot be released ahead of publication.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: Adecco and Federation of Small Businesses**

Liam Byrne: [\[110063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when legal approval will be granted to the Federation of Small Businesses and Adecco to enable participation in the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

We are aware that the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has teamed up with Adecco Working Ventures to act as a Gateway organisation for the Kickstart Scheme, we look forward to receiving their bid.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: Scotland**

Stephen Flynn: [\[110908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many businesses have enrolled in the Kickstart Scheme in (a) Aberdeen and (b) Scotland.

Stephen Flynn: [\[110909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many job placements have been provided through the Kickstart Scheme in (a) Aberdeen and (b) Scotland.

Mims Davies:

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

■ **Local Housing Allowance: Young People**

Caroline Lucas: [\[109279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2020 to Question 102027 on Local Housing Allowance: Young People, if she will publish a summary explanation of the changes to (a) legislation, (b) local authority policies and (c) universal credit IT systems required to extend the Shared Accommodation Rate exemption to care leavers aged 22 to 25 years old and homeless people under 25 years old; whether work on those changes has begun; whether that work will take three years from start to finish; if she will undertake a feasibility study of bringing forward the implementation of those changes; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

Early policy and delivery work has begun to deliver these measures and the necessary legislation will be taken forward in due course. As announced in the Spring Budget 2020, these changes will be in place from October 2023.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Coronavirus

Ian Mearns:

[110783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to increase the state pension allowance to account for the increased utility costs of people spending an increased amount of time in their homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to ensuring that older people are able to live with the dignity and respect they deserve, and the State Pension is the foundation of state support for older people. In response to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Government has introduced an Uprating Bill to ensure we can increase State Pension and Pension Credit rates for 2021/22.

In April 2020, full amounts of the basic and new State Pensions increased by 3.9%, in line with average earnings growth. The full yearly rate of the basic State Pension is now worth over £1,900 more than it was in 2010.

The Government has committed to keeping the Winter Fuel Payment. The payment gives reassurance, particularly to poorer pensioners that they can keep warm during the colder months. We will continue to pay £200 for households with somebody who has reached State Pension age and is under age 80 or £300 for households with somebody aged 80 and over. This is a significant contribution towards a household's winter fuel bill.

Pensioners whose financial circumstances have been affected by the pandemic may be eligible for Pension Credit. Pension Credit tops up a person's other income to a standard minimum weekly amount – £173.75 for single people or £265.20 for a couple. Extra amounts are also payable in respect of disability, caring (including for children) and certain housing costs. An award of Pension Credit can also provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with housing costs, council tax, heating bills or health costs.

Pension Credit customers who are in receipt of the Pension Credit Guarantee Credit element, are also entitled to the warm home discount providing their energy supplier is part of the scheme. Further details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

■ Unemployment: Young People

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[110269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on setting and monitoring cross-Government objectives on supporting young unemployed people during the current economic situation.

Mims Davies:

My Department works closely with a range of partners including local authorities, key stakeholders and colleagues in other Government Departments - including the Department for Education, Department for Media, Culture and Sport and HMT - to set

common objectives on how we deal with the future challenges around youth employment and monitor how we are providing support.

From September 2020 we started the implementation of the new DWP Youth Offer for all 18 to 24 year olds. This includes the introduction of our Youth Employment Programme, during which young people will be referred to the most appropriate support. We have also implemented DWP Youth Hubs and DWP Youth Employability Coaches.

We have launched the Kickstart Scheme, dedicated to helping those young people at risk of long term unemployment develop their skills and experience through thousands of 6-month job placements.

We will continue to monitor our policies and processes to ensure young unemployed people are effectively supported during this unprecedented time.

■ Universal Credit

Caroline Lucas:

[\[109277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on rent arrears levels of the Government's policy of only allowing direct payments to landlords from universal credit claimants to commence once rent arrears have been amassed; if she will make it her policy to all enable universal credit claimants to choose to pay rent directly to their landlord from the start of their claim; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

Payments to landlords are already available at any point of a Universal Credit claim, if the tenant is likely to have difficulty in managing their rent payments or is in arrears. Such arrangements can be requested by either the claimant or the landlord and are considered on a case by case basis.

All Universal Credit claimants have the opportunity to discuss any concerns about how to budget their monthly payments with their work coach and/or via their UC Journal. UC staff will identify any financial issues the claimant has and signpost claimants to any relevant local face-to-face provision or support that is available and/or the Money Advice Service as appropriate.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[111410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it the policy of the Government during the covid-19 restrictions to exempt from calculations of capital limits for claiming universal credit savings which have been set aside for the purpose of a deposit for house purchase; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit has always had a limited 6 months disregard relating to proceeds of the sale of premises formerly occupied as the person's home, provided it is to be

used to purchase premises that the person intends to occupy as their home. However, monies saved more generally, no matter what the intention for the saving might be, are not disregarded.

■ **Universal Credit: Self-employed**

Alison McGovern:

[110805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what cost-benefit analysis the Government has undertaken on maintaining the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor in universal credit.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not yet available.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Report into violations in Belarus

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS561\]](#)

The Government has welcomed the publication of the report by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) independent rapporteur, Professor Wolfgang Benedek on Belarus. The report was initiated under the Moscow Mechanism to consider Alleged Human Rights Violations related to the Presidential Elections in Belarus on 9 August 2020.

As I noted in my statement to the House of 24 September, alongside 16 other Participating States at the OSCE on 17 September, the United Kingdom invoked the Moscow Mechanism of the human dimension of the OSCE. This triggered an independent investigation into credible reports of electoral fraud and human rights violation before, during and after the Presidential elections in Belarus. The investigation commenced on 30 September and is now complete. The report was formally presented to the OSCE Permanent Council on 5 November 2020 and was welcomed by all 17 invoking States in a Joint Statement. The UK also made a national statement to welcome its publication.

Belarus refused to cooperate with the rapporteur or allow him access to the country. Nevertheless, the report draws heavily on evidence and observations from international organisations and mechanisms, as well as more than 700 submissions from Belarusian citizens and organisations.

The findings of the report are clear.

The report concludes that the allegations that the elections were not transparent, as well as neither free nor fair, are accurate and well evidenced. The report notes that from the selection of the national electoral commission through to vote counting, Belarus fell short of its international commitments and of the basic requirements of previous OSCE and Council of Europe election monitoring reports.

The report finds that the allegations of human rights violations have been proven beyond doubt and that the Belarusian authorities have carried out violations on a massive and systematic scale. The report highlights the environment of impunity that exists in Belarus; no one has been held accountable for the well documented cases of torture and inhumane treatment by the security forces. The report also confirms that freedom of the media and the safety of journalists are under sustained attack in Belarus.

The report makes 82 recommendations to the Belarusian authorities including new Presidential elections, an immediate end to the violence and release of all those illegally detained, an independent oversight mechanism on detention conditions, and an investigation into all allegations of torture.

The Government calls on Belarus to implement all of the recommendations included in the Report. Further, the report makes 16 recommendations to OSCE Participants and the wider international community. The UK has already begun to implement the majority of these recommendations. In addition, the UK supports the recommendation that Belarus must hold new elections and that a detailed and thorough investigation in the human rights violations is required.

A copy of the Report is being placed in the Library of both Houses.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Negotiations on the UK's Future Trading Relationship with New Zealand: Update**

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): [\[HCWS560\]](#)

The second UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiating round took place from 19th October to 2nd November. Negotiators carried out 46 sessions over two weeks, covering all areas of the proposed FTA, and bringing us closer to agreeing an ambitious FTA. Between round one and round two both sides shared 35 draft texts and 25 position papers, which enabled detailed and constructive talks.

The talks underscored both countries' commitment to removing trade barriers and creating new opportunities for business, and a belief that a deep and dynamic agreement can send a clear signal to the world that both the UK and New Zealand are prepared to fight protectionism and advance free and fair trade.

There has been encouraging progress on numerous areas of common interest. In the area of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, both sides reaffirmed their ambition to agree a chapter that will enable these businesses to fully benefit from the FTA.

Productive conversations were also held on trade and the environment and promoting clean growth, where both countries are working closely together to support sustainable outcomes across the agreement.

Discussions also demonstrated shared ambition in trade in services, particularly exploring opportunities for the recognition of professional qualifications, as well as exploring innovative provisions to promote sustainable finance and diversity in the financial services sector. Our negotiations on digital trade also underlined shared aspirations, and a mutual intent to agree a cutting-edge chapter.

The groundwork was laid for the exchange of initial goods market access offers as well as positive discussions in the areas of Rules of Origin and Customs on agreeing simple, modern customs procedures that consider current and future supply chains.

The UK and New Zealand are both keen to continue the momentum of discussions, and the third negotiating round is expected to take place in January 2021.

Below is a summary list of those areas discussed in the round, which continued to take place by video conference:

- Anti-Corruption

- Competition
- Consumer Protection
- Customs
- Digital trade
- State-to-State Dispute Settlement
- Environment and Clean Growth
- Financial Services
- Good Regulatory Practice
- Trade in Goods
- Indigenous Trade
- Intellectual Property
- Investment
- Labour
- Legal & Institutional
- Procurement
- Remedies
- Rules of Origin
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
- Services (including Cross Border Trade in Services, Professional Business Services, Transport and Delivery Services, and Movement of Natural Persons)
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- State Owned Enterprises
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Telecoms
- Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment
- Trade for Development

Any deal the UK Government agrees will be fair and balanced and in the best interests of the whole of the UK. We remain committed to upholding our high environmental, labour, food safety and animal welfare standards in our trade agreement with New Zealand, as well as protecting the National Health Service (NHS).

JUSTICE

■ Review of the Presumption of Parental Involvement

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Alex Chalk):

[\[HCWS562\]](#)

On the 25th June 2020, the Government published the *Final Report on Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases*, alongside an Implementation Plan. The Report contained a number of recommendations from a Panel that included external experts, and the Implementation Plan set out how the Government proposed to address the recommendations.

One of the recommendations made by the Panel was “that the presumption of parental involvement be reviewed urgently in order to address its detrimental effects.”

I am pleased to announce the commencement of a review into the presumption of parental involvement in child arrangements, and certain other private law children, proceedings. This review will focus on the application of the presumption and the statutory exception in cases where there are allegations or other evidence to suggest that involvement of the parent would put the child at risk of harm.

The Review will focus both on the courts’ application of the presumption, as well as on the impact on children’s welfare of the courts’ application of these provisions. In particular, the Review will examine:

(i) how courts are applying sections 1(2A), (2B) and (6) of the Children Act 1989, which together require courts to presume, in child arrangements and certain other private law children proceedings, that involvement of a parent in the child’s life will further the child’s welfare, unless there is evidence to suggest that involvement of that parent would put the child at risk of suffering harm, and to define involvement as ‘involvement of some kind, either direct or indirect, but not any particular division of a child’s time’;

(ii) and the impacts on children’s welfare of the courts’ application of these provisions

This is an important, and complex, issue and this approach is intended to identify whether any reforms are needed in this area, and if so, what kind (legislative or otherwise), and to ensure that any conclusions and recommendations are rooted in a solid understanding of the effect of the presumption and its exception, and the evidence base surrounding its application.

I am establishing an Advisory Group to guide the evidence gathering for this important Review. The Advisory Group members will be:

- Rachel Thomas, Welsh Children’s Commissioner’s Office
- Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner
- Peter Jackson LJ
- HHJ Michelle Corbett
- Jacky Tiotto, CEO Cafcass

- Matthew Pinnell, Cafcass Cymru
- Tammy Knox, Resolution
- Michael Lewkowicz, Families Need Fathers

The evidence that this Review will gather will include a case file review, input from those working in the family courts and an academic literature review of how the presumption is currently applied and the impact of parental involvement on the wellbeing of the child.

The Ministry of Justice will follow a competitive tender process to identify the most appropriate individuals to conduct the evidence review.

I anticipate being able to update the House before summer recess with the outcomes of the Review.