



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:29 P.M., 12 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

■ Boilers: Hydrogen

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[112117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential role of hydrogen hybrid boilers in replacing natural gas boilers from 2025.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department has been considering the potential contributions of different technologies to decarbonise heat, including the deployment of heat pumps and the potential use of hydrogen on the grid.

In order to support this, prototype 'hydrogen-ready boilers' are being developed under the £25m BEIS Hy4Heat programme. This programme is seeking to investigate if it is technically possible and safe to replace methane with hydrogen in appliances for residential and commercial buildings and evaluate the likely costs and performance.

The Government is also supporting the uptake of heat pumps and hybrid heat pumps through the Renewable Heat Incentive and the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme. We are continuing to develop our position on the potential role of hybrid heating systems in meeting net zero by 2050 and they have been included in our large scale 'Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project'. The project aims to gather further evidence on how these systems operate in practice, which will provide more in-depth understanding of hybrids' role in decarbonising heating going forwards.

We will be setting out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings in our Heat and Buildings Strategy which we plan to publish in due course.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Sir John Hayes:

[\[111429\]](#)

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.

Paul Scully:

As of 18 October 2020, 1,336,320 applications have been approved for Bounce Back Loans, at a value of £40.20 billion.

■ Business: Coronavirus**John Stevenson:** [\[111478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government plans to issue business guidance on the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown to (a) tradesmen, (b) floor-fitters and (c) similar businesses.

Paul Scully:

Our Other People's Homes safer working guidance was updated on 4 November incorporating the new national restrictions for England.

This guidance can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes.

Colleen Fletcher: [\[111552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses in each sector that have created new jobs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

In response to the covid-19 outbreak, the Office for National Statistics has implemented more rapid fortnightly business impacts surveys to monitor many things, including job-supporting measures including furlough. These can be found published on the ONS website here:

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

Barbara Keeley: [\[113043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November 2020 to Question 110766 on Business: Coronavirus, if his Department will take steps to monitor the number of office-based businesses who are still requiring staff to work from the office during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

When employers consider whether workers should come into the office, this will need to be reflected in the COVID-19 workplace risk assessment and actions taken to manage the risks of transmission in line with this guidance.

The decision to return to the workplace must be made in meaningful consultation with workers (including through trade unions or employee representative groups where they exist). It is vital employers engage with workers to ensure they feel safe returning to work, and they should not force anyone into an unsafe workplace.

Safer working guidance for offices and contact centres can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres. This guide clarifies for employees how they, should they need to, can escalate a concern regarding a return to work.

Anyone who feels they are incorrectly being asked to go into their place of work should contact their employee representative or trade union if they have one, or

contact the Health and Safety Executive on 0300 790 6787 or using the online [working safely enquiry form](#).

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Alex Cunningham:

[111506]

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 deliver and operate Carbon Capture Usage and Storage projects as part of the UK's transition to a net zero carbon economy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Carbon Capture Usage and Storage (CCUS) will be essential to meeting our 2050 net zero target, playing a vital role in levelling up the economy, supporting the low carbon economic transformation of our industrial regions, creating new high value jobs.

Our new CCS Infrastructure Fund will provide at least £800m to support the establishment of CCS in at least two UK sites: the first by the mid-2020s; the second by 2030.

The Government is committed to having a strong, industrialised UK supply chain. We are working with industry to understand how we can build a thriving UK supply chain, drive growth, and seize the commercial opportunities in the UK and abroad.

■ Climate Change Convention

Andrea Leadsom:

[113087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether a further tranche of COP26 funding will be made available to support UK organisations preparing for that conference.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Discussions on the costs for COP26 are currently ongoing, and final budgets are yet to be confirmed.

■ Climate Change Convention: USA

Catherine West:

[113175]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the election of Joe Biden as US President Elect on the COP26 summit.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK welcomes President-elect Biden's commitment to re-join the Paris Agreement and to put the US on a path to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

As the incoming Presidency of the G7 and COP26, we look forward to working with the new US administration to address the urgent challenge of climate change and to encourage countries across the world to increase their climate ambition.

■ Construction: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[111415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to enable construction work to continue during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Construction workers play a crucial role in supporting our public services and providing and maintaining safe, decent homes for people to live in.

The Government has been clear that construction activity can continue during the lockdown, where it can take place safely. The Government has worked with construction firms and other stakeholders to develop guidance on safer working on construction sites, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The industry has also developed Site and Branch Operating Procedures for firms and merchants, as well as guidance for small firms and mineral products suppliers. These products provide advice as to how construction firms can apply the Government's guidance on safer working.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Rachel Reeves:

[113067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which businesses have been awarded a loan under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme since 1 January 2020.

Paul Scully:

The table below shows a breakdown of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme facilities offered as per sector as of 4 October.

CBILS by sector:

SECTOR	VALUE OF LOANS OFFERED (£M)	NUMBER OF LOANS OFFERED	PROPORTION OF OFFERED FACILITIES
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	2,612	10,270	18%
Manufacturing	2,047	7,376	13%
Construction	1,785	7,815	14%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	1,444	6,009	11%

SECTOR	VALUE OF LOANS OFFERED (£M)	NUMBER OF LOANS OFFERED	PROPORTION OF OFFERED FACILITIES
Administrative and Support Service Activities	1,376	6,017	11%
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	1,212	4,494	8%
Information and Communication	615	2,608	5%
Transportation and Storage	500	2,264	4%
Human Health and Social Work Activities	453	2,496	4%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	419	1,558	3%
Real Estate Activities	342	1,244	2%
Financial and Insurance Activities	323	737	1%
Education	273	827	1%
Other Service Activities	232	1,570	3%
Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	196	709	1%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	85	464	1%
Sector not specified	13	33	0%

Details of individual aid awards under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme will be published where required on the European Commission's Transparency Aid Module in due course.

Rachel Reeves:

[\[113068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many times Departmental officials have met with individual businesses awarded support under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme since 1 January 2020.

Paul Scully:

As of 18 October 2020, 73,094 loans totalling £17.16 billion have been approved under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). For commercial confidentiality reasons, the British Business Bank cannot disclose whether businesses are or are not in receipt of support without their approval. As such, we are only aware of businesses that are in receipt of a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan where they have publicly disclosed this information.

The Government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, business representative organisations, and the financial services sector to monitor the implementation of current support and understand whether there is additional need.

■ **Correspondence: Postal Services**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[111544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who are unable to receive letters by post; and whether he has made an assessment of the harms associated with not being able to receive letters by post.

Paul Scully:

The Postal Services Act 2011 requires a six days a week, one price goes anywhere, service for the delivery and collection of letters (and five days a week for parcels) to every address throughout the United Kingdom.

Ofcom, as the UK's designated independent regulator of postal services, monitors the delivery of the universal postal service standards.

■ **Energy Performance Certificates**

Richard Fuller:

[\[112019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to costs to private rented properties for achieving grade C on their Energy Performance Certificates, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of staging that progress in line with economic returns of private rented properties.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The consultation on improving the energy performance of the privately rental homes to EPC band C is open until 30 December 2020. As part of the consultation we are seeking views on affordability and are inviting stakeholders to submit relevant evidence. The Government will set out its response following the closure of the consultation.

■ Energy Supply: Capital Investment and Job Creation

Ruth Edwards: [\[111647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to ensure that Ofgem's Final Determination for investment under RII0-2 will (a) promote investment and (b) create jobs in the energy transmission sector in the years 2021-26.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Network regulation is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator.

Ofgem's Draft Determinations published in July for consultation included upfront allowances of over £7.5bn for the electricity and gas transmission sectors alongside a further £10bn available across all sectors for net zero investment through the price control period of 2021-26. Ofgem are due to publish their Final Determinations for the transmission sectors in December.

■ Fireworks

Jane Stevenson: [\[113226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to reduce the noise limit on fireworks available to the public.

Paul Scully:

The Government has no current plans to lower the legal noise limit of fireworks.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) published its Fireworks Evidence Base on 29 October 2020. This included reviewing existing data and producing a research paper on fireworks noise levels and impacts on health and the environment. This is intended to provide a baseline of current scientific knowledge.

The Fireworks Evidence Base, including noise data, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fireworks-evidence-base>

■ Fireworks: Sales

Mick Whitley: [\[111623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to introduce additional regulations on the sale of fireworks.

Paul Scully:

There is already a comprehensive regulatory framework in place for fireworks that aims 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.

We remain committed to promoting the safe and considerate use of fireworks through the effective legislative framework and through non-legislative measures.

■ Fuel Poverty: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[113164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown on levels of fuel poverty.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We have been working to ensure there are multiple support systems in place for low income and vulnerable households.

In order to reduce the impact of high energy bills we successfully negotiated an agreement with energy suppliers to support consumers impacted by COVID-19. The Green Homes Grant, launched in September 2020, is a £2 billion programme which will help improve the energy efficiency of homes in England. Of this, £1 billion is allocated specifically for low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

In order to protect incomes, we have extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March, and are increasing the third self-employed grant, covering November to January, from 55% to 80% of trading profits.

■ Green Deal Scheme: Complaints

Gavin Newlands:

[\[111567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the role is of the Financial Ombudsman Service in handling complaints received by his Department in relation to the Green Deal.

Gavin Newlands:

[\[111568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the role of the Green Deal Ombudsman is in handling complaints received by him in relation to the Green Deal.

Gavin Newlands:

[\[111569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether people who have sent complaints to his Department on the mis-selling of Green Deal loans by Helms receive direct correspondence from the Financial Ombudsman Service in relation to their case.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

For complaints about mis-selling, the Financial Ombudsman Service is responsible for initial reviews. For many, but not all, complaints about other Green Deal matters, such as installation quality, the Green Deal Ombudsman is contracted to complete initial reviews.

In all cases, decisions regarding whether a breach has occurred and, if so, whether a sanction should be imposed, are the responsibility of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Complainants do not receive direct correspondence from the Financial Ombudsman Service as part of the reviews of complaints submitted to the Secretary of State. In addition to the work it completes on complaints to the Secretary of State, the Financial Ombudsman Service more generally handles Green Deal complaints about financing issues as part of its statutory role under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. Some such complaints may subsequently be referred to the Secretary of State for review and may be the subject of associated correspondence between the Financial Ombudsman Service and the complainant, but such correspondence stands outside of the formal review process.

■ Green Deal Scheme: Misrepresentation

Gavin Newlands: [\[111565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what redress is available for people who have inherited a property associated with a Green Deal loan where there is concern that the person from whom they inherited the property was potentially mis-sold that loan.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Under the Green Deal Framework regulations, loans can be reduced or cancelled where there has been a breach of the relevant rules, and my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State is satisfied that the consumer has suffered, or is likely to suffer, a substantive loss. This applies to any complaint which meets the eligibility requirements regardless of whether it concerns a Green Deal Plan that was in place at a property prior to a complainant inheriting that property.

Gavin Newlands: [\[111566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many complaints he has received in relation to Green Deal mis-selling by Helms where the complainant was not the person in whose name the original credit agreement was made.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department does not record data on the number of complaints about mis-selling of Green Deal Plans by Home Energy & Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS) received from complainants who did not enter the original credit agreement as the property "improver". Complaints to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State can be made under the Green Deal Framework regulations by original improvers or subsequent bill payers (other eligibility criteria must also met).

Gavin Newlands: [\[111570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of correspondence acknowledging receipt of a complaint on Green Deal loan mis-selling has been sent by his Department within 15 days in line with departmental targets.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department does not record data on correspondence acknowledging receipt of a complaint on Green Deal loan mis-selling which has been sent by this Department. Complaints on Green Deal mis-selling can be received through a number of routes, including email, post, and official Department and Ministerial correspondence.

Gavin Newlands:[\[113133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether complaints to his Department or the Green Deal Finance Company on Green Deal mis-selling are restricted by the amount of time elapsed since the signing of an agreement by a customer.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The legislative context within which redress can be sought in regard to mis-selling under the Green Deal is set out in [The Green Deal Framework](#), based on provisions in the Energy Act 2011, Framework Regulations and Code of Practice.

Section 4.9 of the Green Deal Code of Practice lays out the time provisions within which a complaint must be made to be considered eligible. This confirms that a complaint must be made, by any category of person identified in the provisions, within six years of the date on which the alleged breach occurred. There are separate considerations where a complaint concerns matters relevant to specific Guarantees.

The Green Deal Finance Company, as a private company, have their own complaints procedure.

Alan Brown:[\[113145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which legislation protected HELMS customers from Green Deal loan mis-selling; and whether there are time restrictions for those consumers raising complaints to either (a) his Department or (b) the Green Deal Finance Company.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The legislative context within which redress can be sought in regard to mis-selling under the Green Deal is set out in [The Green Deal Framework](#), based on provisions in the Energy Act 2011, Framework Regulations and Code of Practice.

Section 4.9 of the Green Deal Code of Practice lays out the time provisions within which a complaint must be made to be considered eligible. This confirms that a complaint must be made, by any category of person identified in the provisions, within six years of the date on which the alleged breach occurred. There are separate considerations where a complaint concerns matters relevant to specific Guarantees.

The Green Deal Finance Company, as a private company, have their own complaints procedure.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Park Homes**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[112994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 106216 on Green Homes Grant Scheme: Park Homes, what steps he is taking to enable park home owners to comply with the requirement to obtain three qualified TrustMark registered installers under the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme when only two businesses are certified installers; and if he will extend the expiry date of the scheme for park home installations beyond 31 March 2021 in recognition of the delay before park home owners became eligible to apply.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As of 10 November, five TrustMark registered businesses were certified to install measures in park homes. We are aware of the relatively low numbers registered and are working closely with the industry to help more businesses obtain the relevant certifications.

As set out in out the Green Homes Grant scheme [guidance](#), although customers are advised to obtain three quotes, only one is required for application to the scheme.

The Green Homes Grant scheme will be time-limited, to help stimulate the economic recovery and support and create tens of thousands of green jobs. Any potential funding allocations for future years will be considered as part of the spending review.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[113198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support pubs, clubs and breweries affected by the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Paul Scully:

The Government is providing an unprecedented package of support for hospitality businesses including an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 31 March 2021 and grants of up to £3000 per month in addition to loans, business rate holidays and VAT cuts.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[113199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on pubs, clubs and breweries of the ban on off sales during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Paul Scully:

During the new national restrictions in place from 5 November, hospitality venues are permitted to sell alcohol through delivery or via click and collect where remote ordering has been utilised. Off licenses and licensed shops selling alcohol, including breweries, are permitted to remain open.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[113231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the requirement for hospitality businesses to only use click and collect to sell alcohol applies to the sale of non-alcoholic items from those same premises.

Paul Scully:

During the new national restrictions, hospitality venues may continue to offer food and non-alcoholic drink through delivery, takeaway prior to 10pm, and click and collect. Alcohol should only be sold from these venues via delivery or click and collect.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[113232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether hospitality businesses can facilitate the sale of sundry grocery items alongside food for consumption off the premises from (a) inside their existing premises and (b) from outside spaces under their control in a covid-secure way during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Paul Scully:

Under the new national restrictions, hospitality businesses can remain open for takeaway (before 10pm and excluding alcohol), delivery and click and collect. Non-essential retail businesses can also continue to sell goods online for delivery and through click and collect. If a hospitality business is able to trade goods in a COVID-secure manner while following the new national restrictions and all other trade requirements, they may do so.

■ Living Wage

Alison McGovern:

[\[113084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of the planned increase in the National Living Wage from £8.72 to £9.21 per hour in April 2021 on (a) incomes and (b) public finances.

Paul Scully:

The minimum wage rates are set on the expert and independent advice of the Low Pay Commission (LPC). This year, we asked the LPC to recommend the National Living Wage rate which should apply from April 2021 in order to reach two-thirds of median earnings by 2024, taking economic conditions into account.

The Government asks the Low Pay Commission to monitor the labour market and the impacts of the National Living Wage closely, advising on any emerging risks, to ensure that the lowest-paid workers continue to see pay rises without significant risks to their employment prospects.

We will announce the 2021 Minimum Wage rates in due course. A full Impact Assessment estimating the benefits and costs to employers and workers will be published alongside the legislation. We estimated that over 2 million workers

benefitted from the increase earlier this year, which gave a full-time worker on the NLW an increase of £930 over the year.

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Coronavirus**

Catherine West: [\[113176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the UK's ability to manufacture key materials and goods.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Manufacturing key materials and goods is critical for our economy. The Department has been engaging with industry and suppliers throughout the pandemic to understand the impacts on production and what support is needed in order for businesses to remain operational.

We have put in place an unprecedented package of Government support to help manufacturers with business continuity and to enable any businesses that may have had to pause production to get back up and running as soon as they are able. The sector has so far benefitted from £2 billion in Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme; £2.3 billion through the Bounce Back Loan Scheme; and £4.78 billion to manufacturers through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

■ **Shops: Coronavirus**

Jane Stevenson: [\[113227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will class card shops as an essential retailer for the purposes of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

The Government has published details of guidance that sets out the restrictions that certain businesses and venues in England will be required to follow from 5 November. It is for each business to assess whether they are a business required to close having considered the guidance and Regulations.

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

■ **Small Businesses: Coronavirus**

Grahame Morris: [\[113063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2020 to Question 109298 on Small Businesses: Coronavirus, on what date the Government notified the European Commission of its intention to take up that new provision; and what the timetable is for the Commission to provide its approval to the UK Government relating to that provision.

Paul Scully:

The UK authorities submitted a notification to the European Commission, under its Temporary Framework, on 20 October 2020. The notification included a request to take advantage of the new measure to enable greater support to companies facing a decline in turnover during the eligible period of at least 30% compared to the same period of 2019, due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The European Commission is currently considering the notification and will provide a response in due course.

■ Wind Power: Continental Shelf**Alex Cunningham:**[\[111507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to increase employment opportunities for UK workers across the supply chain that will be required to provide an additional 30GW of energy from offshore wind farms on the UK Continental Shelf by 2030.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

On 6 October, the Government set out new plans to make the UK the world leader in clean wind energy – creating jobs, slashing carbon emissions and boosting exports. The Government also announced a commitment to 40GW of offshore wind capacity in the UK by 2030 alongside £160 million being made available to upgrade ports and infrastructure; supporting up to 2,000 construction jobs and enabling the offshore wind sector to support up to 60,000 jobs directly and indirectly by 2030 in ports, factories and the supply chains. The Government also announced a new target for floating offshore wind to deliver 1GW of energy by 2030, which is over 15 times the current volumes worldwide.

The Government recently sought views on strengthening Supply Chain Plan Policy for future CfD rounds, as part of the AR4 consultation. Government is considering the responses to the consultation before considering implications for policy.

These commitments are the first stage outlined as part of the Prime Minister's ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, which will be set out fully later this year. This is expected to include ambitious targets and major investment into industries, innovation and infrastructure that will accelerate the UK's path to net zero by 2050.

CABINET OFFICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[908687\]](#)

What plans the Government has to implement the recommendations of the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia.

Rosie Cooper: [\[908710\]](#)

What plans the Government has to implement the recommendations of the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia.

Chloe Smith:

The Government welcomed the ISC's report on Russia. The Government's response to the report was published on the same day as its release.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[908700\]](#)

What steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure the adequacy of fuel and electricity supplies in the event of no agreement on the future relationship with the EU at the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

The end of the transition period will not alter the fact that our energy system is resilient, and our supplies secure. We are planning extensively for the end of the transition period, alongside industry, the Devolved Administrations, and key delivery partners to ensure energy demands continue to be met.

Navendu Mishra: [\[908706\]](#)

What discussions he has had with private companies providing services across Government on the (a) employment practices and (b) safety of staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

Julia Lopez:

Suppliers have played a vital role in supporting the Government's Covid-19 efforts in addition to delivering their existing public sector contracts.

All suppliers must adhere to Health and Safety legislation, as well as relevant departmental policy when staff are working at Government sites.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[908707\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to help ensure that blind and partially sighted people can vote (a) independently and (b) in private.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to ensuring that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote and has been working with The Royal National Institute of Blind People to improve the voting process for blind and partially sighted people.

■ Cabinet Office: Consultants

Rachel Reeves: [\[113069\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many consultants have been seconded to his Department with security clearance since 1 March 2020.

Rachel Reeves: [\[113070\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many consultants have been seconded to the Treasury with security clearance since 1 March 2020.

Rachel Reeves: [\[113071\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many consultants have been seconded to 10 Downing Street with security clearance since 1 March 2020.

Julia Lopez:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of security clearance are not normally disclosed.

■ Cabinet Office: Senior Civil Servants

Christian Matheson: [\[111564\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November 2020 to Question 102103 on Cabinet Office: Senior Civil Servants, how many expressions of interest were received for the position of Cabinet Secretary.

Julia Lopez:

As stated in my answer of 3 November 2020, in line with previous such appointments, the process was overseen by the First Civil Service Commissioner.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[91841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the weekly totals of covid-19-related deaths in the UK (a) have been and (b) will be published, by (i) age range and (ii) specified serious underlying condition.

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 PQ91841 [PQ91841.pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Social Distancing

Bambos Charalambous: [\[109552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to raise public awareness of the Please Give Me Space visual indicator.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to PQs [45274](#) and [907859](#).

To help the public comply with the latest guidance, [Please Give Me Space](#) cards and badges were created in collaboration with the RNIB, and are available on gov.uk for download and print for those who are exempt from wearing face coverings. The badge and other assets were shared via Government social media channels, with disability charities, and with relevant enforcers of face covering guidelines to raise awareness, such as the police and public transport firms. COVID-19 guidance is published on gov.uk and amplified via our public information campaign.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith: [\[111572\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what evidence his Department used to complete the equality impact assessment ahead of the Government's Voter ID trials.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to my [answer](#) of 22 October.

■ Equality: Training

Sir John Hayes: [\[109159\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government has spent on funding unconscious bias training in the last five years.

Sir John Hayes: [\[109160\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy and effectiveness of unconscious bias training funded by the Government.

Sir John Hayes: [\[109161\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department is making on its review of what future diversity and inclusion learning should be provided as part of a cross-Civil Service learning offer; and what the (a) scope and (b) timetable of that review is.

Julia Lopez:

The Civil Service is committed to being an inclusive workplace where talented individuals can thrive, no matter their background.

The Civil Service is committed to an evidence-based approach to building more inclusive workplaces. We are currently reviewing our training on Diversity & Inclusion to ensure it is based on the best available evidence. Updates will be made in due course.

■ Older People: Coronavirus

Selaine Saxby:

[107140]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of whether elderly people with limited internet access receive up-to-date information about covid-19; and what steps the Government is taking to ensure that information is widely accessible.

Penny Mordaunt:

It is important we reach everyone with public health information in this pandemic.

All new guidance is amplified via our public information campaign, utilising multiple national and local channels including TV, radio, newspapers, out of home and social media to ensure government communications reaches the widest possible audience. In some cases we have used publicly held contact details to contact directly those who may need.

In addition, third parties and local support networks are able to deliver more detailed information in response to bespoke enquiries. We have supported them in doing so by specialist guidance being available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and, in the case of Members of Parliament - daily calls with myself.

■ Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies

Dr Ben Spencer:

[112118]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Government Department's responsibilities does SAGE fall within.

Julia Lopez:

The terms of reference for SAGE can be found here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage>.

SAGE is not, as the terms outline, a membership body and the Chief Scientific Adviser and the Chief Medical Officer will advise on attendance.

■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[111603]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on ensuring veterans can access mental health services when the November 2020 covid-19 restrictions come into effect.

Johnny Mercer:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

Throughout the pandemic, NHS England and NHS Improvement have ensured those who require NHS services have been able to access them as easily and safely as

possible. This includes veteran specific services, such as the Veterans Trauma Network, Transition Intervention and Liaison Service and Complex Treatment Service which continued with the majority of care being delivered through on-line and telephone consultations. Providers continue to look at how face-to-face appointments can be delivered safely whilst maintaining a video and digital offer throughout November 2020.

The charity sector also provides support for veterans seeking support with their mental health and wellbeing. The Government recognises this important role and £10m of additional funding was made available to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust in the Budget specifically for veterans wellbeing support and a further £6m through the COVID-19 Impact Fund. In addition to this the Government has funded research to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of our veterans.

DEFENCE

■ Aircraft Carriers: Deployment

Sir John Hayes:

[\[111419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has made for the Carrier Strike Group deployment in 2021.

James Heapey:

We have yet to announce our destination or programme; planning continues and a statement will be made to this house in due course. This maiden deployment is a key step on the road towards full operational capability: these extraordinary ships will be with us for decades to come, and we are only just beginning to understand their potential. Deploying our sovereign carrier group at range allows us to test and demonstrate the successful cohesion of this complex system of systems. The carrier's convening influence is a powerful symbol of Global Britain and will draw our friends and partners together as we go. There will of course be visits and exercises, and there will also be numerous opportunities for supporting HMG's broader diplomatic and trade agenda.

■ Armed Forces: Muslims

Fleur Anderson:

[\[113240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British born Muslims applied to the armed services in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018 and (d) 2019.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[113241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of British-born Muslims who applied to the armed forces (a) successfully completed their training and (b) served in the (i) British Army, (ii) Royal Air Force, (iii) Royal Navy and (iv) Royal Marines in each year since 2016.

James Heappey:

Defence is dedicated to achieving a more diverse workforce and is undertaking a wide range of activities to increase the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) recruits into the Armed Forces, including through better understanding and greater engagement with BAME communities, reviewing recruitment processes; and better targeted marketing and communications towards potential BAME applicants. The Armed Forces set a target for 2020 that 10 per cent of recruits should be BAME; in the 12 months to 31 March 2020, 11.7 per cent of total intake into the combined UK Regular Forces and Future Reserves 2020 were BAME.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) publishes biannual statistics on diversity declarations for Armed Forces personnel. The latest edition can be found at the following link and provides a detailed breakdown of the strength of the Armed Forces, including by self-declared religion, in each of the requested years:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>. However, it will take time for officials to collate the requested detailed information and I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

■ Armed Forces: Surveillance

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[113200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 107090 on Armed Forces: Surveillance, what the names are of the two specialist units of the armed forces trained to run covert human intelligence sources.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[113201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what guidance his Department has issued on the use by the Armed Forces of covert human intelligence sources who participate in crime; and if he will publish that guidance.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence does not comment on intelligence matters and I am therefore withholding the information as its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[113005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all UK F-35Bs are operating with the same software standard.

Jeremy Quin:

All UK Lightning aircraft software is updated bi-annually to ensure coherence with the Global F-35 Programme, compliance with UK regulations and to deliver incremental capability enhancements to the Front Line.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[113006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all UK currently delivered F-35Bs are fully compatible with carrier operations.

Jeremy Quin:

By December 2020, when the UK declares Initial Operating Capability (Maritime), 17 aircraft will be fully carrier compatible. The remaining four aircraft will have the required modifications completed as part of an ongoing programme of work.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Overseas Aid**

Martyn Day: [\[113158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102833 on Saudi Arabia: Overseas Aid, what the names are of the funding streams through which the Government provides funding to the UK armed forces to provide advice, assistance and training to Saudi Arabia; and how much funding was provided by those funding streams in each of the last four financial years.

James Heapey:

Since 2016, the Ministry of Defence has used the Gulf Strategy Fund, Defence Assistance Fund and Integrated Activity Fund to fund UK armed forces to provide advice, assistance and training to Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, with the limited time at our disposal, we have been unable to calculate accurately the funding streams you have mentioned; however, I will write to the hon. Member to provide a copy of these records as soon as possible.

■ **Teachers: Recruitment**

Anthony Mangnall: [\[112114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his departmental press release of 24 May 2019 on UN peacekeeping operations, what progress he has made in (a) conducting and (b) acting on the results of a study to identify barriers to women joining peacekeeping operations.

James Heapey:

The Department continues to explore options for conducting the UK study into the barriers preventing women from deploying on UN Peacekeeping Operations. The UK currently meets or is close to meeting the UN Secretary-General's Gender Parity targets for 2020. We remain committed to acting fully on our policy commitment; the Gender Barrier Study will provide an evidence base for future initiatives as we work to meet the year-on-year increases for the participation of uniformed women peacekeepers set out by the UN.

■ USA: RAF Croughton

Stephen Timms:

[\[112981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer dated 13 October 2020 to Question 907478 on USA: RAF Croughton, what assessment he has made of the US Government's compliance with obligations under Article II of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement in respect of activities at RAF Croughton.

James Heapey:

The legal status of US military personnel stationed at RAF Croughton is governed by the NATO Status of Forces Agreement 1951 (SOFA), and by the Visiting Forces Act 1952 which was enacted in order to implement relevant provisions of the SOFA in UK domestic law. It is my assessment that the US military personnel stationed at RAF Croughton are in full compliance with the terms of this legal framework.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Cultural Heritage: Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[109778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding from the Culture Recovery Fund has been allocated to the culture and heritage sector in (a) Sussex and (b) Arundel and South Downs constituency.

Caroline Dinenge:

Excluding the BFI awards which are still being processed, across arts and heritage the following sums have been awarded:

1. Awards across Sussex (defined as the counties of East Sussex and West Sussex):
£9.64m (71 awards)
1. Arundel and South Downs constituency specifically: £250,226 (5 awards)

Please note that some awards may be subject to change depending on changing circumstances and need. Geographic allocation is determined by applicant postcode and may not directly relate to where any associated activity occurs.

■ Culture Recovery Fund

Sarah Olney:

[\[113189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when payments for all Culture Recovery Fund awards will be made.

Caroline Dinenge:

Over £500m of the Culture Recovery Fund has been allocated. This is across capital and recovery grants and is in addition to £188m allocated to the devolved administrations as part of the Barnett formula, and £100m for the national cultural institutions and English Heritage Trust.

Repayable finance awards are currently under negotiation, with outcomes expected to be announced in the coming weeks, and part of the £120m capital funding is still to be allocated.

Successful applicants need to formally accept their offer, provide the relevant delivery body with their bank details and request their payment (this includes meeting any payment conditions). Once that's done and there are no issues, payments take 10-15 working days to process.

■ Events Industry: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[113123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the events and exhibition sector in Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

Events businesses have been able to access a number of the Government's support measures throughout this period. In the context of new national restrictions, events businesses and individuals can seek support in the form of various government-backed loans, new business grants and the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes. The recently announced discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant guidance for Local Authorities specifically refers to businesses in the events sector.

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

■ Football: Coronavirus

Stephen Flynn:

[\[110910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much emergency covid-19 funding the Government has provided to (a) professional, (b) semi-professional, (c) amateur and (d) youth football in England since the start of the outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. An income scheme announced in July by the Secretary of State for Local Government, aims to support local authorities who have incurred irrecoverable loss of income from sales, fees and charge which they had reasonably budgeted for. On 22

October, the Government announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres. In addition, Sport England's Community Emergency Fund has also provided £210 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic.

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them.

■ Gyms and Swimming Pools: Coronavirus

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[112023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what evidence informed the decision to close gyms, leisure centres and swimming pools during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of lockdown - and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

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.

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. We have not introduced further exemptions because when you unpick at one activity the effectiveness of the whole package is compromised. As soon as we're in a position to start lifting restrictions, grassroots sports will be one of the first to return.

■ Instagram: Disinformation

Jo Stevens:

[\[113580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to Instagram since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by Instagram.

Jo Stevens:

[\[113581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to Google since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by Google.

Jo Stevens:

[\[113582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pieces of disinformation the Counter Disinformation Unit has reported to YouTube since 1 March 2020; and how many of those disinformation posts have subsequently been removed by YouTube.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. During the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been vitally important that the public has accurate information and DCMS is leading work across Government to tackle disinformation.

The Counter Disinformation Unit brings together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities. The Unit's primary function is to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and impact of disinformation and misinformation regarding Covid-19 and to work with partners to ensure appropriate action is taken. It would not be appropriate for the Unit to provide a running commentary on the amount of misinformation/disinformation seen to date.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been working closely with social media platforms to quickly identify and help them respond to potentially harmful content on their platforms, including removing harmful content in line with their terms and conditions, and promoting authoritative sources of information.

■ **Leisure: Coronavirus**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[110902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional support and guidance to (a) gyms, (b) bowling alleys, (c) dance studios and (d) other sports facilities to ensure that people of all ages are able to have access to the services they need to maintain physical and mental wellbeing during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown period in England.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active.

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. On 22 October, the Government announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres. In addition, Sport England's Community Emergency Fund has also provided £210 million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through this pandemic.

We are continuing to work with organisations to understand what they need and how we may be able to support them.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Adam Afriyie:

[\[110763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the evidential basis for the (a) closure of covid-secure outdoor sporting venues and (b) restriction of (i) tennis, (ii) golf and (ii) swimming lessons; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of those restrictions on the health and wellbeing of people who use those facilities.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of lockdown - and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

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.

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. We have not introduced further exemptions because when you unpick at one activity the effectiveness of the whole package is compromised. As soon as we're in a position to start lifting restrictions, grassroots sports will be one of the first to return.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Nadia Whittome:

[\[112142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) funding and (b) other support for the adoption of survivors of child sexual abuse.

Vicky Ford:

Adopters are legally entitled to an assessment of their needs and their adoptive child's needs, including assessment of need for financial support, therapeutic services, advice and guidance.

Sexual abuse can have both short-term and long-term effects and children and young people may experience a range of issues including: anxiety and depression; post-traumatic stress; feelings of shame and guilt; and relationship problems with family and friends. Therapeutic support can help children recover from their experiences and the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) is available for children who have left care

through adoption and special guardianship to access this kind of support. The types of therapeutic support available through the ASF include play therapy, psychotherapy, family therapy and extensive life story work.

The government has invested significantly in the ASF, which has provided more than £177 million for therapeutic support to over 62,000 families since it launched in 2015. Local authorities and regional adoption agencies also fund other types of support to adoptive families. The government continues to review the support provided to all adoptive children and this issue will be discussed as part of the forthcoming spending review. We have also tasked the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board with improving support to adoptive families.

■ Apprentices

Helen Hayes:

[\[113163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of devolving apprenticeship provision to local and regional government.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships are a national programme which give employers access to high quality skills provision throughout England to meet their current and future skills needs.

Individual employers already have direct control over their apprenticeships, and levy payers are able to use their funds as they choose, either to fund apprenticeships in their own business or in smaller businesses in their supply chain or local area. We will work with employers to improve the transfer process, making it easier for them to find smaller employers to receive transfers and make full use of their levy funds. In doing so we will build on successful regional pilot schemes, such as those by the West Midlands Combined Authority and the London Progression Collaboration, who are supporting local employers in the retail, hospitality, and construction sectors.

■ Children in Care

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[112125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has allocated to the PAUSE scheme in each of the last 10 years.

Vicky Ford:

The Pause scheme received £4.2 million in round one of the department's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (2014-2016) to pilot the programme in 7 sites.

The Pause scheme was then funded a further £6.8 million in round two of the programme (2017-2020) to scale and spread the Pause model to 9 new local authority areas, including to develop and implement a care leaver pilot for young women (aged 16-25) who have been in care and who have experienced one or more children being removed.

In 2020-21, Pause was funded £3.6 million by the department to test a regional approach to the scheme in the North West and North East regions and to implement a single Pause practice in 6 individual local authorities.

■ Free School Meals: Immigrants

Stephen Timms:

[\[112979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer dated 2 November 2020 to Question 106891, whether he plans to consult externally in working with the Home Office on how immigration status and no recourse to public funds interact with free school meals and other educational entitlements; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

We are working with departments across government to evaluate access to free school meals and other educational entitlements for families with no recourse to public funds. In the meantime, the extension of eligibility for free school meals will continue until a decision on long-term eligibility is made. At present there are no plans for a statement to be made.

■ GCE A-level

Dan Jarvis:

[\[113099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with awarding bodies on ensuring that grades awarded to A-level students sitting exams during the autumn 2020 term take into account the atypical number of students sitting those exams in that period.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[113100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with awarding bodies on ensuring that students who have opted to sit exams in October 2020 will be awarded grades that are consistent with those awarded in (a) summer 2020 and (b) summer 2019.

Nick Gibb:

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its interim Chief Regulator, Dame Glenys Stacey, to write to the hon. Member for Barnsley Central and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Music: Private Education

Sarah Champion:

[\[113108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether music tuition in a pupil's home is permitted under the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Nick Gibb:

As outlined in the guidance for education and childcare settings on New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020, out-of-school activities such as private tuition

may continue to operate during the period of national restrictions:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>. This includes 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 could include, for example, private tutors). Providers may continue to operate for face-to-face provision for the duration of the national restrictions.

Where online lessons are not reasonably possible, providers are permitted to offer face-to-face provision in pupils' homes, where it is necessary for them to continue to work.

Tutors that continue to operate face-to-face provision during this period should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in the protective measures for holiday clubs and after-school clubs and other out-of-school clubs for children during the COVID-19 outbreak guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Providers operating out of other people's homes should also implement the guidance on working safely in these environments: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>.

All other out of school activities, not being primarily used by parents for these purposes and that can offer remote education, should close for face-to-face provision for the duration of the national restrictions. This will minimise the amount of mixing between different groups of people, and therefore reduce the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19.

■ Musical Instruments: Private Education

Valerie Vaz:

[113074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Education and Childcare settings New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020 guidance and the updated guidance for full opening of schools, whether private instrumental lessons can take place in (a) teachers' homes, (b) private studios and (c) pupils' homes during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

As outlined in the guidance for education and childcare settings on new national restrictions from 5 November 2020, out-of-school activities such as private tuition may continue to operate during the period of national restrictions:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020#ooss>. Providers of these activities who are operating out of their own homes or private studios should ensure they are only being accessed for face-to-face provision by parents if their primary purpose is registered childcare. If they are providing other activities for children, this should be done only

where it is reasonably necessary to enable parents to work or search for work, to undertake training or education, or for the purposes of respite care.

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, may also continue to operate for face-to-face provision for the duration of the national restrictions. This could include, for example, private tutors.

Where online lessons are not reasonably possible, providers are permitted to offer face-to-face provision in pupils' homes, where it is necessary for them to continue to work.

Tutors that continue to operate face-to-face provision during this period should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in the protective measures for holiday clubs, after-school clubs and other out-of-school clubs for children during the COVID-19 outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Providers operating out of other people's homes should also implement the guidance on working safely in these environments: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>.

All other out of school activities, not being primarily used by parents for these purposes and that can offer remote education, should close for face-to-face provision for the duration of the national restrictions. This will minimise the amount of mixing between different groups of people and therefore reduce the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19.

■ Primary Education

Andrea Leadsom:

[113090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether children in reception year will be able to retake that year in the 2021-22 academic year in the event that they are unable to complete reception in 2020-21 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Schools continue to remain open for all children and young people as they have since the start of the autumn term. Being at school is vital for children's education and their wellbeing. It continues to be the aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time.

The Department does not currently anticipate that children in Reception or any other year group will need to repeat a school year as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is important for parents to remember that all children in any year group will be in the same position. Schools have planned carefully to take this into account in their teaching and support for pupils.

The Department has announced a package of support worth £1 billion to ensure that schools have the support they need to help pupils make up for lost teaching time in the last school year. This package of measures comprises a £650 million universal catch up premium for schools to help them make up for lost teaching time, and a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged pupils.

Once a child has been admitted to a school, it is for the head teacher to decide how best to educate them. It remains possible for head teachers to agree for an individual child to retake a year, if they think it is appropriate.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[113126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of school exclusions.

Nick Gibb:

It is critical for schools to be calm and disciplined environments, for pupils and teaching staff. The Department backs head teachers in using exclusion where warranted. We are clear that there is no right number of exclusions, and permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort. Exclusion from school should not mean exclusion from high-quality education.

The Department is pursuing an ambitious programme of work to improve school behaviour. We are working to improve the availability of good alternative provision, so that permanently excluded children, and children at risk of exclusion, receive high-quality education and support suited to their needs. This includes a £10 million investment in behaviour hubs, which will enable schools and multi-academy trusts with exemplary behaviour cultures and practices to work in partnership with those that want to improve pupil behaviour. We are also working with Ofsted to eliminate on off-rolling.

The Department will also revise guidance on exclusions to make it clearer and more consistent, so that head teachers have the information they need to use exclusion properly and proportionately.

■ Schools: Bereavement Counselling

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[111541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the services available in schools for children who experience a bereavement.

Vicky Ford:

It is for schools to decide what support to offer to their pupils, including for bereavement, and we do not collect detailed information on what schools provide. However, the government remains committed to promoting and supporting the mental health of children and young people. Access to mental health support, including bereavement support is more important than ever during the COVID-19 outbreak and

the department has taken action to ensure schools and colleges are equipped to support children and young people.

As children and young people return to school, staff need to be equipped to understand that some of them may have experienced bereavement. Our guidance signposts further support and resources, including MindEd, which has specific material on bereavement and dealing with death and loss. Further information can be found here: <https://www.minded.org.uk/>. Our remote learning guidance also signposted online support from the Childhood Bereavement Network and their website, which can be found here: <http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>. This was supported by webinars over the summer, which reached thousands of school and college staff.

Additionally, we are investing £8 million in the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, which will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The programme is funding expert advisers in every area of England to train and support schools and colleges during the autumn and spring terms. The training includes specific examples of supporting bereaved children.

Of course, schools and colleges are not mental health professionals, and it is important that more specialist support is available for children and their families. All NHS mental health trusts have ensured that there are 24/7 open access telephone lines to support people of all ages. Public Health England and Health Education England have also developed advice and guidance for parents and professionals on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes a specific section on dealing with bereavement and grief. Advice and guidance for this is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>.

We have also provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities, including charities like Young Minds, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

In the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams linked to schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Margaret Greenwood:

[110844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2020 to Question 104751 on Schools: Coronavirus, if he will publish local data on pupil attendance on a monthly basis.

Margaret Greenwood: [110845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2020 to Question 104751, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary, (b) secondary and (c) special schools that are closed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak in the latest period for which information is available.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is constantly reviewing the content of its publications. The final decision on the publication of official statistics lies with the head of profession for statistics in the Department. Announcements about future content will be made through the official statistics release page, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>.

The number of primary, secondary and special schools closed as a result of COVID-19 is published regularly. The most recent publication can be found at:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Stephen Hammond: [113038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure disinfectant products being used in educational establishments meet the required high clinical standards and are effective against covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

The measures set out in the guidance for safe working in education provide a framework for leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for children, pupils, students and staff. This guidance can be found at:

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

All elements of the system of controls are essential, and all educational establishments must cover each of them. Due to the range of educational establishments, from schools to colleges, the implementation of the requirements will differ based on their individual circumstances. These controls include: enhanced cleaning measures, including more frequent cleaning of rooms and shared areas that are used by different groups; cleaning frequently touched surfaces; and using standard cleaning products, such as regular detergents and bleach.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Daisy Cooper: [111626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to classify UK nationals resident in the EU as home students for purposes of higher education fees at UK universities after the end of the transition period.

Michelle Donelan:

UK nationals living in the European Economic Area or Switzerland at the end of the transition period, and who wish to study in England, will continue to be eligible for home fee status and student support from Student Finance England for courses starting up to 7 years after the end of the transition period.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Apprentices****Robert Halfon:**[\[74515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reach the public sector apprenticeship target.

Victoria Prentis:

In Defra group, we have taken the following steps towards the public sector apprenticeship target.

Defra group has recently reactivated its 'Early Talent' Strategy for 2020/21 and is intending to increase our activities around the following four themes:

- a) Increasing the use of apprenticeships within external recruitment
- b) Promoting the use of apprenticeships to support development of existing staff
- c) Increasing and maximising the use of the levy
- d) Using targeted apprenticeship recruitment to improve the diversity of our workforce

We have identified a number of levers that can be used to achieve the above and these are actively being discussed within the business, for example by: building an apprenticeship option into all new external recruitment activity; identifying executive sponsors; establishing a robust approach to learning and development; the creation of apprenticeship networks; and seeking to convert other early talent pipelines such as internships into apprenticeships.

We continue to enhance the information and tools available to line managers to improve understanding. For example, within recruitment processes we have introduced the use of Interactive Candidate Packs, appropriate selection processes such as Success Profiles, online advertising, case studies and trained selection panels.

While there are a number of standards that we can actively use, given the unique nature and breadth of our activities in Defra group, we continue to explore and invest in trailblazer activity.

Defra group has been focused on delivery against EU exit requirements and more recently COVID-19. Defra remains committed to the Civil Service Apprenticeship Strategy and is looking to increase our use of apprenticeships across Defra group over the next 12 months.

■ Fisheries: Greenland and Iceland**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**[\[113029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which species of fish are referred to in the Bilateral Fisheries Memoranda with (a) Greenland and (b) Iceland; and what effect those agreements have on fishing quotas.

Victoria Prentis:

The aims of the bilateral Memoranda of Understanding with Greenland and Iceland are to promote discussion and cooperation on fisheries issues with both of the two countries. Fishing opportunities form no part of either of these Memoranda.

Accordingly, no species of fish are referred to and neither Memorandum has any effect on fishing quotas.

■ Flood Control: Finance**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[113196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 104127 on property level flood resilience grants, how many Risk Management Authorities have developed local Property Flood Resilience grant schemes and applied to Regional Flood and Coastal Committees for a contribution towards their cost through local-levy or grant-in-aid.

Rebecca Pow:

In England, 46 Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) have developed Property Flood Resilience (PFR) schemes with an element of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant-in-Aid or levy funding within the current investment period (2015-2021).

Elements of PFR work may also be carried out within wider flood risk management schemes. However, it is not currently possible to readily identify the number of additional RMAs that have done this.

■ Floods: Building Regulations**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[113195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 104129 on Floods: Building Regulations, if his Department will work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to update British Standard 85500:2015 on flood resilient construction for new buildings and retrofits for existing buildings to make it more explicit for the reinstatement of flood-damaged properties.

Rebecca Pow:

The British Standards Institute is independent of Government and reviews its standards every five years. There is a consultation in progress as to whether to proceed with a review of BS85500:2015, which is due to close on 22 November.

Defra and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) keep in regular contact on these matters. MHCLG keeps building regulations under review.

■ **Plastics: Pollution**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[113020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105307 on Symphony Environmental: Plastics, what the Government's policy is on plastic which escapes into the open environment which cannot be collected.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[113021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105307 on Symphony Environmental: Plastics, what estimate he has made of the amount of non-biodegradable plastic which has escaped into the open environment in England and its territorial waters in the last 12 months.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. Our priority is preventing plastic from entering the marine or terrestrial environment, and our focus is on creating a circular economy. The UK is recycling more than ever, achieving a 46% plastic packaging recycling rate in 2017, and the Government is committed to minimising the movement of waste for disposal elsewhere. Through our Resources & Waste Strategy we have committed to take action to help stimulate investment in domestic reprocessing and recycling infrastructure. This includes through new policies such as extended producer responsibility and deposit return schemes for drinks containers (subject to further evidence and analysis); raising recycling targets for packaging across a number of materials and waste streams to increase the amount and quality of recycling and improve environmental outcomes.

The Government does not hold data that differentiates between non-biodegradable and biodegradable plastic litter. However, the UK does collect data on the quantity and type of marine litter in our waters, including data on seafloor litter, floating litter and beach litter, following methods agreed through the OSPAR Convention's monitoring and assessment programmes. Data is available through the Marine Online Assessment Tool: <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/>. This data is used to help us monitor the levels and trends of plastic pollution and inform our decisions on how to tackle marine litter.

We also published the Litter Strategy for England in April 2017, setting out our aim to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering within a generation. The Litter Strategy brings together communities, businesses, charities and schools to bring about real change by focusing on three key themes: education and awareness; improving enforcement; and better cleaning and access to bins. A copy of the Litter

Strategy can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england.

■ Symphony Environmental: Plastics

Theresa Villiers: [\[113022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105307 on Symphony Environmental: Plastics, for what reason the Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee did not hold discussions with the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association as part of that review; and if they will do so now.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee is an independent scientific advisory committee. We tasked them to conduct a literature review of the published scientific literature. Stakeholder engagement was therefore not part of this process.

Theresa Villiers: [\[113023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105307 on Symphony Environmental: Plastics, if he will work with the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association to review existing standards for the verification of oxo-biodegradable plastics to reduce confusion in the marketplace.

Theresa Villiers: [\[113024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105307 on Symphony Environmental: Plastics, if he will prohibit the description of plastic as compostable if it is the type of plastic required by European Standard EN13432 to convert almost entirely into CO₂ and not into compost.

Rebecca Pow:

EN 13432:2000 is an industry-derived harmonised EU standard which lays down minimum requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation. It is a standard that has been adopted by national standards bodies in many of the EU Member States. In the UK it is published as BS EN 13432 by the British Standards Institution. Only packaging which has passed relevant tests and assessments can carry the standard. It has not been adopted into UK legislation.

Turning to standards and biodegradability more broadly, we are concerned that, in the absence of robust standards, claims about the biodegradability of plastic-based products cannot be verified leading to potential confusion in the market place, possible increased levels of consumption and potential environmental harm at the point of disposal. Furthermore, concerns persist that plastics which are claimed to be biodegradable, if littered or otherwise released into the environment in an uncontrolled way, may not degrade quickly or at all, and they can only be composted if they meet relevant standards.

As a consequence of these concerns, the Government published a call for evidence in July 2019 to help consider the development of standards or certification criteria for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics as well as to better understand their effects on the environment and our current waste system. The call for evidence closed on 14 October 2019 and we are grateful for the responses submitted to us by industry and others. We are currently analysing the responses received to inform future policy and will publish a response to the call for evidence by the end of the year.

We appreciate the engagement of industry in the call for evidence and welcome further engagement in future consultations and policy development as our work develops.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Antarctic: Marine Protected Areas

Luke Pollard: [\[111616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the (a) Chinese and (b) Russian Ambassadors to the UK on support for the creation of new Marine Protected Areas around Antarctica.

Luke Pollard: [\[111617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made for the implications for his policies on the revision of the Antarctic Treaty of the decision by China and Russia to refuse the creation of new Marine Protected Areas around Antarctica.

Luke Pollard: [\[111618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he will have with his (a) Chinese and (b) Russian counterparts on the creation of Marine Protected Areas around Antarctica before the next round of talks on the revision of the Antarctic Treaty.

James Duddridge:

The Antarctic Treaty, its Protocol on Environmental Protection and the Convention of the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) have indefinite durations.

Three large-scale Marine Protected Area (MPA) proposals are under consideration by the CAMLR Commission, in East Antarctica, the Weddell Sea and the Antarctic Peninsula. The UK is co-sponsor of the first two and has contributed significant scientific input to the ongoing development of the latter. There was little opportunity to discuss the MPA proposals at this year's CAMLR Commission meeting, which was held virtually between 27 and 30 October. Nevertheless, around three-quarters of the Commission members spoke positively about making progress on further MPA designations. Russia and China continued to express their reluctance to agree the

MPA proposals. Many Commission members, including the UK, have spoken directly to Russia and China and will continue to do so, both through their CCAMLIR delegations and directly via diplomatic posts, to press for progress on the designation of MPAs in the CCAMLIR area.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Jim Shannon:

[\[111525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the report by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe entitled OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic, published on 17 July 2020.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomes this report published by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). We strongly support the work of ODIHR, including the efforts it has made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is vital that all participating States take responsible action in line with the OSCE's comprehensive body of principles and commitments.

The challenges the world faces in responding to COVID-19 are unprecedented and the exceptional measures needed to combat it will have profound effects on individuals and societies. But it is vital that any exceptional measures are lawful, proportionate, limited and time-sensitive; both as a matter of international human rights law and national law. States' response to the COVID-19 pandemic must also take into account the specific needs and experiences of marginalised and vulnerable groups, on whom the pandemic has the greatest effect, and it is imperative that States respect their commitments to the core values of human rights, democracy and rule of law as they address this crisis. The UK Government is committed to protecting and respecting human rights and we have a longstanding tradition of respecting these values and fulfilling our domestic and international human rights obligations.

■ **Democracy and Human Rights**

Jim Shannon:

[\[111524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 September 2020 to Question 87549 on Democracy and Human Rights, whether his Department has formal mechanisms for incorporating civil society input when preparing his Department's Human Rights and Democracy reports and briefings.

Nigel Adams:

We regularly engage with a wide range of civil society organisations globally, including through regular meetings with the Foreign Secretary's Advisory Group on Human Rights. We value the contributions of civil society organisations in support of

our foreign policy and development priorities, including on the issues highlighted in our Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report. The 2020 Report will be published in 2021.

■ **Developing Countries: Sanitation**

Sarah Olney: [\[113191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prioritise water, sanitation and hygiene in the overseas development budget.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is taking steps to prioritise water, sanitation and hygiene in the overseas aid budget. The UK is on track to help over 60 million people gain access to a water supply or basic sanitation by the end of 2020. This builds on the achievement of our earlier targets which involved reaching 64.7 million people with water or sanitation by 2015. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has funded new programmes across a wide range of countries, including partnership with the private sector, on improving hand hygiene to help tackle COVID-19. We will look to build on this experience in the COVID-19 recovery phase.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[113193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his Answer to Question 109548 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff, whether details of proposed restructures have been presented to staff of his Department.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[113194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether any proposed restructure of his Department will result in a reduction in the number of director roles.

Nigel Adams:

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

■ **Independent Commission for Aid Impact**

Layla Moran: [\[113209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the period to submit evidence to the review of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact is limited to two weeks.

Wendy Morton:

This is a short departmental review. The Review Team is consulting stakeholders including the International Development Committee, civil society, foreign policy professionals, and other government departments. In order to ensure as broad a consultation as possible in the short timeframe, the Review Team is also inviting written input for a limited period.

■ **Jonathan Taylor****Sarah Champion:**[\[113115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has responded to the Croatian supreme court's request for the Government to make an intervention in Jonathan Taylor's case.

Wendy Morton:

Mr Taylor appealed to the Croatian Supreme Court against his extradition. It confirmed that the correct process was not followed at the initial hearing - under EU law, the first instance Court should have enquired whether, as a UK national, the UK wished to extradite him. The National Crime Agency responded to this request that they had no outstanding case against Mr Taylor and therefore did not seek his extradition. There was no other request to the UK from the Supreme Court.

■ **Members: Correspondence****Maria Eagle:**[\[113000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood of 1 April 2020 and subsequent requests for a reply in respect of her constituent.

James Duddridge:

A response was sent on 16 April 2020, and has now been resent as a courtesy.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Peace Negotiations****Layla Moran:**[\[113210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK vetoed a proposal by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs at the UN Security Council on a ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh at the most recent UN Security Council meeting.

Wendy Morton:

The UK did not veto a proposal by the Co-Chairs regarding a UN Security Council Presidential Statement on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Regrettably, although the UN Security Council was united in seeking an end to the conflict, members were unable to reach an agreed version of the text.

■ Nigeria: Violence

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[111471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people reported to have been killed by police and military personnel during the recent End Sars protests in Nigeria.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[111472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in Nigeria on the reported killing of protesters in Lagos, Nigeria by police and military personnel on the 20 October 2020.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned by violence during protests in Lagos and other major cities in Nigeria, which tragically claimed lives. Our thoughts are with the families of all those affected. Reports of the numbers killed in Lagos on 20 October vary and we have not been able to verify their accuracy.

The Foreign Secretary issued a statement on 21 October calling for an end to the violence and for the Nigerian Government to urgently investigate reports of brutality by its security forces and hold those responsible to account. I tweeted on 21 October, encouraging the Nigerian authorities to restore peace and address concerns over brutality towards civilians. I reiterated these messages when I spoke to Foreign Minister Onyeama on 23 October. The British High Commissioner in Abuja has also raised the protests, including incidents in Lagos, with representatives of the Nigerian Government and will continue to do so. We welcome the establishment of judicial panels of inquiry to investigate alleged incidents of brutality by the security services. It is vital these panels receive full police and military cooperation. They must investigate all incidents, including those in Lagos, fully. I shared these messages in a tweet on 29 October.

■ Overseas Aid

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[110777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of UK Official Development Assistance was spent in (a) Least Developed Countries, (b) Lower Middle Income Countries and (c) Upper Middle Income Countries in Asia in 2019.

James Cleverly:

The table below sets out UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend in Least Developed Countries, Lower Middle Income Countries and Upper Middle Income Countries in Asia as a proportion of total UK ODA.

	TOTAL ODA COUNTRY SPEND IN ASIA, 2019 £M	AS A % OF TOTAL UK ODA*
Least Developed Countries	£1,016	6.7%
Lower Middle Income countries	£937	6.2%
Upper Middle Income Countries	£328	2.2%

Source: Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2019,

* please note the Statistics on International Development publication calculates income group spend as a proportion of ODA assigned to a specific country rather than total ODA

Jim Shannon:

[\[111521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of OECD development assistance committee rules on development assistance.

James Cleverly:

The Official Development Assistance (ODA) rules enable a broad range of activities to be defined as ODA and the UK uses the full scope of the rules to address evolving development challenges. The UK has led the way in working with others to modernise the rules.

We are looking at how our aid budget can be used most effectively in our national interest through the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

■ Overseas Aid: Gulf States

Martyn Day:

[\[113154\]](#)

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, how many projects delivered through the Integrated Activity Fund (a) were and (b) were not subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment in each of the financial years (i) 2016-17 and (ii) 2017-18.

James Cleverly:

Details of Overseas Security and Justice Assessments for those years is not held centrally.

Martyn Day:

[\[113155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 106366 on Overseas Aid, how

many projects were solely delivered in (a) Bahrain, (b) Saudi Arabia, (c) Kuwait, (d) UAE (e) Oman and (f) Qatar under the Integrated Activity Fund for the financial year 2017-18.

James Cleverly:

15 projects and programmes were delivered solely in these individual countries.

Martyn Day:

[\[113156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 106364 on Overseas Aid: Gulf States, how many projects were applied for by his Department under the Integrated Activity Fund in the financial years (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19 and (d) 2019-20; and what the (i) allocated budget and (ii) actual spending was for each of those projects in each of those financial years.

James Cleverly:

We do not disclose information related to individual IAF projects to maintain the confidence and confidentiality of our Gulf partners.

■ **Pakistan: Educational Institutions**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[113239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in Pakistan on returning to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community educational institutions that were nationalised by the Pakistani Government.

Nigel Adams:

The UK remains deeply concerned by reports of discrimination and violence against religious communities in Pakistan, including against the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The Minister of State for South Asia spoke at the launch event of the APPG for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's Report on the 21 July and expressed the UK's deep concern regarding discrimination and violence against Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan.

We engage at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority religious communities, including the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The Minister for South Asia, raised our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief, including inclusion and tolerance in education, with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 19 October. On 1 October, The Minister for South Asia met with Pakistan's Minister for Education, Mr Shafqat Mahmood, and on 8 September with the Governor of Punjab, Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar, to discuss inclusive and tolerant education.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Human Rights**

Chris Law:

[\[111562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will make it its policy to withdraw from the upcoming G20 in Saudi Arabia

unless that country releases (a) human rights (b) women's rights and (c) senior political detainees.

Chris Law:

[\[111563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he plans to hold with his Saudi counterpart prior to the G20 Summit in Riyadh on the release of (a) Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, (b) Prince Turki bin Abdullah and (c) other political detainees.

James Cleverly:

The UK will participate in the G20 Summit, which is likely to focus on health, the global economic recovery and wider global challenges (including climate change, trade and development). It is a key part of international planning for a sustainable recovery from coronavirus. As current G20 President, Saudi Arabia will play a vital role in coordinating the global health and economic response. We hope that the international platform provided by the G20 Presidency encourages continued progress on domestic reforms.

Our close relationship with Saudi Arabia allows us to raise our concerns about human rights, including on political detainees, in private and in public. We have expressed significant concerns about reports of continuing arrests and arbitrary detentions in Saudi Arabia. We raise concerns about individual cases regularly, using a range of Ministerial and diplomatic channels, including our Embassy in Riyadh. The UK signed a statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 15 September. It noted our human rights concerns in Saudi Arabia, regretted the continued detention of at least five women's human rights defenders, arrested in 2018, and called for the release of all political detainees. We continue to raise concerns at all levels and are monitoring the situation closely.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Overseas Aid**

Martyn Day:

[\[113157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 102833 on Saudi Arabia: Overseas Aid, what the names are of the funding streams through which the Government implements projects that involve working with organisations in Saudi Arabia; and how much funding was provided by those funding streams in each of the last four financial years.

James Cleverly:

A number of funding streams are available to implement projects in Saudi Arabia. Collecting information on each funding stream available across Government will take more time; it is therefore not possible to provide this information in the time available. Once my officials have collected the information, I will write to the Honourable Member with further details.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[113119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the expiry of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 40/1 in March 2021, what steps the Government, in its role as leader of the Core Group on Sri Lanka, plans to take at the forthcoming UN Human Rights Council session in March 2021 to renew the international focus on impunity for human rights violations and attacks on the rule of law in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has long supported efforts to promote peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka, including in our role as penholder on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). We firmly believe that UNHRC resolution 30/1, and its successor resolutions 34/1 and 40/1, remain the best framework for establishing truth and achieving justice and lasting reconciliation following the conflict in Sri Lanka. We continue to encourage and support Sri Lanka to deliver on the commitments it made to the UNHRC through these resolutions.

We are concerned about the Government of Sri Lanka's decision to withdraw support for the UN resolution, and have made this clear in statements delivered on behalf of the Core Group on Sri Lanka at the UNHRC in February, June and September. These statements reiterated our ongoing commitment to justice and accountability for victims of conflict and human rights violations, and to lasting reconciliation. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised these concerns on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, most recently during calls on 4 and 5 November respectively. The Foreign Secretary also underlined the importance of accountability and reconciliation when he spoke to Foreign Minister Gunawardena in May.

Ahead of the March 2021 session of the UNHRC, we will continue to engage with the Government of Sri Lanka to underline the importance we attach to this issue. We will also continue to work with our international partners and with the HRC on how best to take forward this longstanding priority for the UK.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[113120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government is working with other states on (a) a new Human Rights Council resolution on Sri Lanka that ensures continued monitoring by the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights and (b) a mechanism to gather and preserve evidence of human rights violations in Sri Lanka at the forthcoming HRC in March 2021, in response to the Government of Sri Lanka's rejection of the existing consensus process on transitional justice, truth, and reconciliation under resolutions 30/1, 34/1 and 40/1.

Nigel Adams:

The UK firmly believes that the UN Human Rights Council resolution 30/1, and its successor resolutions 34/1 and 40/1, remain the best framework for establishing truth and achieving justice and lasting reconciliation following the conflict in Sri Lanka. We continue to encourage and support Sri Lanka to deliver on the commitments it made to the UNHRC through the resolutions. We believe that the preservation of progress to date, including the gathering of evidence, is important for future reconciliation and accountability. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised human rights concerns on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, most recently on 4 and 5 November respectively. At the March 2021 session of the UNHRC we will continue to work with our international partners to take forward this longstanding priority for the UK.

■ Sri Lanka: Overseas Trade**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[113117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the new trade envoy to Sri Lanka on ensuring that future trade agreements between the UK and Sri Lanka support the UK's policy on accountability and justice for human rights abuses in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

Sri Lanka is a valuable trading partner for the UK. Both countries have expressed a mutual commitment to identifying and reducing barriers to trade and are actively seeking ways to further enhance our trading relationship. The UK's new trade envoy to Sri Lanka will play an important role in supporting this. The UK has long supported efforts to promote peace, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, including through our work with the Core Group on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council. We regularly raise the importance of human rights and good governance alongside trade and other issues as part of our wide-ranging discussions with the Government of Sri Lanka. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised both human rights and trade on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, most recently during calls on 4 and 5 November. Human rights in Sri Lanka has been, and will continue to be, a longstanding priority for the UK.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Blood Tests****Sarah Owen:**[\[109700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the supply of routine blood tests.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that at no point have urgent blood tests been delayed or unavailable due to the reported distribution issue.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to ensure all shortage items are supplied promptly and that delivery schedules are returned to normal. They are working closely with Roche Diagnostics, and will continue to do so until all routine services have resumed, and any backlog of testing has been worked through.

■ Blood: Screening**Helen Hayes:**[\[104133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the adequacy of provision for blood tests in (a) Lambeth, (b) Southwark, (c) London and (d) England.

Helen Hayes:[\[104134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he is having with Roche Diagnostics on provision of blood tests in South East London; and what steps is he taking to increase the capacity of blood testing services in that area.

Helen Hayes:[\[104135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department made of the performance of Roche Diagnostics in delivering blood testing for NHS England; and what the (a) key performance indicators and (b) penalties are in NHS England's contract with that company to deliver those services.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 October 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have been meeting with the senior management team at Roche regularly, including representatives of the Department and the devolved administrations. A daily review of every pathology network in England, including South East London, takes place, with urgent issues raised directly to Roche for prioritisation.

The National Health Service's commercial relationship with Roche is between pathology networks or individual NHS trusts and foundation trusts and the supplier. Key Performance Indicators and contract penalties sit within those individual, local contracts. NHS England and NHS Improvement are providing support to pathology networks to ensure any local contractual terms and conditions are applied correctly in

light of the current incident. NHS England and NHS Improvement, along with counterparts in the devolved administrations, are working closely with Roche on the implementation and delivery of a recovery plan to restore normal supply to the pathology networks.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[106955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information he holds on the number of routine blood tests that have been delayed as a result of the distribution issues reported by Roche Diagnostics; what (a) steps he is taking and (b) the timeframe is to tackle that backlog; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The Department does not hold information on routine blood test delays. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that at no point have urgent blood tests been delayed or unavailable due to the distribution issue.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to ensure all shortage items are supplied promptly and that delivery schedules are returned to normal. They are working closely with Roche Diagnostics, and will continue to do so until all routine services have resumed, and any backlog of testing has been worked through.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[107707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many individuals have received alerts from the NHS covid-19 app related specifically to a venue they have visited and checked into as required, since the app went live on 24 September 2020.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Airports**

Alex Sobel:

[\[99725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people returning from the EU have been given (a) temperature checks and (b) other covid-19 tests at UK airports in the last three months.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[110730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidential basis for (a) prohibiting two people playing golf on a public golf course and (b) allowing two people to walk a dog on a public footpath during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Evidence is clear that action is needed on a national scale to suppress the spread of the virus. We have introduced national restrictions to reduce social contact across England. This includes the closure of most businesses and venues, except for essential retail. It is therefore necessary for sports facilities, such as golf courses, to close. Whilst these facilities are closed, it remains important for wellbeing to be able to exercise and enjoy outdoor recreation safely, and that is why individuals can continue to do this in public outdoor places under the new restrictions. However, people are advised to remain as local as possible, to act responsibly, and limit transmission risk wherever possible, including by ensuring social distancing with anyone they do not live with.

■ Coronavirus: Food**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[97596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) cases of and (b) deaths from covid-19 have been recorded in food factories in England to date.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Data on the number of cases of COVID-19 in relation to food factories in England is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Funerals and Weddings**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[111411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the reasons are for not permitting the same number of people to attend weddings as are permitted to attend funerals under the covid-19 restrictions; on what evidence this policy was based; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: We recognise that both weddings and funerals are significant events which are incredibly important for those involved. Allowing funerals will allow the bereaved to mourn appropriately while minimising the spread of the virus. People cannot choose when they need to commemorate the death of a loved one.

The scientists have made it clear that the more you break the chains of transmission the more you reduce spread of the virus. These measures are designed to limit the number of interactions that people have and therefore reduce the risk 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. We continue to keep these restrictions under constant review and will ensure they remain proportionate to the threat to public health posed by COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Laboratories**Justin Madders:** [\[87567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the location is of each laboratory engaged in processing tests for covid-19; and how many tests were processed at each of those laboratories in each month since April 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2020]: The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Portsmouth**Stephen Morgan:** [\[87632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people requesting a covid-19 test in Portsmouth have been instructed to visit a test centre in excess of 50 miles away in the latest period for which figures are available.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not publish data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Gill Furniss:** [\[68397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many requests for coronavirus tests were made to the (a) NHS website and (b) 111 phone line in June 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 July 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[99641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have been ordered by (a) gender and (b) age category in the latest period for which that data is available; and if he will place a copy of that data in the Library.

Helen Whately:

Data is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Southend**Sir David Amess:** [\[91563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tests the Southend covid-19 testing centres at (a) Short Street and (b) Southend Airport (i) have the capacity to carry out and (ii) are carrying out.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Students

Rachael Maskell: [\[86103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the turn around time of covid-19 testing results from the point of contact for (a) home testing kits for students and (b) local testing centres.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Dementia: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [\[109514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the current level of risk from covid-19 to people living with dementia; and what steps is he taking to ensure guidance is reviewed in light of (a) Tier 2 restrictions, (b) Tier 3 restrictions, (c) any planned national restrictions.

Helen Whately:

The medical conditions used to identify those individuals at the highest risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 were agreed by the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers. Dementia is not included in the clinically extremely vulnerable list due to the varied presentation and severity of the condition.

Shielding was a very restrictive measure with negative consequences for many people, and the Government does not want to advise anyone to follow these measures if it is not necessary. However, clinicians in the National Health Service are able to identify any patient as clinically extremely vulnerable, based on clinical judgement and an assessment of their needs. The clinically extremely vulnerable conditions list is regularly reviewed in light of the latest scientific evidence.

■ Hospitals: Young People

Stuart Anderson: [\[72262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure a successful transition of young people from children's hospital services to adult's hospital services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working with key stakeholders during the COVID-19 outbreak to ensure that children and young people continue to access high quality care

On 16 March 2020 NHS England and NHS Improvement released clinical guidance for managing paediatric patients during the COVID-19 pandemic that included principles set out in the NHS Long Term Plan for moving to a 0-25 age model of care and supporting older patients in children's units if required.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Andrew Percy:

[\[109286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to review the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) across England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are committed to expanding all age-mental health services through the NHS Long Term Plan – this includes services for children and young people.

Through the Long Term Plan, we are investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year into all age mental health services by 2023/24. This funding underpins our aim for an additional 345,000 children and young people every year to access support through National Health Service-funded services or school- and college-based mental health support teams, if they need it.

We remain committed to implementing the core proposals of the children and young people's mental health Green Paper, including the introduction of senior leads in mental health and mental health support teams in schools and colleges, and the piloting of a four-week waiting time for specialist NHS services.

■ Mental Illness: Discrimination

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[109537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the mental health campaign, Time to Change on tackling stigma and discrimination; and if the Government will provide further funding for the continuation of that campaign's work.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Time to Change campaign has helped transform the national conversation around mental health and successfully changed the attitudes of 5.4 million people towards mental illness since 2007. A copy of the Time to Change Social Impact report for 2019/20 is available at the following link:

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/about-us/our-impact> Since 2011, the Department has provided over £30 million of funding to the campaign. The current phase of the campaign ends on the 31 March 2021 and we have no plans to provide further funding for the campaign.

The Government is committed to addressing mental health inequalities, stigma and discrimination. Every Government department, as well as major corporations, have made a Time to Change Pledge to continue challenging mental health stigma and the inequalities experienced by people with mental illness.

■ NHS: Negligence

Jim Shannon: [\[110825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's has a five-year strategy for tackling medication errors and medication-related harms in NHS England.

Jim Shannon: [\[110826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the Government's progress in meeting the aims of the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge to halve severe avoidable medication-related harms by 2022 compared to 2017 levels.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service approach to improving patient safety overall is set out in the ten-year NHS Patient Safety Strategy, which covers a range of initiatives that will have an impact on patient safety, including medication safety.

Additional steps taken specific to medication safety include supporting the adoption of electronic systems for prescribing and medicines administration in NHS hospitals which reduce the risk of medication errors in hospital and commissioning a report to support safety improvement in overprescribing/problematic polypharmacy.

In response to the World Health Organization Global Patient Safety Challenge, the Medicines Safety Improvement Programme was established. In 2017, the Department established a Short Life Working Group to advise on a programme to improve safety in use of medication, including the best way to measure progress. A review of progress against their recommendation is being conducted on behalf of the National Director of Patient Safety and is expected to report to the Medicines Safety Improvement Board in December.

■ Social Services: Disability

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[94588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to appoint a policy lead in his Department for working age disabled social care to (a) engage with stakeholders and (b) develop an action plan to tackle the (i) effects of the covid-19 outbreak and (ii) long terms reform of disabled social care.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[95150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will nominate a policy lead in his Department for working age social care who can engage with stakeholders on an action plan which assesses the effect of covid-19 on disabled people and their families.

Helen Whately:

The Department frequently engages with social care stakeholders including those who provide care to working age disabled people and those who receive this care or

their representatives. For example, officials participate in fortnightly webinars with learning disability and autism stakeholders to discuss the response to COVID-19.

The 'Adult Social Care Winter Plan 2020 to 2021', includes support and guidance for this part of the social care sector. The Winter Plan drew on recommendations from the social care COVID-19 taskforce, which was in turn informed by advisory groups – including a learning disability and autism advisory group involving people with lived experience.

■ Specialised Commissioning Oversight Group

Sir Mike Penning: [\[105317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date the most recent meeting of NHS England's Specialised Commissioning Oversight Group took place; if he will publish the outcomes of that meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[105318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the agenda of the next meeting of NHS England's Specialised Commissioning Oversight Group before that meeting takes place.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[105319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NHS England on the (a) importance of meetings of NHS England's Specialised Commissioning Oversight Group taking place and (b) commissioning of new clinical procedures and therapies as part of the Government's commitment to see non-covid19 aspects of the NHS resume as part of the recovery agenda; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: The Specialised Commissioning Oversight Group last met in June 2019. This is because the meeting structure has since changed, and NHS England now have a Strategy and Policy Group meeting on a monthly basis and a Delivery Group meeting on a monthly basis instead.

Although there is no specific agenda for the next meeting, the Strategy and Policy group considers the recommendations made by the Clinical Priorities Advisory Group (CPAG) relating to clinical policies and service specifications. The CPAG looks at NHS England's approach to commissioning services, treatments and technologies, and considers which of these should be prioritised for investment.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Gavin Robinson: [\[109381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to maintain medical supply lines between Great Britain and Northern Ireland where EU medicine rules will still apply after the transition period.

Gavin Robinson:

[\[109382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is planning to take to mitigate the effect of the Border Operating Model on the supply of (a) urgent medical supplies and (b) other goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland after the transition period.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: After the end of the transition period, the United Kingdom will have autonomy over the regulation of goods, including medicines. As set out in the Northern Ireland Protocol, which will take effect on 1 January 2021, Northern Ireland will continue to follow the European Union acquis for medicines. The Government has been in intensive discussion with the European Commission on how to safeguard the crucial flows of medicines and medical products into Northern Ireland from other parts of the UK from the end of the transition period.

The parties have agreed a pragmatic approach to implementation, including a one year time-limited approach to the application of the regulatory requirements for imports and the 'safety feature' elements of the Falsified Medicines Directive. This was set out in the UK Government statement of 5 November following the fourth meeting of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee. This approach gives industry the time and flexibility it needs and ensure that medicines can continue to flow to Northern Ireland. Further industry guidance on moving medicines to Northern Ireland after the end of the transition period will be published shortly.

■ Vaccination: Take-up

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[107595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of targets on improving the uptake of adult vaccinations.

Jo Churchill:

We are reviewing how to improve vaccine uptake overall as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. The United Kingdom has a number of key components in place to achieve high coverage of vaccinations. This includes national co-ordination of our vaccination programmes, fully trained staff, and access to relevant information.

There are national uptake targets for all vaccination programmes based on recommendations from Public Health England and the Department, informed by knowledge of the necessary levels of coverage to support herd immunity and prevent transmission of disease and outbreaks. Activity undertaken by commissioners and providers are informed by these targets.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Hotels and Military Bases**

Thangam Debonnaire: [\[110852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) terms of reference, (b) timetable and (c) scope of hotels and military barracks selected for the internal review into risk in relation to asylum seekers staying in hotels and military barracks.

Thangam Debonnaire: [\[110853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the decision-making process for the choice of hotels and military barracks selected for the internal review into risk in relation to asylum seekers staying in hotels and military barracks during the covid-19 pandemic.

Chris Philp:

The terms of reference for the review of initial asylum seeker accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic are to:

- Conduct a rapid review of initial accommodation for single adult asylum seekers, including hotels and former military barracks, and provide assurance of compliance with public health guidelines to prevent the transmission of Covid 19. This will include interviews with a wide range of interested parties including Local Authorities, Strategic Migration Partnerships, commercial providers, non-governmental organisations, asylum seekers and Government officials.
- Provide advice and guidance to the Home Office, providers and individual accommodation units on best practice to prevent transmission of Covid 19

This is a rapid review to assure ourselves of the health and safety of asylum seekers during the Covid 19 pandemic. A report is due by the end of the month and we will seek to publish a summary of the recommendations.

We chose sites across the UK that would best inform our national approach going forward. This has augmented our business as usual activity on risk and assessment of accommodation during this time of crisis.

■ British Nationality: Applications

Jessica Morden: [\[113033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for a British Citizenship application to be processed; and how many applicants have been waiting over a year for their application to be processed, as of November 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The most recent published data on citizenship applications (August 2020) shows that of those Straightforward Applications received, the percentage completed within the Service Standard of six months was 99.3%.

The latest information on processing times can be found in the UK Visas and Immigration Transparency Data

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-august-2020>

■ **Coronavirus: Bosworth**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[112116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department is providing to police officers to enforce covid-19 lockdown restrictions in Bosworth.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has been clear that it will provide police forces with the support they need to continue protecting the public and keeping communities safe through the coronavirus pandemic.

On 8 October, the Government announced an additional £30m funding for police forces in England and Wales to step up their enforcement of coronavirus rules. Leicestershire Police has received £446,094 from this additional funding.

In addition to this, we have provided the police the powers and guidance they need to support compliance with covid-19 social distancing and lockdown restrictions.

The department continues to work closely with the policing sector to monitor and make decisions on their current and future needs.

■ **Dangerous Dogs**

Jane Hunt: [\[111648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105600 on dangerous dogs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a standardised method of recording non-assistance dog attacks across all police forces in England.

Kit Malthouse:

When setting national standard methods for classifying crimes reported to the police the benefits of consistent recording need to be balanced against other considerations. In this instance the Home Office has judged it better to allow local flexibility to manage incident recording in a manner most suitable to local needs. This allows police forces to develop the most appropriate approach to understand and respond to local issues.

■ **Domestic Abuse: Males**

Virginia Crosbie: [\[113269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support male victims of domestic abuse.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office is undertaking ambitious work to support all victims of Domestic Abuse, including male victims.

Since 2017/18 the Home Office has provided funding of £160,000 per year to the Men's Advice Line run by Respect which supports and advises male victims of domestic abuse. Additional funding of £151,000 was provided to further bolster the helpline earlier this year from the funding announced by the Home Secretary on April 11 in response to COVID-19 pressures.

In March 2019 the Home Office published the Male Victims Position Statement which sets out 12 specific commitments to better enable male victims and survivors to come forward and receive necessary support, and to tackle offenders. A copy of the statement can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-commitments-to-tackle-abuse-against-men>

More widely the Government announced £76 million for charities supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse, amongst others.

Specific advice has been published on gov.uk for domestic abuse victims during COVID-19 directing them to a range of specialist organisations including those supporting male victims. The information also makes clear that stay at home orders do not apply where any victim needs to leave home to seek help if they are in danger of domestic abuse.

In April the Home Secretary launched a domestic abuse campaign, #YouAreNotAlone, to raise general awareness of domestic abuse during COVID-19 and signpost the support and advice available.

Our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill will help all victims to have the confidence to report their experiences, knowing they will be properly supported, and perpetrators brought to justice.

In the meantime, we are continuing to work closely with domestic abuse organisations, including male victim organisations, to assess ongoing trends and needs and to help support them through the period of new measures, building on the progress to date.

■ Emergency Services: Staff**Sir John Hayes:****[111418]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect emergency service workers.

Kit Malthouse:

Our brave workers across the emergency services do an extraordinary job in the most difficult situations, keeping us safe, day in and day out. It is absolutely right that we should ensure that they are supported and protected. We have accelerated work to introduce a Police Covenant, which will be enshrined in law, and ensure our police get the support and protection they need.

The Covenant will focus on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families. It will be put on a statutory footing as part of an ambitious package of measures to strengthen protection for the police and the public through the policing legislation, announced in the Queen's Speech and to be introduced later this session. The legislation will also include other measures to support the police, for example, ensuring special constables are able to join the Police Federation and increasing the legal protection for police drivers involved in accidents while doing their jobs.

This Government has also been clear that any assault on an emergency worker is completely unacceptable in any circumstances. We want to send a clear message that these kinds of attacks will not be tolerated. Which is why we recently announced our intention to legislate to double the maximum penalty for assaults on emergency workers, from 12 months to two years.

■ Immigration: Au Pairs

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[113166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of offering a dedicated immigration route for EU au pairs after the transition period.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[113167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing a formal route for au pairs who are EU citizens to travel and work in the UK after the transition period.

Kevin Foster:

Our Future Points Based system will operate on a global basis, not on whether someone's passport was issued by an EU or non-EU country.

As has been the case since 2008, the UK's immigration system will not offer a dedicated route for au pairs. However, there are other immigration routes which will exist for people who may wish to take up these roles, such as the Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS).

The UK currently operates eight YMS arrangements which are principally designed for cultural exchange. We have indicated our desire to negotiate a Youth Mobility arrangement with the EU, or with individual countries within it, if a collective agreement is not possible.

■ Immigration: Correspondence

Stella Creasy:

[\[113085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current average response time is for written enquiries on immigration queries from hon Members' offices, by region and month first contacted.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visas and Immigration work to a target of responding to 95% of Ministerial correspondence within 20 working days.

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

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard is held at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-august-2020> and this includes data from quarter 2 - 2017 up to and including the end of quarter 2-2020/21. We are proposing the release of data for quarter 3, in due course.

We do not publish average response times for correspondence nor do we record correspondence data by region.

Members: Correspondence**Matthew Pennycook:**[\[113172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 14 August 2020 regarding his constituent's Windrush compensation scheme offer.

Priti Patel:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Hon. Member's correspondence. The response was sent on 10 November 2020.

Offenders: Deportation**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[110936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on deporting offenders who have grown up in the UK.

Chris Philp:

Under the UK Borders Act 2007 passed by the last Labour Government, the Home Secretary has a duty to deport a foreign criminal who is convicted in the UK and sentenced to a period of imprisonment of 12 months or more unless an exception applies. Where the automatic deportation threshold is not met, the Home Office will consider deportation under the Immigration Act 1971 where the person is a serious or persistent offender. Currently, European Economic Area (EEA) nationals are deported in accordance with European Union (EU) law on the grounds of public policy or public security. The UK's departure from the EU means that, in future, an EEA national who commits an offence after the end of the transition period (31 December 2020) will be considered under the same deportation thresholds that apply to non-EEA nationals.

■ Police: Finance**Sarah Jones:** [\[113202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the gap in funding for police precepts as a result of people being unable to pay council tax during covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Jones: [\[113203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the average annual cost to a police authority of employing a (a) police officer and (b) police community support officer; and what estimate she has made of that cost in each year from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has been clear that the police will get the financial support they need to see them through the COVID-19 pandemic, and that they are listening to what the police needs.

Future police funding, including costs for the remaining years of the Police Uplift Programme and precept referendum limits, will be agreed as part of the 2020 Spending Review.

■ Refugees: Resettlement**Stuart Anderson:** [\[110913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to restart refugee resettlement schemes.

Chris Philp:

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions and pressures, both overseas and in the UK, resettlement activity is currently paused. We continue to evaluate how to respond given these restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity when safe to do so.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Standards**Jessica Morden:** [\[113031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions UKVI failed to meet the 20-day service level agreement on responding to enquiries from hon. Members on behalf of constituents in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visas and Immigration work to a target of responding to 95% of Ministerial correspondence within 20 working days.

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

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard is held at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-august-2020> and this includes data from quarter 2 - 2017 up to and including the end of quarter 2-2020/21. We are proposing the release of data for quarter 3, in due course.

■ Visas: Applications

Jamie Stone:

[\[110892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect on the financial and mental well-being of visa applicants of extensive travel to (a) complete the English Language and Life in the UK tests and (b) submit a visa application in person.

Kevin Foster:

UKVI work hard to ensure that front-end immigration services are accessible to customers.

UKVI works closely with commercial partners both overseas and in the UK, to ensure that there is a sufficient geographical spread of English language and Life in the UK (UK only) testing and biometric enrolment locations to minimise the amount of travel required by customers by analysing where concentrations of demand are. Our footprints in respect to both services are kept under review and further locations opened where sufficient demand supports.

In addition, our commercial partners offer a range of optional added-value services which provide customers additional choice in how they access biometric enrolment services overseas or in the UK such as mobile enrolment at a location at their convenience.

Individuals applying in the UK who have higher needs, may be vulnerable, or whose circumstances may be complex are directed to the Home Office run Support Centres (SSC) where they receive support with their application.

SSC customers who are unable to pay the application fee may submit a fee waiver request. Customers who have been granted a fee waiver and who fit certain criteria may be eligible to apply for travel assistance to attend their closest SSC.

Within the UK, customers who cannot travel to enrol biometrics due to ill health are directed to contact either UKVI (if routed to SSCs) or Sopra Steria Limited (if routed to the UKVCAS service which they run on behalf of UKVI) once they have completed their application and before booking an appointment. Information on how to do this is provided at the end of the online application form on Gov.uk.

■ Visas: Married People

Steve McCabe:

[\[112995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of waiving the financial threshold for people renewing spousal visas

who have lost their jobs or are unable to find new employment as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The financial threshold, or Minimum Income Requirement, is set at the level which prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration. We remain committed to those aims but have made relevant adjustments to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including those seeking to renew spousal visas.

These adjustments are among a range of measures put in place by the Home Office to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. These are set out for customers on GOV.UK and are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.

These are unprecedented times. We continue to monitor the situation closely and may make further adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[113139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of the Lord Privy Seal on 3 November 2020, Official Report, Column HL683, what plans he has to set out in detail what steps the Government plans to to protect renters facing hardship from eviction, and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has established an unprecedented package of support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to support renters to sustain tenancies and continue paying rent. This includes a range of support for businesses to pay staff salaries, including through the furlough scheme which has now been extended to March 2021. We have also strengthened the welfare safety-net with 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. For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year and which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

In addition, 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.

Together with the pause on enforcement of evictions over the Christmas period, this means bailiffs have been asked not to enforce evictions in England until the 11 January at the earliest, except in the most serious circumstances.

This builds on protections from legislation introduced in August to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but the most serious circumstances, meaning that most tenants served notice now cannot be legally evicted before at least May 2021.

■ Homelessness: Mental Health

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[111546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of long-term homelessness on mental health.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We know that the causes of homelessness are multiple and complex and that this is not solely a housing issue. Many individuals experiencing homelessness have co-occurring mental health and substance misuse support needs.

During the pandemic, we have worked closely with local authorities, local health partnerships and the homelessness sector to offer vulnerable people safe accommodation and support. That work is ongoing and in September we had successfully supported over 29,000 people, with 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support.

This support includes working closely with Public Health England and NHS England to ensure that arrangements are in place so that individuals' health and care needs can be met, including ensuring that they are registered with GPs and that mental health assessments are carried out where appropriate.

More broadly, the Department for Health and Social Care is delivering £30 million to 2023/24 from NHS England in the Long Term Plan to fund up to 20 areas for specialist mental health services for people sleeping rough.

MHCLG continues to work closely with the DHSC to work to better understand how we can support the mental health needs of this vulnerable group.

■ Homelessness: Pregnancy

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[113124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the number of pregnant women who are homeless in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Kelly Tolhurst:

In the quarter April – June 2020, national homelessness data shows that, of households assessed as unintentionally homeless and owed a main duty by priority need, the following numbers of households included a pregnant woman:

1. 10 in Coventry
2. 60 in the West Midlands
3. 480 in England

The Homelessness Reduction Act, the most ambitious reform to homelessness legislation in decades, came into force in April 2018. It means that local authorities and other public bodies must work together to actively prevent homelessness for people at risk. Local authorities must do so irrespective of whether they are a family or single person, the reason they are at risk, or if they have a local connection to the area.

Pregnant women are in priority need for housing assistance. This means that if a local authority is satisfied that a household which includes a pregnant woman has become homeless through no fault of their own and are eligible for assistance, they have a duty to place them into accommodation.

■ **Housing: Construction**

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[113197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will reassess the potential merits of making sustainable drainage systems compulsory in new housing developments at risk from flooding.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided and directed away from areas at highest risk. If new homes are necessary in a flood risk area, and no suitable sites at lower risk are available, the local authority should ensure that the development will be safe and will not increase flood risk elsewhere, and include sustainable drainage systems where appropriate.

Additionally, developers must comply with the Building Regulations which give priority to sustainable drainage systems in their hierarchy of arrangements for dealing with rainwater draining from roofs and paving giving access to the building.

We are reviewing our policy for building in areas at flood risk. This will seek to ensure that communities across the country know that future development will be safe from floods. We will assess whether current protections in the National Planning Policy Framework are enough and consider options for further reform.

■ **Landlords: Coronavirus**

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[113089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support landlords who rely on income from less than three rental properties during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is supporting landlords by helping tenants to pay their rent and has brought forward a significant economic response, including support for businesses to pay staff salaries through the furlough scheme, which has been extended to March.

As made clear in our COVID renting guidance to tenants and landlords, tenants who are able to pay rent must continue to do so. Where landlords find themselves in coronavirus-related hardship, mortgage lenders have agreed to offer payment holidays of up to six months, with applications now open until 31 January 2021.

Housing possession claims can be actioned through the courts and we have worked with the judiciary to introduce new court arrangements to ensure appropriate protection for all parties

While we have asked bailiffs not to carry out evictions during the national restrictions in England (from 5 November), there will be a number of serious circumstances which will be exempt. This we hope can serve as reassurance to landlords. These serious circumstances are cases of illegal occupation, anti-social behaviour, fraud, eviction of a 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. Together with the pause on enforcement of evictions over the Christmas period, this means bailiffs have been asked not to enforce evictions in England until the 11 January at the earliest, except in the most serious circumstances.

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 for the most serious cases.

■ Leasehold: Reform**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[112103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to reform leasehold arrangements for existing leaseholders.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market.

We are working with the Law Commission to make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and cheaper, and to reinvigorate the Right to Manage to help empower leaseholders to take on management responsibilities for their properties if they wish to do so. The Law Commission published its first report to Government, on the valuation aspects of enfranchisement, on 9 January 2020 followed on 21 July by its reports on the remaining aspects of enfranchisement and the Right to Manage. These reports put forward a range of options and recommendations to help existing leaseholders. The Government will carefully consider the proposals in the reports and set out next steps in due course.

Further information can be found at <https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/leasehold-enfranchisement/> and <https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/right-to-manage/>.

The Government also asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to conduct an investigation into potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector. On 4 September the CMA announced that it was opening enforcement action focussing on certain practices of four housing developers. The Government has welcomed the CMA action, and wants to see homeowners who have been adversely affected swiftly obtain the justice and redress they deserve.

The CMA has now written to the companies concerned outlining its concerns and requiring information. The Government is keeping a close eye on this issue and will consider any next steps once the CMA have progressed their enforcement action. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/leasehold>.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus**

Mick Whitley:

[\[111624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that every rough sleeper is provided with adequate sheltered accommodation during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The 'Protect Programme', the next step in the ongoing targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19, was announced by the Prime Minister on Thursday 5 November. A further £15 million will be provided to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic, and is on top of the previously announced £10 million Cold Weather Fund for all councils to help keep rough sleepers safe this winter.

Areas with high numbers of rough sleepers will receive extra targeted support to provide accommodation for those currently sleeping rough, prioritising those who are clinically vulnerable. This work will continue throughout the winter until March 2021.

This builds on the success of the still ongoing 'Everyone In' campaign, which is helping to protect thousands of lives during the pandemic - by September it had supported over 29,000 vulnerable people; with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 moved on into settled accommodation.

This funding is on top of the £91.5 million allocated to 274 councils in September to fund their individual plans for rough sleepers over the coming months. More than 3,300 new long-term homes for rough sleepers across the country have been approved, backed by Government investment of more than £150 million.

Neil Coyle:

[\[113121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Cold Weather Fund to support councils get rough sleepers off the streets will be available; and how that funding will be distributed in London.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government recently announced a new £10 million Cold Weather Fund to support councils in helping rough sleepers off the streets during the winter by assisting them in providing more self-contained accommodation. We have written to local authorities to set out how they can access the Cold Weather Fund. Applications should be made by 4 December. We have also announced a £15 million Protect Programme to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the coming winter months. This programme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout this period. London is one of the areas to receive support under the Protect Programme. This is alongside an additional £2 million for faith and community groups to help them provide COVID-19 secure winter accommodation for rough sleepers, and comprehensive guidance to the sector, produced with Public Health England, Homeless Link and Housing Justice to help shelters open more safely, where not doing so would endanger lives.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Children**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[113125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many families with children were housed in temporary accommodation for more than (a) six months, (b) one year and (c) two years in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England in each of the last five years.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department does not currently publish information on the duration of households in temporary accommodation.

Related published statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Trade Agreements: Sri Lanka****Stephen Kinnock:**[\[113118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government plans to replace the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences in its trade negotiations with Sri Lanka with provisions to incentivise good governance and the adherence to international human rights obligations.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom is replicating the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), which will enter into force on 1st January 2021.

The scheme will include an arrangement that replicates the EU's GSP+ tier, called the "Enhanced Framework", and Sri Lanka will automatically be granted trade preferences under this.

The “Enhanced Framework” will continue to be subject to conditions, similar to those under the EU’s GSP+, for all beneficiaries. These include ratifying and effectively implementing the same international conventions and complying with those conventions’ reporting and monitoring requirements.

JUSTICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Chris Stephens:

[112082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) artificial intelligence and (b) machine learning projects are being (i) undertaken and (ii) considered for his Department.

Alex Chalk:

The department does not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Machine Learning (ML) in the true definition across its services. The department has an Analytical Platform which spots trends and create links between data sets; however, this wouldn’t fall under either category. A case study on the Analytical Platform can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/choose-tools-and-infrastructure-to-make-better-use-of-your-data#case-study---using-data-science-with-the-ministry-of-justice-analytical-platform>

With its analytical platform, the department has built a set of tools that provide the basis for the potential development of AI/ML tools, and alongside this, we are undertaking a project that builds on the Office for Artificial Intelligence guidance to develop practical tools and governance to support the ethical development of any future AI/ML project. The Government’s Data Ethics Framework and ‘Guide to Using AI in the Public Sector’, alongside other guidance are available on GOV.UK, to support ethical and safe use of algorithms in the public sector.

The Department continues to review where artificial intelligence or machine learning would add value to undertaking its duties. In most circumstances we use software in place of machine learning or Artificial Intelligence.

■ Adultery: LGBT People

Jane Stevenson:

[113228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to amend the definition of adultery to include same-sex relations.

Alex Chalk:

Parliament considered this definition during passage of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. Adultery in this context has a longstanding definition and can, within the terms of the 2013 act, take place only between a man and a woman. A same sex extramarital affair can therefore not be cited in support of the legal fact of adultery for the purpose of a divorce petition under the existing law. People can and

do, however, use the fact of behaviour in a divorce petition to cite same sex affairs or other kinds of infidelity that do not meet the legal definition of adultery.

Commencement of the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 will remove the requirement to evidence adultery or any other fact and replace this with a requirement to state that the marriage has broken down irretrievably. There will therefore no longer be a requirement to evidence matters of a personal nature that can introduce or worsen conflict to the detriment of any arrangements for the future, particularly about children.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[110775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make it his policy to ask the representative bodies of bailiffs to instruct their members to suspend evictions during the period of new national covid-19 lockdown from 5 November 2020 to help prevent the transmission of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Lord Chancellor wrote to the High Court Enforcement Officers Association on 5 November to request that they ask their members not to enforce evictions other than in a limited number of the most serious circumstances during the period of time that the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020 are in force.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[110856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his letter of 21 October 2020 to the High Court Enforcement Officers Association, whether his request that enforcement officers do not carry out evictions in areas with local lockdown restrictions now applies to all of England.

Chris Philp:

On 5 November, the Lord Chancellor wrote to the High Court Enforcement Officers Association to request that they ask their members not to enforce evictions other than in a limited number of the most serious circumstances during the period of time that the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020 are in force.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[110857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his letter of 21 October 2020 to the High Court Enforcement Officers Association, whether he sent a similar letter to enforcement officers for the county courts, and if he will publish it.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS issued guidance to county court bailiffs instructing them not to enforce evictions in Local Alert Level Areas 2 (High) and 3 (Very High). This was consistent with the request that was made by the Secretary of State to the High Court Enforcement Officers Association in order to protect public health.

Olivia Blake:

[\[110934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 107142 on Evictions: Coronavirus, if he will make it his policy to suspend all evictions in the interests of public health during the period of new national covid-19 lockdown from 5 November 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Lord Chancellor wrote to the High Court Enforcement Officers Association on 5 November to request that they ask their members not to enforce evictions other than in a limited number of the most serious circumstances during the period of time that the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020 are in force.

■ Offences against Children: Criminal Proceedings

Nadia Whittome:

[\[112139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of the backlog in the criminal justice system of cases involving sexual abuse of children and young people on victims and their families.

Alex Chalk:

The Government is committed to understanding and mitigating the impact that caseloads in the criminal justice system are having on victims, including victims of child sexual abuse.

Part of this is achieved through ensuring that criminal courts' recovery remains on track. We are making excellent progress and now have over 250 jury rooms open. Further courtrooms will continue to be made available in the existing estate and in Nightingale courts. Young victims of sexual abuse will also benefit from the accelerated rollout of the Section 28 (Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence (YJCE) Act 1999) (pre-recorded cross examination and re-examination) service for vulnerable witnesses, which includes all children under 18.

To support victims of childhood sexual abuse in their recovery, we have doubled the funding available for voluntary sector organisations providing direct support to victims and survivors of abuse at a national level to £2.4 million until 2022. This will provide vital national services including support lines, online resources and remote counselling.

The Ministry of Justice has also awarded £12 million to 91 rape support centres across England and Wales to provide independent, specialist support to female and male victims of sexual violence. This is an increase of £4 million from 2019/20 and includes £1.8 million of ringfenced funding for victims of recent and non-recent child sexual abuse. This new funding is in addition to the £4.8 million per annum already provided to Police and Crime Commissioners by the MoJ to support victims of child sexual abuse (part of the £69m provided this year for them to commission victim support services based on local need).

■ Prisons: Coronavirus**Barbara Keeley:**[\[113039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the transmission of covid-19 on the prison estate.

Lucy Frazer:

The safety of our staff and those in our care remains our top priority and when responding to Covid-19 we have worked closely with Public Health England and been guided by their advice. 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.

One of the range of measures HMPPS is taking to limit the spread of the virus in prisons and save lives is to compartmentalise prisoners. This requires establishments to introduce isolation units for the symptomatic, shielding units for the vulnerable, and reverse cohorting to quarantine new arrivals. Social distancing and basic hygiene are also effective controls to reduce transmission and we continue to provide access to the right cleaning and hygiene products in prisons. Other measures have included adapting prison regimes to support social distancing and PPE usage, and expanding the estate with new temporary units.

We have started to rollout regular testing for frontline staff which means we can identify positive cases earlier and will be able to minimise the spread of outbreaks. HMPPS is also rolling out testing for prisoners on reception and transfer.

We continue to work closely with PHE to develop and refine our response to the pandemic.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Louise Haigh:**[\[113147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make an estimate of the number of remaining outstanding legacy cases of people killed by paramilitaries.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government does not hold precise figures on the number of outstanding legacy cases of people killed by paramilitaries as this is a matter for the relevant independent authorities, including Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. However, we are aware that following the closure of the Historical Enquiries Team in 2014, the PSNI inherited a caseload of over 900 cases, involving nearly 1,200 deaths - the vast majority of which were at the hands of republican or loyalist terrorists.

TRANSPORT**■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[113168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the scientific advice for the decision to include practical driving tests in the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England.

Rachel Maclean:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has indicated there is an enhanced risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in enclosed spaces. Due to prolonged indoor contact between people of different households, there is a significant risk of transmission. The November restrictions do not allow people to leave their homes except for specified purposes, which include childcare, education, health appointments and essential activities.

On this basis, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has suspended practical driver testing for the duration of the national restrictions, except for frontline NHS workers.

■ High Speed Two Railway Line**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[112969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) terms of reference, (b) tendering process and (c) budget is for each of the four technical expert panels being established by HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

a) HS2 Ltd already use Independent Technical Expert Panels (ITEP) to review specific assets. This is consistent with the recommendation made by the HS2 Ltd Chairman in his Stocktake report and the Oakervee Review. The panels work to stress-test and challenge selected assets or areas.

b) HS2 Ltd is currently undertaking a market engagement exercise for covering the requirement to establish, manage and provide ITEPs to peer review its Main Works Civils Contracts (MWCC) scheme, Stations and Phase 2 detailed designs and construction methodology (PIN reference 2020/S 217-533979). The tendering process cannot be confirmed until this market engagement exercise is completed.

c) The total budget for the ITEPs is £5.2 million for the full duration of the contract, including all applicable extension options (an initial duration of 2 years, with options to extend for a further 5 years). The individual panel budgets are commercially sensitive as this information may impact the procurement following the market engagement.

■ Motor Vehicles: Testing**Julian Sturdy:**[\[113081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to extend the MOT eligibility period for vehicles that are due an MOT before 2 December 2020 when the owner of that vehicle is clinically vulnerable.

Rachel Maclean:

At present there are no plans to further extend MOT due dates, for either the public as a whole or those who are clinically vulnerable. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency have published guidance on how to safely conduct an MOT test while adhering to social distancing measures, and they continue to work with the industry on reducing the potential risk of transmission of COVID-19.

The Department continues to monitor the situation as it evolves and any further changes made to MOT expiry dates will be made based on the evidence available.

■ Motorways: Safety**Olivia Blake:**[\[113271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference his Written Statement of 12 March on Strategic roads update: smart motorways evidence stocktake, what progress has been made on implementing a national targeted communications campaign to further increase awareness and understanding of smart motorways, how they work and how to use them confidently.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England is developing a nationally-targeted campaign to increase road user confidence on All Lane Running (ALR) motorways, including what to do in the event of a breakdown in a live lane. The campaign concept has been tested on a number of audiences. Stakeholders in the recovery and insurance industries have been engaged throughout the process and have helped to shape the campaign.

Highways England is now in the production phase of the campaign, which will launch in January 2021. The campaign will be seen widely across the country including on TV, social media and national radio to ensure maximum reach amongst the target audience.

■ Ports: Infrastructure**Alex Cunningham:**[\[111514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect the inaugural meeting of the Hydrogen Advisory Council on 20 July 2020 has had on his policies on sea port infrastructure on the east coast of (a) England and (b) Scotland.

Robert Courts:

The Hydrogen Advisory Council was established in July 2020 to inform the development of a hydrogen strategy, to be published early in 2021, and formalise engagement with industry.

At the inaugural meeting of the council, hydrogen demand in transport sector and accompanying infrastructure requirements were discussed. No policies on sea port infrastructure on the east coast of England and Scotland, where port policy is devolved, have been changed in light of the inaugural meeting of the Hydrogen Advisory Council.

■ Road Works: Water Companies

Richard Fuller:

[\[112018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has instructed Highways England to review their speed of response for providing permits for roadworks to enable water companies to meet their targets set by Ofwat in relation to leakage reduction.

Rachel Maclean:

Water companies are not required to seek permission from Highways England to work on the strategic road network (SRN), only to give notice. In cases where planned work would cause disruption or clash with other plans, Highways England may ask the water company to adjust the day or time of the planned works.

Highways England is in dialogue with the utilities industry to forge closer relationships, in order to proactively support its roads delivery programme and the industry's requirements on the SRN.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Alex Cunningham:

[\[111508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential contribution that (a) hydrogen and (b) ammonia fuel will make to the decarbonisation of the shipping industry by 2025; and what the latest advice is of the Clean Maritime Council on bridging targets in (i) 2025 and (ii) 2030 for decarbonising the maritime sector.

Robert Courts:

DfT-commissioned research supporting the Clean Maritime Plan set out that hydrogen and ammonia, a hydrogen carrier, are expected to play a significant role for decarbonising the maritime sector, with ammonia representing the most prevalent fuel for shipping by 2051. It also suggested that 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, and could generate economic benefits to the UK of up to £0.5bn per year by the middle of the century.

The Clean Maritime Plan includes the Government ambitions that by 2025 all new vessels being ordered for use in UK waters are being designed with zero emission propulsion capability and that by 2035 low or zero emission marine fuel bunkering options are readily available across the UK. The Clean Maritime Plan has been developed in close partnership with the maritime industry, including the Clean Maritime Council, which advice continues to inform the implementation of the Plan.

Further detail on developing trajectories for the decarbonization of the maritime sector in the UK will be set out within the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[111509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report of the Committee on Climate Change, Reducing UK emissions: Progress report to Parliament, published in June 2020, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on (a) port workers, (b) port infrastructure and (c) seafarers of the recommendation that the shipping industry switch to using vessels powered by (i) hydrogen and (ii) ammonia in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from merchant shipping activity.

Robert Courts:

The Department has been engaging actively with maritime stakeholders to better understand the opportunities for employment arising from the transition to net zero and will comment on the related consideration of employment issues in the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

More broadly, following the publication of the Clean Maritime Plan and its associated research in 2019, the Department has commissioned additional research into the economic opportunities presented by maritime clusters and the role such clusters will play in delivering net zero, and expects this work to be finalised later this year.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[111510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report commissioned by his Department, Reducing the Maritime Sector's Contribution to Climate Change and Air Pollution - Economic Opportunities from Low and Zero Emission Shipping, published in 2019, when he plans to make an assessment of the effect on (a) port worker and (b) seafarer employment of the transition to zero emission shipping.

Robert Courts:

The Department has been engaging actively with maritime stakeholders to better understand the opportunities for employment arising from the transition to net zero and will comment on the related consideration of maritime employment issues in the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

More broadly, following the publication of the Clean Maritime Plan and its associated research in 2019, the Department has commissioned additional research into the economic opportunities presented by maritime clusters and the role such clusters will play in delivering net zero, and expects this work to be finalised later this year.

■ Shipping: Hydrogen

Alex Cunningham:

[\[111513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect the inaugural meeting of the Hydrogen Advisory Council on 20 July 2020 has had on his Department's Clean Maritime Plan.

Robert Courts:

Government is committed to developing hydrogen as a strategic decarbonised energy carrier. The Hydrogen Advisory Council was established in July 2020 to inform the development of a hydrogen strategy, to be published early in 2021, and formalise engagement with industry. The Clean Maritime Plan was published in 2019, prior to the launch of the Hydrogen Advisory Council, but recognised the key role hydrogen may have to play in the decarbonisation of the maritime sector. Further detail on the Government's policies on maritime decarbonisation will be set out in the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

■ Train Operating Companies: Directors**Ian Mearns:****[R] [113065]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether any restrictions are placed on train operating companies' increasing director remuneration during periods of application of (a) Emergency Measures Agreements and (b) Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Train operators subject to either an Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) or Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement (ERMA) remain the employer of their respective employees and have ultimate responsibility for employee remuneration. However, under both the EMAs and ERMAs train operators are only reimbursed for employee remuneration costs that have been approved by the Department or would have been incurred by a 'Good and Efficient Operator'.

It should be noted that any bonuses paid to staff, including directors, will be held back against any fees payable unless prior approval has been provided.

■ Trains: Diesel Fuel**Catherine West:****[113178]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of accelerating the phasing out of diesel trains to help meet the UK's climate targets.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed to rail decarbonisation to meet our target of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Network Rail's work to develop a Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy will inform our decisions about the scale and pace of rail decarbonisation, the deployment of different decarbonisation technologies on each part of the network to replace diesel trains, and the delivery of our ambition to remove all diesel-only trains from the railway by 2040.

■ Transport: Greater London**Catherine West:****[113177]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is providing assistance to the Mayor of London in formulating strategic transport plans for the city.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London.

Ministers and officials in the Department for Transport hold regular discussions with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Transport and Transport for London on a range of transport matters.

■ **Travel: Quarantine****Sarah Champion:****[113113]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Government's covid-19 restrictions on travel overseas from 5 November to 2 December 2020, whether those restrictions apply to people travelling overseas for the purpose of visiting under-age children; and whether the requirement to self-isolate on arrival in the UK applies to people having travelled overseas for that purpose.

Robert Courts:

Under the new national restrictions, you cannot travel abroad unless for work, education or other legally permitted reasons, as defined in the regulations:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/1200/part/2/made>

Individuals should assess themselves against the regulations to determine whether they may qualify for an exemption.

Guidance for overseas travel during the new national restrictions is published on gov.uk, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

The requirement for self-isolation on arrival in England will depend whether the country of departure is on the list of travel corridors or not. The most up-to-date list is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>.

Individuals arriving to Scotland, Northern Ireland, or Wales should follow the guidance of the relevant Devolved Administration.

Sarah Champion:**[113114]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Government's covid-19 restrictions on travel overseas from 5 November to 2 December 2020, what forms of proof are acceptable to demonstrate that overseas travel is for the purpose of work.

Robert Courts:

Under the new national restrictions, you cannot leave or be outside of your home unless for work, education or other legally permitted reasons. This necessarily means that you cannot travel abroad unless the travel is for one of those legally permitted reasons.

Individuals should assess themselves against the requirements to determine whether they may qualify for an exemption and, where they do, ensure they travel with the appropriate supporting documentation to demonstrate this if asked.

Guidance for leaving home for work during the new national restrictions is published on gov.uk, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november#going-to-work>.

If you are planning to travel into England, you should check the current travel corridor list to see whether you need to isolate upon arrival. You will still be required to abide by the national lockdown restrictions even if you do not need to isolate.

TREASURY

■ Economic Situation: Forecasts

Alison McGovern:

[\[113083\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what requests he has made to the Office for Budget Responsibility to produce economic forecasts over the next 12 months; and if he will place that correspondence in the Library.

John Glen:

The OBR prepares an economic and fiscal forecast twice in each financial year.

On 11 September, the Chancellor laid a written ministerial statement in the House of Commons stating that he had 'asked the OBR to prepare an economic and fiscal forecast to be published in mid to late November', and the specific date (25 November) was confirmed on 28 October.

The OBR publish a log of substantive contact between the OBR and Treasury Ministers, Special Advisers and their private office staff alongside each forecast.

■ Net Zero Review

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[113088\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress he has made on his Department's Net Zero Review announced November 2019; and what his timescale is for the publication of the outcome of that review.

Kemi Badenoch:

The government has announced that the Net Zero Review will be published in Spring 2021. In the meantime, HMT will publish an Interim Report this Autumn. This will set out our approach and initial analysis which will inform the Net Zero Review final report.

■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

Sarah Olney:

[\[113192\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of excluding period pants over a certain size from classification as a sanitary product for VAT purposes on the mental health of young women.

Jesse Norman:

At Spring Budget on 11 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that a zero rate of VAT will apply to women's sanitary products from 1 January 2021, at the end of the transition period. This will apply to those products which are currently subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent, for example, tampons and pads, and to reusable menstrual products, such as keepers.

The relief specifically excludes articles of clothing, such as period pants. Such exclusions are designed to ensure that the relief is properly targeted, since difficulties in policing the scope of the relief create the potential for litigation, erosion of the tax base and a reduction in revenue. Under existing rules period pants may already qualify for the zero rate, if they have been specifically designed to be worn by a child, meet the sizing criteria, and are held out for sale specifically for use by girls under the age of 14 years old.

Details are provided in VAT Notice 714: zero-rating young children's clothing and footwear: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear/vat-notice-714-zero-rating-young-childrens-clothing-and-footwear#items-suitable-only-for-young-children>.

Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies**Alison McGovern:****[113082]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library all correspondence between the SAGE committee and the Chief Economist since 1 January 2020.

John Glen:

Government officials work together across departments to understand both the health and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Senior officials from other government departments, including the Treasury, attend SAGE as observers to ensure a full understanding of the scientific advice the committee give to government.

Shipping: Exhaust Emissions**Rosie Cooper:****[113028]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Transport and (b) Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the decarbonisation of the maritime industry.

Bob Blackman:**[91872]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has held with the (a) Secretary of State for Transport and (b) Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the decarbonisation of the maritime industry.

Bob Blackman:**[91873]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has held with the (a) Secretary of State for Transport and (b) Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the creation of a clean maritime fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer meets Cabinet colleagues to discuss a range of issues as part of the policy making process.

The government continues to take its environmental responsibilities very seriously, and is committed to meeting its climate change targets. With this in mind, the government is considering how it can most effectively progress transport decarbonisation through the Spending Review.

Taxis: Coronavirus**Gill Furniss:**[\[113183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2020 to Question 109525 on Taxis: Coronavirus, how many self-employed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers have received grants through the first three rounds of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not available.

Taxi and private hire vehicle drivers are part of the "Transportation and Storage" sector.

225,000 self-employed individuals in the Transportation and Storage sector claimed the first SEISS grant and 212,000 claimed the second SEISS grant.

These figures were taken from the SEISS statistics published on 21 August and 22 October respectively.

The third SEISS grant is not yet open for claims and is due to open from 30 November 2020.

WORK AND PENSIONS**Child Maintenance Service: Video Conferencing****Claire Hanna:**[\[113267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Financial Investigations Unit of the Child Maintenance Service has begun the use of video calling technology to complete interviews under caution.

Guy Opperman:

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions in place until at least 3 December, no interviews under caution are being conducted across DWP. However, as part of a DWP wide project, the use of video conferencing for interviews under caution is currently being explored.

■ Health and Safety Executive: Finance

Seema Malhotra: [\[111526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will provide additional funding to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mims Davies:

This year the Health and Safety Executive has been provided with an additional £19m to help ensure that workplaces are COVID secure. Future funding decisions will be made as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

■ Health and Safety Executive: Staff

Seema Malhotra: [\[111527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Health and Safety Inspectors (a) are employed by the Health and Safety Executive and (b) have been recruited by her Department in each month since March 2020.

Mims Davies:

On 31st October 2020 HSE employed 960 full-time equivalent (FTE) inspectors plus an additional 9 FTE ex-HSE inspectors who have been employed on a temporary basis to work with HSE in delivering spot check inspections to ensure COVID compliance.

	MAR-20	APR-20	MAY-20	JUN-20	JUL-20	AUG-20	SEP-20	OCT-20
Inspectors	3	2	1	21	0	9	0	1
Recruited by month (FTE)								

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra: [\[111528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) improvement notices and (b) prohibition notices have been issued and (c) prosecutions have been instigated by the Health and Safety Executive in relation to employers not adequately managing the risks of covid-19 transmission in each month since March 2020.

Mims Davies:

The numbers of COVID-19 related Health and Safety Executive (HSE) intervention cases where the outcome is recorded as being an enforcement notice are shown in the table below. A breakdown of notices by type (prohibition / improvement notices) is not available.

MONTH (2020)	NUMBER OF INTERVENTION CASES RESULTING IN NOTICES
March	0
April	1
May	9
June	15
July	32
August	26
September	30
October	23
Total	136

To date, there have been no COVID-19 transmission related prosecutions instigated by HSE.

Note - the above quoted numbers were taken from HSE's live operational database on 5th November 2020 and are subject to change e.g. as there can be a delay before actions are updated on the database.

■ **Jobseeker's Allowance: Coronavirus**

Peter Kyle:

[\[113159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the number of days for which a person can claim new style job seekers allowance during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

A person's entitlement to contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance is limited to a maximum of 182 days in any period for which entitlement is established by reference to the person's National Insurance record in the same two income tax years relevant to the claim or claims. The time limit strikes a balance in providing support whilst keeping the cost of this and other contributory benefits affordable based on the overall income to the National Insurance Fund each year.

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

■ Kickstart Scheme

Daisy Cooper: [\[111627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will allow local councils and voluntary organisations to refer 16 to 17-year-olds to the Kickstart scheme instead of referral via the universal credit system.

Mims Davies:

The DWP's Kickstart Scheme is part of a wider offer for young people, including the opening of Youth Hubs in local areas and increased incentives for employers to take on young people through apprenticeship schemes.

Kickstart is open for young people on Universal Credit and at risk of long term unemployment, aged 16-24. DWP Work Coaches refer suitable candidates to Kickstart Scheme job placements and will work with the young person to ensure they access the appropriate support package which best meet their needs. We have no plans to allow other organisations to refer young people into the Kickstart Scheme at present, but keep all measures under review.

■ Social Security Benefits

Sarah Champion: [\[113112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people applied for (a) attendance allowance, (b) pension credit and (c) carers' allowance in (i) the UK and (ii) Rotherham from April to September in (A) 2019 and (B) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Social Security Benefits: Overpayments

Nadia Whittome: [\[113277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people on (a) universal credit and (b) legacy benefits were subject to deductions for benefit overpayments in the most recent month for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

For UC claims with payments due during August 2020, around 5% (216,000 claims) had deductions for benefit overpayments. The deductions from UC for benefit overpayments include overpayments for tax credits, housing benefit and any DWP overpayments (including legacy benefits), not just UC overpayments.

The latest available data for legacy benefits shows, claims with payments due during May 2020, around 1% (213,000 claims) had deductions for benefit overpayments.

UC collects overpayments from the full range of benefits, including tax credits. As more people have moved on to UC this has resulted in a greater proportion of these overpayments being collected through UC.

Notes

- Claims figures rounded to the nearest 1,000.
- During the Covid period, deductions for benefit overpayments were suspended for three months. These began to be reinstated from July 2020, taking a phased approach, however as of August they have not been fully reinstated and some new debts may not yet have been transferred to DWP.
- Deductions for benefit overpayments include DWP, HMRC and LA fraud and non-fraud overpayments.
- Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

■ State Retirement Pensions**Stephen Timms:**[\[112980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 106889 on State Retirement Pensions, how many people were having deductions and adjustments made to their State Pension payments by her Department to repay claimant debts owed to Government on the most recent date for which that data is available.

Will Quince:

17,215 claimants are currently having deductions made from their State Pension in respect of benefit overpayments or repayment of outstanding Social Fund loans. The figure excludes accounts managed by the Department for Communities.

Regulations allow a number of deductions and adjustments to be made from State Pension. There are also limits on the amount that can be taken. Deductions taken to repay claimant debts owed to Government include those in respect of benefit overpayments and civil and administrative penalties.

All such debts are first notified to the customer in writing; notifications also include information on what action can be taken by the customer if they wish to dispute the amount stated as owing. A further notification is issued before any deductions from State Pension commence.

Anyone unable to afford the rate of recovery proposed is encouraged to contact DWP so an affordable rate of repayment can be negotiated.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Coronavirus**Colum Eastwood:**[\[113268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has to provide an uplift to the state pension beyond inflation, in line with the increase to universal credit introduced in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has no such plans.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Jack Dromey:** [\[113049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee, by the Permanent Secretary on DWP's Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20 on 21 October 2020, Q96, HC 759 stating that 1,900 women have been identified by her Department as having been underpaid state pensions, what the total lump sum cash amount is that has so far been paid by her Department to those women in respect of those underpayments.

Guy Opperman:

We are unable to provide you with the requested data at this time, the Department has plans to publish this data at a later date.

■ Universal Credit**Louise Haigh:** [\[113149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit payments are subject to deductions for tax credit debt.

Louise Haigh: [\[113150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit deductions have been made for tax credit repayments since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

From 3rd April 2020, deductions for benefit overpayments were temporarily suspended for three months. These began to be reinstated from the beginning of July, taking a phased approach.

Most recent figures show, for Universal Credit claims due a payment during August 2020, 2% (102,000 claims) had a deduction for Tax Credit Overpayments.

Nadia Whittome: [\[113275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of universal credit claimants had deductions made to their monthly payment in the most recent month for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

New claimants do not have to wait for their first regular Universal Credit payment if they need up front support. All new UC claimants are able to request a new claim advance during the first assessment period of up to 100% of their estimated monthly award. Advances can be repaid over the following year, allowing new claimants to receive 13 payments during the year instead of 12. We are extending the maximum repayment period to two years from October 2021 to reduce the impact of taking an advance even further, and the reduction of the deductions cap from 30% to 25%.

For Universal Credit claims due a payment during August 2020, 41% (1,847,000 claims) had a deduction (excluding sanctions and fraud penalties).

- 26% had only advance repayments,
- 10% had advance repayments and deductions for other debts (e.g. third party deductions),
- 5% had only deductions for other debts.

For those who find themselves in unexpected hardship, advance repayments can be deferred for up to three months in certain cases.

Notes

- Other debts include Universal Credit third party deductions and all other deductions, but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.
- Figures rounded to nearest 1,000.
- Deductions for benefit overpayments were temporarily suspended for three months from the beginning of April due to Covid.
- Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[113276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of universal credit claimants were (a) repaying an advance payment and (b) also repaying other debts through the deductions system in the most recent month for which figures are available.

Will Quince:

If a new claim advance is taken, this means that a claimant can receive 13 payments over the course of a year instead of 12. As of October 2021, the period over which claimants can repay an advance also doubles from 12 months to 24 months

For Universal Credit claims due a payment during August 2020 41% had a deduction:

- 26% had only advance repayments,
- 10% had advance repayments and deductions for other debts
- 5% had only deductions for other debts.

Notes

- Other debts include Universal Credit third party deductions and all other deductions, but exclude sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.
- Figures rounded to nearest 1,000.
- Deductions for benefit overpayments were temporarily suspended for three months from the beginning of April due to Covid. These began to be reinstated from July 2020, taking a phased approach. However, as of August they have not been fully reinstated and some debts associated to new Universal Credit claimants have not yet been transferred to DWP.

- Figures are provisional and are subject to retrospective change as later data becomes available.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Louise Haigh: [\[113148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the interface on tax credit debt and deductions from universal credit.

Will Quince:

As part of our initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic we suspended recovery of all overpayment deductions, as well as pausing notification of any new overpayments. The transfer of Tax Credit debts from HMRC to DWP was temporarily suspended as part of this approach.

Recovery of existing Tax Credit overpayments from Universal Credit has now resumed, along with the transfer of new Tax Credit debt to DWP.

Our stance remains that we want to ensure that repayment of all debt owed to the Department is sustainable and takes into account the customer's ability to pay. Claimants are encouraged to contact DWP if they are unable to afford the rate of recovery; the recovery rate of Tax Credit overpayments can be reduced where a claimant is experiencing financial hardship.

Whilst we have no current plans to pause the recovery of Tax Credit overpayments from Universal Credit, we have been clear that we will keep our Covid measures under review.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employed

Hywel Williams: [\[113003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will retain the minimum income floor for self-employed universal credit claimants while covid-19 related public health measures are in place in Wales.

Hywel Williams: [\[113004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the temporary suspension of the minimum income floor for self-employed universal credit claimants; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of permanently removing that floor.

Mims Davies:

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

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Service Justice System Update

Secretary of State Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS577\]](#)

I am today informing the House that, after further and full consideration of an earlier decision announced in February 2020 in response to the Service Justice System (SJS) Review, I have taken a decision to maintain jurisdictional concurrency when dealing with cases of murder, manslaughter and rape when committed by Service personnel in the UK.

Currently, decisions on which jurisdiction should deal with criminal offences in the UK by Service personnel are made by the SJS and Civilian Justice System (CJS) policing and prosecutorial authorities on a case-by-case basis. My intent is to seek views on what improvements can be made to the protocols which guide those decisions and which have developed since Parliament last expressed its view on this subject.

In considering the recommendations made by the Service Justice System Review, I have come to the conclusion that, having agreed to take forward 79 other recommendations, including assurance around the quality of investigations, the SJS is capable of dealing with these offences when they occur in the UK, as well as overseas. The Service Justice System Review strongly supported the continued existence of the SJS and sets out a sound roadmap for its future.

I am not, therefore, content to accept the first recommendation in the Review which would undermine the principle of concurrency between the SJS and CJS which is set out in the current legislation. While there will not be a presumption that either system takes primacy over the other, I plan to retain the current role of the Director of Public Prosecutions (in relation to cases in England and Wales) of having the final say of where a case is tried in the unlikely event of disagreement about where the case should be handled.

In light of this decision, my department will lead an exercise with SJS and CJS policing and prosecutorial authorities to revise all current guidance around jurisdiction for criminal offending by service personnel in the UK. That exercise will include public engagement on factors to be considered relevant in guiding the case-by-case allocation decisions. Parliament will have an opportunity to consider these matters when parliamentary time allows, and I intend to bring forward proposals to place the arrangements for allocating cases between the SJS and CJS on a statutory basis.

My department will be engaging with the devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland to consider the corresponding arrangements that should exist there.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Avian Influenza: Further protection measures for kept birds**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food)
(Victoria Prentis):** [\[HCWS576\]](#)

High Pathogenicity H5N8 Avian Influenza has been circulating in Europe in recent weeks. There have now been two diagnosed cases in poultry in the UK, in Cheshire and Herefordshire, as well as several findings in wild birds in south-west England. The risk of further H5N8 incursion in wild birds across the UK remains high and has recently been raised to medium for poultry. We will continue to undertake comprehensive disease surveillance over the coming weeks and months.

Public Health England advises that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency has said there is no food safety risk for UK consumers.

In response to the risk to poultry and other captive birds, the Department has put in place a statutory Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. The Zone requires keepers across the country to take additional steps to introduce enhanced biosecurity measures and to protect poultry and other captive birds from contact with wild birds. Some of these measures apply to all keepers, including those with small flocks or pet birds. They include:

- cleansing and disinfection of equipment, vehicles and footwear when moving between bird premises;
- effective vermin control;
- reducing movements of people to the essentials for the birds' welfare, collecting eggs and feeding;
- keeping records of poultry, captive birds and egg movements;
- ensuring that buildings are maintained and that repairs are carried out without delay where water or other contamination may penetrate.

The Zone will remain in place indefinitely but will be kept under review and amended as necessary in the light of any changes in circumstances. We have also made changes to licensing arrangements to prohibit events such as bird shows.

Given that the disease is spreading across Europe, the introduction of this Zone has been co-ordinated with the Devolved Administrations and Scottish and Welsh Governments are introducing similar measures. Northern Ireland officials, who have been in the discussions, are reviewing their risk assessment which will inform their next steps.

We have tried and tested procedures for dealing with such animal disease outbreaks and a strong track record of controlling and eliminating previous outbreaks of avian flu in the UK. Our actions are in line with established practice and with the processes followed in previous years. Avian Influenza Prevention Zones, for example, were introduced in England, Scotland and Wales in 2018. We are working closely with operational partners, devolved administration colleagues and the industry.

The detections of H5N8 in poultry or captive birds have been dealt with effectively by the Animal and Plant Health Agency. We have taken robust action, imposing zones of up to ten kilometres (six miles) around infected premises to limit the risk of disease spreading, and culling birds humanely and to high biosecurity standards.

Looking forward, the Department will keep the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone under review and will consider amendments to reflect any changes to the level of risk of incursion to wild birds and poultry as well as any further scientific, veterinary and ornithological advice.

We have not yet required mandatory housing of all poultry and captive birds as part of our response to the disease risk. However, such a measure remains under active review as a potentially important step.

We continue to urge bird keepers to be vigilant for any signs of disease, ensure they are maintaining good biosecurity on their premises, seek prompt advice from their vet and report suspect disease to APHA (as they must do by law).

We strongly advise keepers to register on the Poultry Register so as to receive notifications and disease alerts. This is mandatory for all those with flocks of over 50 birds. Registration is easy and can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-gatherings-licences.

HOME OFFICE

■ **HMICFRS's Inspection Report: An inspection of the National Crime Agency's relationship with the Regional Organised Crime Units**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS574\]](#)

The National Crime Agency (NCA) leads the fight against serious and organised crime (SOC). It has the power to task other law enforcement partners and a capability, with local to international reach, to disrupt the impact of SOC on the UK.

This is the seventh HMICFRS inspection of the NCA and examines the relationship between the Agency and the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU). The focus is specifically on the collaboration arrangements, the role of the NCA's Regional Organised Crime Coordinators (RCCs), coordination and support of operational activity, threat prioritisation and integration and co-location.

I have asked HMICFRS to publish the report. It will be published today and will be available online at www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The inspection found that NCA and ROCUs are working well in a number of areas of law enforcement. The NCA's provision of specialist capabilities to the network, such as Protected Persons and Kidnap and Extortion is seen as a positive example. Meeting structures for tasking and co-ordinating operational activity work well, with ROCUs and the NCA represented at regional and national level. National tasking of regional cyber and Undercover Online (UCOL) assets is judged as mature and efficient. The report also

emphasises a number of areas for improvement including the need for greater interoperability and a more systematic approach to joint working; a clearer understanding within ROCUs of the roles and responsibilities of the NCA; and more effective duty management within the NCA's control room to ensure monitoring of the location and availability of its operational resources.

It is for the NCA's Director General to respond to these recommendations.

The inspection also identified a need to review current funding arrangements for ROCUs; consider changes to legislation that would allow NCA to task ROCUs directly; and as part of the Review of the Strategic Policing Requirement, consider how greater emphasis is placed on national threats such as SOC by Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables. These recommendations are being taken forward by my officials.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Machinery of Government

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[\[HCWS573\]](#)

Responsibility for the Justifying Authority for new nuclear power transferred from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 6 October 2020.

TRANSPORT

■ Transport Update

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[\[HCWS575\]](#)

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This statement concerns two applications made under the Planning Act 2008 relating to the A303.

The first application concerns the proposed construction by Highways England of a new two-lane dual carriageway for the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down in Wiltshire (also known as the "A303 Stonehenge" application), which the Secretary of State has today approved.

The second application concerns the proposed construction by Highways England of a continuous dual carriageway on the A303 linking the Podimore Roundabout and the Sparkford Bypass.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Development Consent Order application on 12 September 2019 and the deadline for a decision was previously

extended from 12 December 2019 to 17 July 2020, and then further extended until 20 November 2020 to allow for further work to be carried out.

The deadline for the decision is to be further extended to 29 January 2021 (an extension of just over two months) to enable further information to be provided by the Applicant and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding outstanding concerns pertaining to the issue of bird strike.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to give development consent.

TREASURY

■ Tax policy update

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman): [\[HCWS572\]](#)

In line with the tax policy-making framework, the Government consulted on a number of tax policies announced at Spring Budget 2020. Today, the Government is publishing responses to some of the consultations that were extended due to COVID-19, alongside draft legislation which will need to be introduced.

The Government is also publishing responses to calls for evidence in the market for tax advice, as well as a consultation on Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax.

Finally, the Government is making some tax policy announcements for Tobacco and Vehicle Excise duties, measures to tackle promoters of tax avoidance, a small change to off-payroll legislation, and delays to other measures and reviews.

Previously announced publications

The Government is publishing summary of responses and draft legislation for each of the following measures, as announced at the Spring Budget:

- Plastic Packaging Tax
- Tackling Construction Industry Scheme abuse
- R&D SME tax credit PAYE cap
- Tax implications of the withdrawal of the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR)
- Hybrid and other mismatches

The Government had extended the policy consultation response deadlines for these measures in April, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Draft legislation is accompanied by a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN), an Explanatory Note (EN) and, where applicable, a summary of responses to consultation document. All publications can be found on the GOV.UK website. The Government's tax consultation tracker has also been updated.

Raising standards for tax advice

The Government is publishing a Summary of Responses and Next Steps from the call for evidence on raising standards in the market for tax advice. As a first step towards raising standards, the Government will consult on requiring tax advisers to hold professional indemnity insurance and how to define tax advice. The majority of respondents supported government action to raise standards.

Tackling promoters of tax avoidance

In line with the Government's strategy to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes, published in March, the Government is today announcing that it will consult in the new year on further measures to tackle promoters. These proposals will build on the proposals announced earlier this year and will:

- disrupt the business model of offshore promoters by making it harder for such promoters to access the UK by making their onshore partners equally responsible for the anti-avoidance regime penalties that the offshore promoter generates.
- directly tackle the secrecy on which promoters rely; the proposals here would ensure that taxpayers are fully informed of the reality of what is being sold to them.
- disrupt the economics of tax avoidance by ensuring that, without delay, promoters face financial consequences for continuing to promote tax avoidance so that promoters cannot continue to profit from avoidance while HMRC investigates them.
- give HMRC additional powers to act against companies that continue to promote schemes and who sidestep the rules designed to restrict their activities. The proposals would see such promoters shut down and restricted from setting up similar businesses.

The Government continues to recognise that the many tax advisers who adhere to high professional standards are an important source of support for taxpayers. The proposals are aimed at targeting those promoters who exploit every opportunity to personally profit by side-stepping the rules and whose unscrupulous actions often leave taxpayers with significant tax bills.

The Government continues to recognise that strengthening HMRC powers in the way described must be done in a carefully constrained way. HMRC will again work with stakeholders, and in particular those tax advisers who adhere to high professional standards, to ensure that these proposals are both effective and proportionate.

Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax

The Government is publishing a consultation on the design of Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax, as announced on 21 July. This will allow stakeholders to inform the early stage design of Making Tax Digital for Corporation Tax and to provide businesses with time to prepare.

Further policy announcements:

The Government has made a number of further policy decisions which are being announced today, relating to:

Extending the Annual Investment Allowance provisional £1 million cap

The Government is today announcing a yearlong extension to the temporary increase of the Annual Investment Allowance (AIA). The AIA provides firms 100% same year tax relief on qualifying capital expenditure, up to a fixed limit. Instead of allowing the AIA to revert to £200,000 from 1 January 2021, the Government is extending the temporary £1 million cap set at Budget 2018 until 31 December 2021. This announcement:

- Responds to the needs of business, giving enhanced tax relief on plant and machinery expenditure;
- Provides businesses with upfront support during continuing COVID-related uncertainty;
- Simplifies taxes for the 99% of businesses investing up to £1 million on plant and machinery assets each year.

Tobacco Duty uprating

The Government is announcing the uprating of tobacco duties to protect the public finances, continue the drive to reduce smoking prevalence, and support the Government's target for a smoke-free England by 2030. In line with the existing escalator, duty rates on all tobacco products will increase by RPI + 2%. In order to narrow the gap between hand-rolling tobacco (HRT) and cigarette duty rates and ensure the Minimum Excise Tax (MET) continues to be effective in the current market, HRT will increase by RPI + 6% and the MET by RPI + 4%. The Treasury is laying an Order before the House to enact these changes, which will take effect on 16 November.

Van Vehicle Excise Duty

The Government will not now introduce a new graduated system of Vehicle Excise Duty for light goods vehicles or motorhomes from April 2021, to avoid distracting the automotive sector and businesses more widely from the challenges they currently face in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Motorhomes will continue to be placed in the Private/Light Goods class.

Off-payroll working - technical change to ensure legislation operates as intended

A technical change to the off-payroll working rules will be made in the next Finance Bill. This will ensure the legislation operates as intended from 6 April 2021 for engagements where an intermediary is a company. The change will correct an unintended widening of the definition of an intermediary, which went beyond the intended scope of the policy.

Notification of uncertain tax treatment by large businesses

The Government is announcing the implementation of the new requirement for large businesses to notify HMRC of uncertain tax treatments will be delayed until April 2022. This will allow more time to get the policy and legislation right following the recent consultation, including through further engagement with stakeholders, and will give affected businesses more time to prepare for the change.

Timely Tax Payments and Review of Tax Administration Framework

On 21 July, the Government committed to publishing calls for evidence on Timely Tax Payments and a Review of the Tax Administration Framework. Given the continued

pressures of the COVID-19 outbreak, and with other consultations in progress, the Government will now publish these documents in Spring 2021.

Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) milk review

In 2017, the Government made a commitment to review the exemption for sugary milk and milk-substitute drinks from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) by 2020. The Government has been clear that if industry does not make enough progress on voluntarily reformulating these drinks, the Government may extend the SDIL to include them. In light of Public Health England's latest reformulation report (published earlier this month) that shows good progress has been made in sugar reduction of milk-based drinks, the Government will next consider the exemption for sugary milk and milk-substitute drinks in 2022 after the full reformulation programme completes.