



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 17 November 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Karl Turner:

[R] [114843]

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutors from the Crown Prosecution Service were furloughed between April 2020 and October 2020.

Michael Ellis:

There were no CPS staff placed on furlough during the period April – Oct 2020.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Bereavement Leave

Jonathan Edwards:

[114826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the economic benefits of the current bereavement leave entitlement.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that the death of a child is a tragic event. There are around 7,500 child deaths a year in Great Britain, including around 3,000 stillbirths. This is devastating for the parents involved and this is why the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy introduced Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay in April this year.

At the time we introduced this entitlement we published an Impact Assessment (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/249/impacts>) which contains a cost benefit analysis of the policy, setting out the costs to the Exchequer and business as well as the monetary benefits to employees and business and the social benefit to employees.

Jonathan Edwards:

[114827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential (a) health and (b) economic benefits of introducing a statutory right to two weeks bereavement leave for employees in the event of the death of a dependant.

Paul Scully:

In April this year we introduced a new statutory entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay for parents who lose a child under the age of 18. Whilst this entitlement is not available to employees who suffer a bereavement in other circumstances, all employees have a 'day 1' right to take unpaid time off work for an emergency involving a dependant. Time off for Dependants can also be used to deal

with practical issues, including registering the death and making funeral arrangements.

All employees also have access to 5.6 weeks of paid Annual Leave a year.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[114828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people have been eligible for (a) parental bereavement leave and (b) statutory parental bereavement pay since April 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises that the death of a child is particularly tragic, and this is why the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy introduced Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay in April this year.

The Government estimates that this entitlement will help to support over 10,000 parents of these children a year.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[114829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to raise public awareness of (a) Parental Bereavement Leave and (b) Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has made a number of media announcements to raise awareness of the new entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay, including during the passage of the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2018 through Parliament and when the new entitlement came into force on 6 April 2020.

The new entitlement has attracted significant media attention since it was first proposed, including many articles in the national press and trade publications, and a multitude of broadcast coverage when the Statutory Instrument that was required to implement the detail of the policy was laid in January this year. Guidance for bereaved parents and their employers has also been published on GOV.UK. We continue to emphasise and champion Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay publicly, whenever the opportunity arises.

■ Christmas Trees

Andrew Rosindell: [\[113011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the November 2020 lockdown restrictions in England on florists that sell Christmas Trees in the run up to Christmas.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognise that this is a very challenging time for florists, particularly in the peak trading period running up to Christmas.

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

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

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[114852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether people who unable to work because they are clinically extremely vulnerable are able to be furloughed under the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme during the November 2020 lockdown restrictions.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) continues to support businesses and individuals throughout the UK. Where employees are deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable, they can be furloughed through the CJRS. As with the previous scheme, it is up to employers to decide whether to furlough these employees.

■ Energy Performance Certificates

Richard Fuller:

[\[113048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of intelligent electrical heating on the effectiveness of Energy Performance Certificate gradings.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is used to assess the energy performance of homes. It produces an annual estimate of a dwelling's energy consumption, running cost and carbon emissions and these calculations form the basis of an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). At present, we do not have a standard way of reflecting intelligent electric heating systems in SAP, so they are treated the same way as normal electric heating systems when calculating an EPC. The Department will consider how to better reflect the impact of intelligent electrical heating for the next version of SAP, SAP 11.

■ Energy: White Papers

Alan Brown:

[\[114954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 30 September 2020 to Question 95690, when he plans to publish the white paper on energy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

My intention remains as I set out in my previous answer to this question, which is to publish the Energy White Paper in the autumn.

■ Events Industry and Weddings: Coronavirus**Mike Amesbury:**[\[113214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what additional steps the Government has taken to support the wedding and events industry during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Paul Scully:

The Government is providing an unprecedented package of support for businesses including an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 31 March 2021 and grants of up to £3000 per month. We have also extended the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and the November-January grant will now provide 80% of average trading profits capped at £7,500 in total.

■ Fireworks: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**Bill Esterson:**[\[114848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of fireworks on people with post traumatic stress disorder.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to promoting the safe and considerate use of fireworks.

On 20 October, we launched our public awareness campaign for the 2020 fireworks season. The focus of the campaign has been to educate people on how to buy, use, store and dispose of fireworks safely; ensure retailers know and understand their responsibilities when selling fireworks; and, promote the considerate use of fireworks, so that people, including those with PTSD, and animals can be better protected from any negative effects that may be caused by fireworks.

We worked with a wide range of stakeholders to share the messaging across differing audiences.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme**Stuart Anderson:**[\[113224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has in place to ensure that (a) vulnerable and elderly people who have difficulty using technology and (b) other vulnerable and elderly people are able to access Green Homes grants.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

For elderly or vulnerable homeowners who are unable to apply to the scheme digitally, an assisted digital route has been made available by the scheme administrator. More information can be found on the Green Homes Grant [Contact Us](#) page, with a phone lines for scheme application (0300 131 0053) open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday. Furthermore, the [Simple Energy Advice](#) (SEA) website, used to find accredited installers for measures under the scheme, also offers a non-digital route for elderly and vulnerable homeowners to search for suitable installers. Homeowners can contact 0800 444 202 between 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday.

Outside of the voucher scheme, support is available to vulnerable and elderly households on low incomes via the £500m Local Authority Delivery (LAD) element. Local Authorities have a comprehensive understanding of their local community and are able to identify vulnerable households through a variety of referral routes, such as a 'cold home referral' from the health and charity sectors.

Lastly, we are working closely with other governmental departments, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Office for Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), to help raise homeowners' awareness of the scheme.

Life Sciences**Catherine West:**[\[113174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase the level of human relevant life sciences in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Since 2017, the Government has invested approximately £1 billion through two Life Sciences Sector Deals, helping to generate significant levels of industry investment in the UK.

At Budget this year, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Life Sciences Investment Programme (LSIP), a new dedicated investment programme of up to £600 million of joint Government and industry investment. The LSIP aims to unlock the potential of the UK's best health and life science innovations, allowing companies to grow in the UK.

This reflects the Government's manifesto commitment to make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences.

Local Restrictions Support Grant: Wholesale Trade**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[114798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Local Government Association on ensuring that local authorities administer grant funding to wholesalers as part of the Plan for Jobs five per

cent discretionary fund in line with the recommendations in clause 23 of the Additional Restrictions Grant Guidance for Local Authorities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There has been close engagement with the local government sector, including the Local Government Association, throughout the design and implementation of grant support for businesses since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.

The Additional Restrictions Support Grant is a discretionary fund and local authorities are free to determine which support best fits their area.

■ **National Grid**

John Spellar:

[\[112996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for security and stability of the National Grid of the need to issue System Warnings on 4 and 5 November 2020.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) is responsible for ensuring security of supply on a day-to-day basis and possesses a range of tools to keep the system in balance. As a result of tight margins on the electricity system - driven by weather conditions, availability of generators and demand levels - NGESO issued Electricity Margin Notices (EMNs) on 3 and 4 November 2020 to ask for more generation to be brought onto the system to provide a larger cushion of surplus capacity. EMNs are part of NGESO's standard procedure for balancing supply and demand, and both notices were cancelled after sufficient generation became available. The system worked as designed.

The forecast electricity margin for this winter is healthy, at 4.8GW or 8.3% additional generation. We remain confident that NGESO is well-equipped to ensure electricity security in a wide range of circumstances this winter, all of which meet the Government's Reliability Standard.

In future we expect GB's energy mix to continue to diversify, including greater levels of offshore wind, storage, Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) and nuclear, as well as more interconnection to Europe and wider access to the electricity market. NGESO has plans in place to transform the operation of the electricity system so that it is ready for zero-carbon operation in 2025.

■ **Redundancy**

Lucy Powell:

[\[114898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many proposed redundancies were indicated on HR1 forms received by the Redundancy Payments Service in October 2020.

Paul Scully:

Employers are required to file a form HR1 where they are proposing to dismiss 20 or more employees at a single establishment. HR1 forms received by Redundancy Payments Service during October 2020 indicated 51,195 proposed redundancies.

The aggregate number may include proposed dismissals due to insolvency, restructuring of a solvent/continuing business, changes to terms and conditions, or proposed relocation of employees, for example. It should also be noted that a proposal to make a given number of dismissals does not necessarily result in all or any of the proposed dismissals occurring.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions**Douglas Chapman:**[\[113130\]](#)

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

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government recognises the importance of bringing together co-ordinated policy action across all departments, to achieve net zero. Two cabinet committees have been established, chaired by my Rt. Hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. These Committees are turbo-charging the net zero transition and co-ordinating action across government.

In 2019 we published our Clean Maritime Plan, the UK's pathway to zero emissions shipping. It identifies ways to tackle air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions while securing growth and placing the UK at the forefront of the global transition to clean shipping. Implementation of the plan is underway. We have funded two competitions for early stage innovation projects in clean maritime, run a study to identify and support potential UK zero emission shipping clusters and supported the establishment of Marine Emissions Regulations advisory Service and the Maritime Research and Innovation UK (MarRI-UK) initiative.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Amazon Web Services****Chi Onwurah:**[\[114881\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total (a) value and (b) number of Government contracts spent with Amazon Web Services was in the last five years.

Chi Onwurah: [\[114882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Amazon Web Services on the use of cloud services.

Chi Onwurah: [\[114883\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, where the Government's data held with Amazon Web Services is stored; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the judgment by the European Court of Justice in the Schrems II case on that data storage.

Julia Lopez:

Data on government spending with suppliers is available on the Crown Commercial Service website. Departments also publish spend data on GOV.UK and are responsible for their own hosting decisions.

As part of the One Government Cloud Strategy, the government has already agreed a number of Memorandums of Understanding with suppliers including UKCloud, Microsoft, IBM, Google and AWS.

The Government is assessing the need for any actions arising from the Schrems II decision. Further announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ Civil Partnerships and Marriage: Ceremonies

Sarah Olney: [\[105624\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will put in place a mandatory two-week notice period for changing guidelines for marriages and civil partnerships ceremonies.

Penny Mordaunt:

May I apologise for the delay in answering the question. On 5 November, the Department for Health and Social Care acted swiftly in accordance with growing evidence of virus prevalence to put in place new national COVID-19 restrictions in England. Under these new restrictions, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are not permitted to take place, except in exceptional circumstances where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover. We recognise that the restrictions may be disappointing for those who are planning such events. However, by their nature, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are events that bring families and friends together from across the country and sometimes across the world, making them high risk events for transmission of the virus.

For further information on COVID-19 restrictions, please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>. Information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is available on related websites.

■ Disease Control**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[100366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to revoke the (a) Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (as amended by the Health Protection Act 2008), (b) Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008 and (c) Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967; and what legislative plans he has to ensure conformity in the tackling of pandemics.

Chloe Smith:

I apologise for the delay in answering this question. The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (as amended by the Health Protection Act 2008), (b) Public Health etc. (Scotland) Act 2008 and (c) Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 enable the UK Government and devolved administrations to take a flexible approach according to the data in different parts of the UK. Public health is devolved and different underpinning legislation is required to enable interventions in different parts of the UK - even where those interventions may be similar. We will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations on the substance of our response.

■ Electoral Register: Ethnic Groups**Cat Smith:**[\[114938\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve voting registration rates among black people in the UK.

Cat Smith:[\[114939\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to introduce automatic voter registration in response to the recommendations from the Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Chloe Smith:

Electoral Registration Officers have statutory responsibility for maintaining complete and accurate electoral registers for their areas. The Government seeks to make registration as easy as possible and to work with many others to reduce any barriers to registration. We encourage everyone who is eligible to register to vote, and registering to vote has never been easier or more convenient.

The Government opposes automatic registration as it contradicts the principle that individuals are responsible for registering and that this should be done at a time and place of their choosing. Automatic registration would raise privacy and security concerns. It would also risk introducing errors and inaccuracies to the registers, creating unwarranted opportunities for fraud.

■ Influenza: Mortality Rates

Tim Loughton: [\[114757\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths there were from seasonal flu in each month of the last three years.

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 PQ114757 [PQ114757.pdf]

■ Ministers: Contact Tracing

Conor McGinn: [\[113584\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is Government policy that Cabinet ministers use the NHS covid-19 app, including contact tracing.

Penny Mordaunt:

We encourage everyone to download and use the NHS COVID-19 app.

■ Slavery: Monuments

Stephen Farry: [\[104775\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of commissioning a memorial to remember the victims of the Transatlantic slave trade and slavery.

Julia Lopez:

May I apologise for the delay in answering this question. The UK deplores the human suffering caused by slavery and the slave trade. They are among the most dishonourable and abhorrent chapters in the history of humanity.

Public and private organisations are able to propose, fund, develop and deliver memorials marking incidents and historical moments.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Churches**

Chris Green: [\[113566\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Commissioners have made of (a) trends in the level of closure of churches and (b) the ability of worshipping communities to fund ongoing repairs to church buildings.

Andrew Selous:

The details of individual parish finances is not generally a matter for the Church Commissioners, though other parts of the National Church Institutions and dioceses have been keeping planned giving and donations under careful review. Churches that have a solid foundation of regular giving through direct debit or standing order appear to be withstanding the pandemic much better than those whose finances were more reliant on church hall income, fundraising events, visitor donations and cash in the offertory plate. During the first national lockdown whilst some parishes saw a substantial drop off in donations others have embraced new technology using digital giving, and social media and, when Church buildings are open, contactless giving.

Although there has been a significant reduction in parish payments to dioceses to fund ministry costs, this has been less than anticipated at the start of the national lockdown, in part boosted by use of reserves as well as the generosity of givers. We are grateful to the Government for allocating over £30million from the Culture Recovery Fund to support major churches and cathedrals. The Church Commissioners have also made significant funds available where possible to support music, essential craft and tradespeople alongside sustainability funding and salary support for cathedrals. The continuation of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme is also important for the future funding of repairs to church buildings and the Archbishops' Council have made representations to the Treasury about this.

■ Churches: Coronavirus**Chris Green:**[\[113564\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Commissioners have made of the effect of churches on community health and wellbeing through their provision of food banks, youth services, mental health services, addiction support services and other community services during the covid-19 outbreak and associated lockdowns.

Andrew Selous:

The parish church is a key source of community support and I commend the work of clergy and volunteers across the country during this very challenging time.

Recent research published by Theos and the Church Urban Fund

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf> and separately by the National Churches Trust

<https://www.houseofgood.nationalchurchestrust.org/> has shown the substantial social and economic contribution parishes, and cathedrals make to their local communities.

Across the dioceses of the Church of England churches are operating 35,000 based projects which serve the needs of their communities, I am pleased to say that many of these have continued to operate during the pandemic within the guidelines set out by Government on Covid-19, providing crisis support such as foodbanks, bereavement counselling, night shelters, debt relief advice, as well as project work to combat modern slavery and support victims of domestic abuse.

■ Churches: Leicestershire**Dr Luke Evans:****[102186]**

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps he is taking to support churches across Leicestershire to conduct Christmas services in 2020.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England's seasonal campaign 'Comfort and Joy' will provide online, booklet and social media resources for all parishes and worshippers to use and enjoy this Advent and Christmas. More information is available here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/preparing-advent-christmas-2020-comfort-and-joy>

Following the Government announcement of a second lockdown, churches have been required to close again for public worship, though I am hopeful this will lift at the end of lockdown on 2nd December and that public worship can resume, with the necessary social distancing rules in place, during Advent and Christmas. The Church of England remains in dialogue with the Government about this as part of the Government's Places of Worship Task Force. I commend the work of clergy and volunteers across the country during this very challenging time.

■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**Anne Marie Morris:****[112061]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions the Church Commissioners have had with the Government on allowing places of worship to remain open during lockdown if they continue to implement additional covid-secure measures.

Andrew Selous:

Following the Government announcement of a second lockdown, churches have been required to close again for public worship, between 5th November and 2nd December. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London and senior Christian and other faith leaders wrote to the Prime Minister about this and their letter can be read here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Faith%20communities%20letter%20to%20Prime%20Minister%20%28ii%29.pdf>.

In it they concluded: "We have already said there is no scientific rationale for suspension of Public Worship where it is compliant with the guidance that we have worked jointly with government to establish. We believe government, and Public Health England, accept this. Government is making decisions about what aspects of our life during this period of restrictions are essential. We believe we have demonstrated that continuation of public worship is essential, for all the reasons we have set out above. We call on government to recognise and support this, and enable us to continue to worship safely, as part of the essential fabric of the nation."

The Church of England remains in dialogue with the Government about this as part of the Government's Places of Worship Task Force. I commend the work of clergy and volunteers across the country during this very challenging time.

Church buildings may remain open for individual prayer where it has been possible to make them COVID-secure. The Church has continued to encourage clergy to broadcast services and make resources available online where possible. Guidance and advice from Public Health England and the Church of England is being distributed to clergy and is published on the Church of England website here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>.

DEFENCE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Stephen Morgan:

[115012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the extent to which overseas service personnel face challenges in their postal votes being (a) delivered on time and (b) counted in UK elections.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is aware that postal voting for Service personnel posted overseas can be challenging. The MOD raises the issue of overseas defence postal voters with the Cabinet Office prior to each national electoral period, requesting that the Electoral Commission ensures that British Forces Post Office (BFPO) addresses are prioritised and despatched as soon as possible. However, in accordance with electoral statute, the earliest that ballot papers can be distributed is 19 working days before Polling Day. This means that BFPO have a maximum of 19 days to distribute and return ballot papers across the globe. While the BFPO makes every effort to ensure that postal ballots are received in good time, this cannot be guaranteed. We therefore advise our personnel serving overseas of the risk that they may not be able to return their ballot before the voting deadline. Due to the time it can take to deliver and return postal ballot papers overseas, we advise our personnel to consider appointing a proxy vote instead.

The MOD will continue to work with the Electoral Commission to ensure that overseas Armed Forces votes are processed quickly. However, current Parliamentary rules regarding the timescales placed on postal voting are outside the remit of the MOD. Additionally, the introduction of any alternative voting processes for overseas voters remains a matter for the Electoral Commission to consider.

■ **Armed Forces: Saudi Arabia**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[115042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Royal Saudi Air Force pilot Mahna al-Biz received training from armed forces personnel in (a) the UK and (b) Saudi Arabia before 13 September 2017.

James Heappey:

The hon. Member's question is assumed to refer to Lt Col Muhanna Al-Baiz, who completed Typhoon conversion training in the UK, delivered by RAF personnel, in 2011 - 2012.

Lt Col Al-Baiz would have received routine continuation training in Saudi Arabia, some of which will likely have been from BAE Systems pilots, including RAF personnel on secondment to the company.

Arms Trade: Exports**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[113501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policy on UK defence exports of the increasing proportion of US-made equipment procured by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

UK Defence equipment is highly regarded; this view is also reflected in the statistics recently released by the Department for International Trade's Defence Security Exports Organisation which show that the UK is ranked 2nd in the global rankings and in 2019 won defence orders worth £11 billion.

The UK Armed Forces equipment needs are many and varied and so it is right that we source the best kit available for them, whether that be from the UK, US or somewhere else, whilst delivering value for money for the taxpayer.

The Department is looking at how the UK Defence Sector can best support the equipment programme into the future through the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy.

AWE**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[114791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of reverting AWE to a direct Government ownership model.

Jeremy Quin:

The change in governance removes the current commercial arrangements, enhancing the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) agility in the future management of the UK's nuclear deterrent. The benefit of AWE plc becoming an Arms-Length Body, wholly owned by the MOD, will mean that there will be no fee or profit payments.

The action taken by the MOD to trigger the Termination for Convenience clause will not incur any penalty cost.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[114792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which UK Government Investments representative is planned to be on the board of Atomic Weapons Establishment.

Jeremy Quin:

No decision has been made on who the government representative on the Atomic Weapons Establishment plc Non-Departmental Public Body Board will be. The new Board will be appointed following the termination of the current contract on the June 30th 2021, and announced closer to this time.

Defence and Military Alliances**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[114790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has a singular definition of interoperability.

James Heapey:

UK Defence uses the NATO definition of interoperability: "The ability to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve Allied tactical, operational and strategic objectives."

Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[113008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to replace the F-35b support system from ALIS with ODIN.

Jeremy Quin:

Yes. In line with the Global F-35 Programme the UK will replace the ALIS Support System with ODIN.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[113009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government has an agreement with the United States which would allow RAF pilots to fly USMC F-35b aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

There is no agreement for UK pilots flying USMC aircraft (or vice versa) beyond currently established Exchange Officer positions. However, we will always seek to achieve maximum interoperability and synergy of effort with the US in maritime projection, including under the UK/US Statement of Intent for Enhanced Carrier Co-operation. Carrier Strike Group 21 will see USMC F-35B and associated personnel fully integrated on HMS Queen Elizabeth for the deployment.

Military Aircraft**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[114793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there is a central agency that deals with the supply of non-military flights for officials within his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

Ministry of Defence staff are required to book all non-military flights via American Express Global Business Travel, which forms part of the Public Sector Travel and Venue Solutions framework, managed by Crown Commercial Services.

■ Nuclear Weapons and Cybercrime

Owen Thompson:

[\[114963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of maintaining nuclear weapons on the deterrence of cyber crime threats.

James Heapey:

The nuclear deterrent is not intended to deter crime. The UK has policies and capabilities to deal with the wide range of threats we currently face or might face in the future, including the threat of cyber crime. Our nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats to our national security and way of life, which cannot be deterred by other means.

■ Shipbuilding

Chris Elmore:

[\[113187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of changes to UK immigration policy on the shipbuilding industry who employ non-UK labour on projects relevant to the UK's national security.

Mr Ben Wallace:

In my role as Shipbuilding Tsar, I am committed to developing this sector and recognise the importance of access to skills.

I am working closely with colleagues across Government to deliver the pipeline of skilled workers that the industry needs to successfully deliver the ships required for our national security and prosperity.

In future, any EU citizen wishing to come to live and work in the UK will need to apply under the UK's future immigration system, which we are now capable of setting in the national interest.

■ Type 26 Frigates: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[113500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect on UK security of the delay in the procurement of the second tranche of Type 26 frigates.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to his Question 70339 on 14 July 2020.

Attachments:

1. WQnA extract on Type 26 Frigates [70339 - Type 26 Frigates.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts and Culture: Coventry****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[114905\]](#)

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

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government recognises the huge contribution the arts and culture sector makes, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. It is for this reason that we have invested an unprecedented £1.57 billion, the biggest ever one-off cash injection, into UK culture to tackle the crisis facing our most loved arts organisations and heritage sites across the country including Coventry, which is to be our next City of Culture.

The Arts Council has allocated over £500k from its Emergency Response Fund to the city including £68k to individuals. The Culture Recovery Fund has awarded over £2.7 million in recovery grant funding (as of 11 Nov) to arts and heritage organisations in Coventry to help support them through the current Covid-19 outbreak.

In addition ACE allocated £3.4m, to Coventry City of Culture Trust (delivery body) to ensure Coventry's success as City of Culture. The arts and cultural sector is instrumental to Coventry's success and the Trust have; employed local art/cultural freelancers, invested in cultural infrastructure and during the first lockdown initiated a resilience fund for the local arts community. Coventry will be one of the first to host major events post Covid and, whilst challenges have been posed by the pandemic, their activity and programming has provided a much needed injection of cash into the sector and supported artists in the region, nationally and internationally.

■ Arts: Greater London**Helen Hayes:**[\[113162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support London's creative sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Culture Recovery Fund is an unprecedented £1.57 billion one-off cash injection into UK culture, to tackle the crisis facing our most loved arts organisations, heritage sites, and creative sector.

Over £500 million has been allocated so far with over 700 recovery grant awards to London (across arts and heritage as of 11 November), totalling over £150 million. This is in addition to government support schemes and funding made available by Arts Council England, including an £18 million ['Developing Your Creative Practice Fund'](#) which is open across England.

On 5 November, the Chancellor announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will be [extended until March 2021](#). Businesses can continue to apply for government-backed loans, and self-employed individuals can access the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, which has also been extended until April 2021. The CJRS and SEISS support has been made more generous, with individuals able to receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked/average trading profits respectively.

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

■ **Broadband: Rural Areas**

Damian Green:

[\[112973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policy on the Outside In programme of the findings of the National Audit Office's report of January 2015 on the Superfast (Rural) Broadband Programme: update.

Matt Warman:

In 2013 and 2015 the NAO published reports on the progress of the Superfast (Rural) Broadband Programme. Since we last reported, the Superfast Programme has moved increasingly to gigabit-capable full-fibre solutions in place of copper telephone wires from premises to a local cabinet.

The Superfast Programme has delivered over 5.2m premises with superfast broadband, which constitutes 17% of all households in the UK and reached the target of 95% coverage in December 2017. After hitting this target Ministers agreed to continue the programme using a combination of underspend, early clawback, Local Body/Devolved funding and EU funding (ERDF and EAFRD). With coverage now beyond 96%.

The NAO have recognised what has been achieved through the Superfast Programme in their latest report from 16th October 2020 called 'Improving Broadband' and has made several recommendations to the Department to be utilised as part of its development of the UK Gigabit Programme.

We are developing our approach to delivering the £5 billion UK Gigabit programme as fast as possible and my officials will ensure that all recommendations that have been made by the NAO will be taken into account during this work. This is a very complex programme and we want to make sure our interventions cater for current need, geography and cost-effectiveness and incorporates lessons learned from previous programmes.

We understand the challenges in achieving nationwide coverage, particularly in hard to reach areas. And have been working closely with industry and local authority partners to develop an approach that will scale with the market's ambitions.

In the meantime we are already connecting some of the hardest to reach places in the country, not only through our Superfast Broadband but additionally with Local Full Fibre Networks and Rural Gigabit Connectivity programmes.

Further details about the £5 billion of public funding committed at the Budget will be announced at the Spending Review on the 25th November.

■ **Coronavirus: Disinformation**

Damian Hinds:

[\[114832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the extent of (a) misinformation and (b) disinformation on social media on the covid-19 outbreak to date; who the originators of the most widespread messages are; and what assessment he has made of the motivations behind such messages.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

That is why we stood up the Counter Disinformation Unit up on 5 March to bring 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.

Misinformation and disinformation can come from a range of sources, however it would not be appropriate for us to provide a running commentary on the amount of misinformation or 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.

■ **Data Protection: UK Relations with EU**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[114872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to update the explanatory framework for adequacy discussions presented to the EU, following the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and the provisions permitting data flows with Japan and their partners.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The explanatory framework, published in March 2020, was intended to inform adequacy discussions with the European Commission and we have no plans to update it. Data provisions in Free Trade Agreements, including the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), are separate but complementary to the UK's adequacy process and international data protection

frameworks. Separately from the CEPA, the UK has preserved the effect of the EU's adequacy decision for Japan on a transitional basis.

■ **Sir Malcolm Arnold**

Sir John Hayes: [\[113492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the papers of composer Sir Malcolm Arnold are preserved in the National Archives.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The National Archives and the Ministry of Justice are currently liaising regarding records of the Office of the Public Guardian and the Chancery Division of the High Court which pertain to Sir Malcolm Arnold. Whilst discussions are ongoing the records are secure within the custody of the Ministry of Justice and are not at imminent risk of destruction.

■ **Telecommunications: Codes of Practice**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[114987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether there is a competent authority in place to fulfill the UK's obligations under the EU Electronic Communications Code 2018.

Matt Warman:

The European Electronic Communications Code Directive updates the EU telecommunications regulatory framework. The Directive will be implemented in the UK via the Electronic Communications And Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code And Eu Exit) Regulations 2020, as approved by the Houses on 10 November 2020, to come into force for a transposition deadline of 21 December 2020.

Whilst the Directive gives member states flexibility to assign certain functions to competent authorities, as under prior EU and domestic law, Ofcom is retained as the designated telecoms national regulatory authority in the UK.

■ **Telecommunications: Coronavirus**

Chi Onwurah: [\[114879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of closing telecoms customer support services during the covid-19 outbreak on (a) UK businesses, (b) consumers and (c) those people and businesses who do not have access to fixed lines.

Matt Warman:

The Government recognises the ongoing importance of the telecommunications industry at this critical time. We have taken action to support the industry to respond to the crisis, including issuing guidance to industry, as well as local authorities and

landowners on how to safely ensure that work to maintain and repair the telecoms network can continue, given the importance of telecoms infrastructure at this critical time. Furthermore, the Government and Ofcom have agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile providers to support vulnerable consumers during the pandemic in addition to providing new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.

The Government agreed that tougher national restrictions were needed to help get the virus under control and protect the NHS. There was joint agreement that there was no alternative to new national restrictions and there are significant restrictions on some sectors of the economy, including all non-essential retail. However, providers have continued to provide online and phone support services during both local and national restrictions.

■ Tennis: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[110922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether outdoor tennis played by people from (a) one household or (b) different households respecting social distancing guidelines is possible during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

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

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

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

■ Tourism

Mary Glendon:

[\[114171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the role the coach travel sector can play in revitalising the UK tourism industry; and when he last met with representatives of the Confederation of Passenger Transport to discuss the revitalisation of the tourism industry.

Nigel Huddleston:

Coaches are an important part of the UK tourism industry, and play a key role each year in connecting visitors with holiday destinations across the country. We are engaging with a broad range of tourism stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support the sector's recovery.

I have discussed the problems facing the coach travel sector in detail with my Ministerial counterparts in the Department for Transport, who hold overall responsibility for coach travel, as well as my counterparts in the Devolved Administrations. The Department also continues to engage with the Coach Tourism Association via the Tourism Industry Events Response Group (TIER).

In July my officials attended a cross-Government Ministerial roundtable on problems facing the coach industry, which was attended by the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT). I have also responded to written correspondence from the CPT.

■ Training**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[115034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Government's Rethink, Reskill, Reboot campaign was launched.

Matt Warman:

The Rethink, Reskill, Reboot recruitment campaign began on Friday 9 October 2020.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Coventry****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[114211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has allocated to businesses in Coventry to support the recruitment of apprentices in each of the last 10 years.

Gillian Keegan:

The government does not allocate apprenticeships funding directly to employers. Employers in England who pay the apprenticeship levy can access funds for apprenticeship training via their apprenticeship service accounts. Employers that do not pay the levy can also now access apprenticeships through the service or through a training provider contracted by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to deliver apprenticeships until 31 March 2021, after which all employers will access funding via the service.

Many levy-paying employers operate in more than one location, and they can spend the funds in their accounts on apprenticeship training across England. We cannot, therefore, disaggregate levy drawdown to individual regions as to the proportion that has been spent on apprenticeship recruitment. Providers' allocated funding to deliver apprenticeships may operate in multiple locations.

Employer demand for apprenticeships has meant that there have been 30,850 apprenticeship starts in the Coventry local authority since May 2010. The table attached provides annual apprenticeship starts in Coventry since the 2010/11 academic year.

Data as reported on the Individualised Learner Record, as published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/899753/201920-July_totals-since-may-2010-and-2015.xlsx

In the financial year 2020/21, funding available for investment in apprenticeships in England is almost £2.5 billion, double what was spent in financial year 2010/11. This funds the cost of apprenticeship training and assessment, any recruitment costs are incurred by the employer.

Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow. To help support employers to offer new apprenticeships, employers are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for those aged 25 and over until 31 January 2021. The new payment means it's a great time for employers in Coventry to offer new apprenticeship opportunities.

Attachments:

1. 114211_table [114211_Table_showing_apprenticeship_starts.xls]

■ **Children: Coronavirus**

Afzal Khan:

[114314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide fiscal support for parents with childcare cost liabilities in the event that a family is required to self-isolate as a result of their child awaiting a covid-19 test.

Vicky Ford:

We want parents to have access to a range of affordable childcare, giving them increased flexibility in their working hours and helping children thrive in the crucial early years. This is why the department is planning to spend more than £3.6 billion to support our early education entitlements in 2020-21.

We want to provide security to nurseries and childminders who are open for the children who need them. That is why on 20 July we announced our commitment to continue paying local authorities for the childcare places they usually fund, for the autumn term. This means that even if providers are open but caring for fewer children, as a result of low demand from parents or due to public health reasons, they can continue to be funded for the autumn term at broadly the levels they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This gives another term of secure income to nurseries and childminders who are open for the children who need them.

Whilst we do not provide guidance on how providers operate their private businesses, including charges for provision over and above a child's free hours, we urge all

childcare providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents, given the great uncertainty they will be facing too.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has established a COVID-19 Taskforce to identify, monitor and respond to competition and consumer problems arising from COVID-19 and the measures taken to contain it. People and businesses who have seen or experienced businesses behaving unfairly during the COVID-19 outbreak can report it to the CMA by using their dedicated online form. Where there is evidence that businesses have breached competition or consumer protection law, the CMA will take enforcement action if warranted. As a result of alleged unfair practices caused by COVID-19 disruptions, the CMA has published an open letter to the early years sector (nurseries and childcare providers). This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-open-letter-to-the-early-years-sector>.

If asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and on a low income, parents who are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result may be entitled to a payment of £500 from their local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. For more information, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>.

■ Coronavirus: Children

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[113272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support clinically extremely vulnerable children learning from home.

Nick Gibb:

The Department published expectations of the quality of remote education for schools on 2 July 2020 as part of the schools guidance for full opening, and for Further Education (FE) providers in August 2020 as part of the autumn term guidance. Additional information on these publications can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision/what-fe-colleges-and-providers-will-need-to-do-from-the-start-of-the-2020-autumn-term>.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. This should be done in line with previous guidance and the Temporary Continuity Direction, which has been in effect since 22 October 2020.

On 1st October 2020, the Department announced a further remote education support package to help schools and FE colleges meet the remote education expectations set out in guidance and Direction. Many elements of the support package are already in

place and more will be available over the coming months to schools and FE colleges. These can be accessed through the remote education service, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The support package includes access to the right technology to deliver remote education, peer to peer training on how to use this effectively, and practical tools, good practice guidance and school-led webinars. This adds to existing support including the resources available from Oak National Academy, which provides video lessons across a broad range of subjects for every year group from Reception to Year 11. Oak National Academy will remain a free optional resource for the 2020-21 academic year, with further information available at: <https://www.thenational.academy/>.

As part of over £195 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, the Department is making over 340,000 laptops and tablets available during the 2020 Autumn term to support disadvantaged children whose face-to-face education may be disrupted. Schools can order devices for critically extremely vulnerable children while they are not attending school by contacting covid.technology@education.gov.uk.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Stephanie Peacock:

[114990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to develop a long term plan for education during and beyond the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Education recovery is a priority for the Department as schools recover from the disruption caused by COVID-19. Schools have been open for all pupils full-time since the start of the autumn term. It continues to be the Department's aim that all pupils remain in school full-time as this is the best place for them to be for their education, development and wellbeing.

The Department recognises that all children and young people have had their education disrupted as a result of COVID-19. The Department has announced a catch up package worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support schools to make up for lost teaching time. Alongside the Catch up Premium, the Department has announced a new £350 million National Tutoring Programme, which will increase access to high-quality tuition for the most disadvantaged young people.

The Department is also delivering a remote education support package which includes access to the right technology to deliver remote education, peer to peer training on how to use this effectively, and practical tools, guidance and webinars. Additionally, over 340,000 laptops and tablets, owned by schools, trusts or local authorities, are being made available by the Department this term to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 whose face-to-face education may be disrupted.

Understanding the long term impact of COVID-19 disruption on attainment and progress is a key research priority for the Department, and it has commissioned an independent research and assessment agency to consider catch up needs and monitor progress over the course of the year. This will help inform strategic policy for supporting the school system.

■ Education: Standards

Colleen Fletcher:

[114904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to close the attainment gap in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is aware that all pupils, regardless of their background, have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. We are providing schools with the resources and tools to address lost education so that all pupils may make up lost ground. Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package is providing additional funding so that schools can support pupils who have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-covid-catch-up-plan-to-tackle-impact-of-lost-teaching-time>.

As part of this, the £650 million universal Catch-Up Premium is enabling all schools to identify and prioritise support for pupils to address their needs: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-catch-up-premium>. This complements the National Tutoring Programme, which is targeting £350 million to accelerate the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils by making high-quality tutors available to schools in all regions at a greatly reduced rate.

English schools continue to receive the Pupil Premium, worth £2.4 billion again this year, to enable them to arrange extra personalised support for disadvantaged pupils. This year, schools in the Coventry North East constituency are sharing £6.8 million provided through this grant, with schools in Coventry local authority sharing more than £18.2 million. The figure for the fourteen local authorities in the West Midlands region is £316.39 million. More information about Pupil Premium allocations and conditions of grant in the 2020/21 financial year is available through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021>.

The Department founded the Education Endowment Foundation in 2011 to research and disseminate the most effective ways to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. So far, it has conducted 190 trials in 13,000 English schools, leading to the publication of a comprehensive range of internationally recognised effective practices. This research shows that schools effectively implementing the best evidence-based approaches can make a difference to the future of every pupil.

We developed a Disadvantage Gap Index that is unaffected by our widespread educational reforms. The index shows that, between 2011 and 2019, the attainment

gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrowed by 13% at age 11 and 9% at age 16: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/attainment-gap/>. Most disadvantaged pupils now attend good or outstanding schools. In March 2020, 86% of schools were Good or Outstanding compared to just 68% in 2010. Our reforms have supported this improvement.

We know there is more to do for disadvantaged pupils, hence our £90m Opportunity Areas programme: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/opportunity-areas-programme-to-support-young-people-hit-hardest-by-pandemic>. The long-term objective of the programme is to transform the life chances of children and young people in 12 areas of the country with low social mobility, whilst learning more about what works to improve education outcomes in coastal, rural and urban areas. The programme seeks to tackle regional inequality, convening resources, testing new approaches and unlocking barriers in those geographic areas, such as Stoke-on-Trent in the West Midlands, where the educational challenges are greatest.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Stephanie Peacock:

[114989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of covid-19 outbreak on the (a) mental and (b) physical health of (i) teachers and (ii) school and college staff.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises the pressure that teachers and leaders in schools and colleges are under. We are enormously grateful to them for their efforts, resilience and service to our country's children and young people as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department has been working closely with members of our Expert Advisory Group on staff wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, and we understand the pressures that teachers and leaders are facing.

The Department has taken decisive action to fund a pilot with Education Support to provide professional supervision from experts and peer support for school leaders, managing the pressures caused by COVID-19. This service will run until at least December 2020, and the outcome of the pilot will inform future wellbeing and mental health interventions. Alongside this, the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return training programme is already supporting staff in schools and colleges to respond to the additional pressures children and young people may be experiencing because of the COVID-19 outbreak.

In June, the Department announced a range of commitments to support the wellbeing of teachers and other education professionals in schools and colleges. These include the creation of a wellbeing charter for the teaching sector. The charter will help create an open culture around wellbeing and mental health, breaking down stigma, and will include a range of commitments by the Government and for employers in schools and colleges to promote and protect staff wellbeing. Further information on this is

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

■ Financial Services: Primary Education

Lee Anderson:

[113225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Talk Money Week, what plans he has to promote conversations about money to pupils in primary schools to help build their financial resilience to future economic challenges; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

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

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

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

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

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

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

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Tim Loughton:

[\[114750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what was the cost of the free school meal vouchers issued over the summer holiday; and what was the value of those vouchers not redeemed.

Vicky Ford:

Our national voucher scheme launched on 31 March. Edenred, the supplier, has reported that over £380 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by families, as of 19 August, and over 20,350 schools had placed orders for the scheme as of 28 July. This covers both term time and holiday provision. Schools also had the option to order via local voucher schemes and claim costs back through the exceptional costs fund. The free school meal (FSM) voucher scheme has now closed. Schools and their kitchens are open, so normal FSM provision has resumed, enabling children to have a nutritious healthy meal at school. We do not hold data relating to the value of vouchers that have not been redeemed and such a figure would still be subject to change. The expiry date on an eGift card varies depending on the retailer (the shortest term being 12 months).

■ Further Education: Closures

Mike Amesbury:

[\[113219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many further education establishments have closed in the last (a) 12 months, (b) five years and (c) 10 years.

Gillian Keegan:

There has been a substantial reduction in independent college corporations over the last 10 years. That reflects increased efficiency achieved through mergers, including through reducing the number of separate leadership teams and rationalising corporate services. All structural changes have prioritised learner need and achieving high educational standards. In every dissolution, there was a transfer of assets, rights and liabilities (including sites, staff, continuing students, provision and funding) to other colleges or education providers.

The number of corporations that have closed is as follows:

- (a) Between 1 November 2019 and 31 October 2020 – 9.
- (b) Between 1 November 2015 and 31 October 2020 – 100.
- (c) Between 1 November 2010 and 31 October 2020 – 123.

These figures include 26 sixth form colleges which have converted to academies. Decisions in relation to provision provided at individual college sites are taken by college corporations, including assessing the impact of any changes to delivery model on students' access to learning.

■ Further Education: Social Mobility

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[114906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve social mobility in post-16 education for people in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Gillian Keegan:

True social mobility is when we put students, their needs and career ambitions first, be that through Higher Education (HE), Further Education (FE) or Apprenticeships. Our policies supporting mobility in post-16 education will benefit people across the country, including Coventry and the West Midlands.

All young people in England are required to continue in education or training until the age of 18. This was implemented because the small group of young people that were not participating included some of the most vulnerable and we want to give all young people the opportunity to develop the skills they need for adult life and to achieve their full potential.

To support students with a disadvantage to participate in post-16 education, we provide funding for disadvantaged students, aged between 16-19, via allocations to institutions. These allocations include funding to account for students' economic deprivation (Disadvantage Block 1), and low prior attainment and/or special educational needs, using English and maths attainment as a proxy (Disadvantage Block 2).

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund targets support at young people who most need help with the costs of staying on in post-16 education and training. It provides funding to young people, aged between 16 and 19, who need financial support with costs to stay in FE.

We also apply a disadvantage uplift through our adult funding system. This results in a funding increase for learners living in the most deprived areas of the country, as we base the uplift on the learner's postcode. We apply this consistently across the Education and Skills Funding Agency's 'formula-funded' Adult Education Budget (AEB) provision.

The AEB also provides funds to colleges and providers, to help adult learners overcome barriers that prevent them from taking part in learning. This includes Learner Support, to support learners with a specific financial hardship and Learning Support, to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Apprenticeships offer high quality training opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds and can be a true driver of social mobility combining a job with high quality training. To help employers offer new apprenticeships, they are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25 before 31 January 2021. This is in recognition of the particular impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on the employment prospects of this group. In addition, our

Apprenticeships Support and Knowledge programme supports schools across England to provide disadvantaged students with information on apprenticeships.

It is more crucial than ever before that we tap into the brilliant talent that our country has to offer, and make sure that HE is available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue it, and who wish to do so, no matter where they grow up.

Latest UCAS data from 2020 admissions shows that record rates of 18 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds are going to university. However, there is clearly more to do to make sure everyone who has the talent and potential can thrive in HE. It is not enough to just get them through the door; attention needs to be paid to retention rates and graduate outcomes. Our reforms are continuing to open routes of progression, including HE, to enable students to make informed choices.

Through Access and Participation Plans, agreed with the Office for Students (OfS), HE providers are expected to reduce the gaps in access, success and progression for under-represented groups amongst their students.

The OfS-funded Uni Connect programme delivers collaborative outreach activity to schools and colleges in areas where participation in HE is lower than expected, based on attainment levels. Uni Connect partnerships work with schools to deliver bespoke programmes to reach out to underrepresented groups in HE, and have been successful in addressing cold spots so that no young person is left behind.

■ Home Education

Kate Green: [\[114159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to collect data on the number of pupils in elective home education.

Kate Green: [\[114160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of effect on children's education attainment of elective home education.

Kate Green: [\[114161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure elective home education is limited to where it is in the child's best interests.

Nick Gibb:

Parents are not obliged to register if they are home educating their children and, as a result, there is not a robust basis on which the Department can reliably collect statistics on home education.

Local authorities are responsible for taking action when it appears that the Elective Home Education (EHE) provision made by parents is unsuitable. If the local authority is not satisfied that the provision is suitable, then it can serve a school attendance order to parents. In April 2019, the Department issued new and strengthened guidance to local authorities on how they can exercise these powers.

In relation to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department is working closely with local authorities to encourage a return to full attendance in school and is monitoring the situation. Initial conversations with local authorities indicate that the majority have noticed an increase in enquiries from parents about home education. Where parents are anxious about the safety of their children returning to school, local authorities and school leaders are reinforcing that it is in the best interests of pupils to return to school.

On 20 October 2020, the Department published advice for parents considering EHE. This is designed to be shared with parents, schools, social workers and local authorities, where the option of EHE is raised. The document is intended to make clear implications of withdrawing their child from school and the challenge involved in providing EHE.

At the same time, the Department also produced information for local authorities and those who work with children, setting out how we expect them to ensure children receive a suitable education, and to use their powers to engage with parents considering EHE where appropriate.

■ Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

Virginia Crosbie:

[113270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support outdoor education centres at risk of permanent closure as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's advice on educational visits can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>. This guidance is in line with guidance from Public Health England, the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; it is currently under review and the findings will be available at the end of November.

The Government has introduced an unprecedented and comprehensive package of support to help as many individuals and businesses as possible during this difficult period. This includes small business grants, coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the deferral of VAT and income tax payments. The measures introduced have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

Further measures have been announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that build on the significant support already available and set out how current support will evolve and adapt. This includes the extension of the CJRS until the end of March 2021 and the introduction of the Local Restrictions Support Grant, which will provide grants of up to £1,500 for each 3-week period that a business is closed following the implementation of localised restrictions and business closures.

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. Businesses can also access tailored advice through our Business Support Helpline, online via the business support website or through their local growth hubs in England.

■ Pre-school Education: Music

Wera Hobhouse:

[113619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether group music and movement classes for children aged under five can continue during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

Music and movement classes for children under 5 need to meet necessary exceptions to continue during the COVID-19 November 2020 national restrictions.

Ofsted-registered early years settings can continue to engage peripatetic teachers for music, dance and drama, including staff from music education hubs, during the period of national restrictions, provided the relevant guidance is followed. Early years settings should continue to follow the guidance available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#infection-prevention-and-system-of-controls>.

Support groups for new parents can continue to be held.

Where these are held in Ofsted registered settings, they should follow government guidance on the COVID-19 outbreak for early years and childcare providers. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

Support groups for new parents in community settings, such as places of worship, community centres or halls, or libraries, and that are essential to deliver in person, can continue. These can be conducted with up to 15 participants where formally organised to provide mutual aid, therapy, or any other form of support. These groups must be organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent, or philanthropic institution, or a public body, and must follow COVID-19 secure guidance. Restricted businesses which are required to close, such as coffee shops, cannot hold support groups. When national restrictions apply, in determining the limit of 15 participants, no account is to be taken of any child who is below the age of 5.

Informal groups, such as those organised by a parent, need to comply with the gathering and household mixing rules. In practice, during the period of national restrictions, this means these groups should only meet virtually.

Supervised activity for children can continue to take place where it is reasonably necessary to enable parents to work, search for work or to undertake training or education, for example in indoor gyms, fitness studios, indoor sports facilities and other indoor leisure centres, community centres or halls.

■ Pupils: Computers**Gareth Thomas:****[112983]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November to Question 106214 how many and what proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals have been given laptops in each school in Harrow since March 2020.

Nick Gibb:

As part of over £195 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, over 340,000 laptops and tablets are being made available this term to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Year 3 to 11 whose face-to-face education may be disrupted.

This supplements over 220,000 laptops and tablets which have already been delivered during the summer term. This represents an injection of over 500,000 laptops and tablets by the end of the year.

Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, trusts or local authorities who can lend these to children and young people who need them the most in the event that they experience disruption to face-to-face education due to COVID-19. In many cases, this will be children who are also eligible for free school meals.

Data about the number of laptops and tablets delivered and provided as of 27 August 2020 is published here, which includes those delivered to Harrow Council and trusts in the Harrow region:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Devices_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf.

Information on the devices provided this term to schools, local authorities and academy trusts, as of 23 October 2020, is published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc_stats_note_shipped_data_231020_FINAL.pdf.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus**Margaret Greenwood:****[114926]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school children in each region who are (i) clinically vulnerable and (ii) clinically extremely vulnerable; and whether he has made a comparative assessment of those numbers between each region.

Margaret Greenwood:**[114927]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school age children who live in a household with someone who is (i) clinically vulnerable and (ii) clinically extremely vulnerable, by region.

Margaret Greenwood: [114928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school staff in each region who are (i) clinically vulnerable and (ii) clinically extremely vulnerable; and whether he has made a comparative assessment of those numbers between each region.

Margaret Greenwood: [114929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school staff who live in a household with someone who is (i) clinically vulnerable and (ii) clinically extremely vulnerable, by region.

Vicky Ford:

The information requested is not held centrally.

The annual school workforce census provides data on school staff characteristics, and although we collect sickness absence data, it does not record their health status. The latest school workforce census data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england#dataBlock-465b74eb-234a-418d-b240-b678afa06e66-tables>.

The school census provides data on school pupil characteristics, but this does not record their health status. The latest school census data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

■ Schools: Computers

Dr Rupa Huq: [113165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops have been (a) requested by and (b) delivered to (i) local education authorities and (ii) academy schools, companies and organisations in England by local authority area since 1 April 2020.

Nick Gibb:

As part of over £195 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care, over 340,000 laptops and tablets are being made available this term to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 whose face-to-face education may be disrupted.

This supplements over 220,000 laptops and tablets which have already been delivered during the summer term. This represents an injection of over 500,000 laptops and tablets by the end of the year.

The Department has updated the allocation process to more closely align allocations with the number of students schools typically have self-isolating. This approach ensures that as many children as possible are able to access a device at the point at which they need one.

Data about the number of laptops and tablets delivered and dispatched to local authorities or trusts as of 27 August 2020 is published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912888/Devices_and_4G_wireless_routers_progress_data_as_of_27_August_2020.pdf

Information on the devices provided this term to schools, local authorities and academy trusts as of 23 October 2020 is published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/929064/Ad-hoc_stats_note_shipped_data_231020_FINAL.pdf

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[113233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for schools that were in Tier 3 covid-19 local alert level areas before the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England was imposed.

Nick Gibb:

Getting all children and young people back into school for the new academic year has been a national priority. Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Following last year's Spending Round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22, and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. On average, schools are attracting 4.2% more per pupil in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. As stated in our guidance, schools should use these existing resources when making arrangements for the autumn term. The full guidance on the reopening of schools is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Schools have also been able to claim additional funding for exceptional costs incurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak between March to July 2020, such as additional cleaning required due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, and increased premises costs to keep schools open for priority groups during the Easter and summer half-term holidays. The guidance about claiming additional funding for exceptional costs associated with COVID-19 is available through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020>.

On Thursday 5 November 2020, the New National Restrictions replaced the Local COVID-19 Alert Level measures: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>. At the end of the new restrictions period, we will return to a regional approach, based on the latest data. At all local alert levels, the expectation is that education and childcare provision should continue as normal.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[113258]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what measures to prevent infection are in place for children of medically vulnerable parents returning to school.

Nick Gibb:

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

The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in the classroom far outweigh the low risk from COVID-19, and schools can take action to reduce risks still further.

The Department has published actions for schools during the COVID-19 outbreak, to support schools in welcoming back all children from the start of the autumn term. The full guidance is available through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Schools should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in this guidance. These measures provide a framework for school leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for all pupils and staff. If schools follow the above guidance and maximise control measures, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively. The measures in place include regular handwashing, promoting good respiratory hygiene, and minimising contact between individuals.

From 5 November 2020, following guidance for education settings during the New National Restrictions, children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should continue to attend education. The guidance for education settings during the New National Restrictions can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020#schools>.

New guidance for shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 was published on 4 November. The guidance is available through the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/advice-for-people-at-high-risk/>.

If parents have concerns about their child attending school because they consider that they, or members of their household, may have particular risk factors, they should discuss these with their school.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agricultural Products: Imports****Dan Jarvis:**[\[114890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of border checks on goods arriving from the EU after the transition period on the quality of (a) perishable goods and (b) fresh cut flowers.

Victoria Prentis:

Products of animal origin (POAO) from the EU will not be subject to additional checks until April 2021. From April, documentary checks on these goods will be carried out remotely. From July, POAO will be subject to a minimum of 1% physical and identity checks at the border, and documentary checks will continue to be carried out remotely to preserve the flow of goods from the EU to Great Britain.

Fresh produce (flowers, fruit and vegetables) will be required to have a phytosanitary certificate and some goods will need to be pre-notified from April 21. There will, however, be no physical checks at the border until July at which point all physical checks on regulated plants and products will be performed at designated Border Control Posts. Any documentary checks will be carried out remotely. The list of goods requiring pre-notification from April onwards will be published on the GOV.UK website shortly.

■ Air Pollution**Geraint Davies:**[\[114766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of increased cost of health problems caused by air pollution as a proportion of GDP since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to reduce air pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not assessed the increased cost of health problems caused by air pollution as a proportion of GDP since the start of the covid-19 outbreak. However, in 2018 Public Health England reported that the cumulative costs to the health and social care service from air pollution will be £5.3 billion by 2035, and their evidence shows that a reduction of $1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ of $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ in England in a single year would prevent 9,000 cases of asthma, 50,000 cases of coronary heart disease, 4000 lung cancers and 15,000 strokes in the period until 2035.

We are committed to tackling air pollution in order to improve public health and the environment. This is stated in our Clean Air Strategy of 2019, which the World Health Organization lauded as world leading. Our landmark Environment Bill is currently going through Parliament, and in it we are committing to an ambitious new air quality target on $\text{PM}_{2.5}$, the pollutant of greatest harm to human health.

We have also put in place a £3.5 billion plan to tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations.

■ Animal Products: Trade

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of hunting trophy (a) imports and (b) exports as a result of delays in bringing forward legislative proposals.

Victoria Prentis:

The Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the publication of the Government response to the recent consultation and call for evidence on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies. I have no plans to make an assessment of the impact of this delay on imports and exports of hunting trophies. However, we are continuing to work on this important area and a response will be published as soon as possible.

■ Dairy Products: Imports

Geraint Davies:

[\[114765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the London School of Economics report, Vulnerabilities of Supply Chains Post-Brexit, published in September 2020, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the estimate in that report that predicts a 55 per cent increase on the price of 99 per cent of dairy product imports after the end of the transition period in the event that no deal is agreed.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has been clear that it seeks a free trade agreement with the EU, based on friendly cooperation and maintaining tariff and quota free access. The UK is a significant importer of food and other goods, and avoiding tariffs should be beneficial to both sides, given our shared commitment to high regulatory standards.

However, in the event that we have a trading relationship with the EU along the same lines as Australia, without a free trade agreement, and the UK Global Tariff applies, we have a highly resilient food supply chain. Consumers in the UK have access to a range of sources of food, including countless domestic food producers. This will continue to be the case after December 2020. As part of the UK Global Tariff, the Government has sought a balance between the interests of consumers and producers to benefit the UK economy as a whole.

There are many factors that impact the cost of food, including commodity prices, exchange rates and oil prices. This will not change at the end of the Transition Period. The UK Government does not directly control these factors but we work closely with industry to promote transparency for consumers and internationally to promote open global markets.

Moreover, the UK's new independent trade policy enables us to take control of more levers to facilitate competitive trade and to forge new trading relationships around the world in the interests of UK agri-food businesses and consumers.

■ Environmental Health and Waste Disposal: Finance**Mike Amesbury:** [\[113216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of Government funding for (a) refuse collection and (b) environmental health.

Mike Amesbury: [\[113217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what fiscal steps he is taking to support local authorities in the delivery of environmental services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rebecca Pow:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the Government department responsible for allocating funding to local authorities. Defra officials work closely with those in MHCLG and also regularly meet local authority colleagues to support them on other non-fiscal challenges they face with the delivery of waste and environmental health services during the pandemic.

The Government is providing over £7.2 billion emergency funding to help authorities deal with COVID-19 pressures. £4.6 billion of this is un-ringfenced and so can be used by local authorities to meet local pressures as they see fit - including refuse collection and environmental health issues.

In addition, councils' core spending power rose by over £2.9 billion this financial year even before additional emergency funding was announced.

■ Flowers**Dan Jarvis:** [\[114891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has for the UK to become self-sufficient in the growth of fresh flowers in the event of the UK not reaching an agreement with the EU on a future relationship.

Victoria Prentis:

We have the climate, landscape, and entrepreneurial farmers and growers in this country allowing us to grow top-quality fresh flowers, ensuring consumers are able to access a wide range of UK-grown produce.

A vibrant and successful ornamental horticulture sector brings significant benefits and plays a crucial role in our economy. We will always champion the sector, looking for ways it can stay competitive with measures to increase productivity and invest in new technology. Part of this work includes working with industry on a sustainable, long-term growth strategy for the sector.

■ Food Supply: UK Trade with EU

Geraint Davies:

[\[114764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the London School of Economics report, Vulnerabilities of Supply Chains Post-Brexit, published in September 2020, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the recommendation in that report which advocates full recognition by the EU and the UK at customs borders of their respective agreed food safety systems and veterinary certifications to minimise frictions in supply chains for UK food and dairy producers.

Victoria Prentis:

I welcome the London School of Economics report. It is important that we are able to minimise friction in our supply chains.

We have been clear any future agreement will be made in respect of the decision-making autonomy of the European Union and with respect for British sovereignty.

The UK must retain the ability to set its own laws and regulations, and so in the ongoing negotiations with the EU, we will always look to agree the best deal for British producers and businesses.

From 1 January 2021 the UK will have the autonomy to introduce its own approach to goods imported to Great Britain from the EU. However, we recognise the impact Covid-19 has had on businesses and therefore we have taken the decision to introduce border controls in three stages up until 1 July 2021. This flexible and pragmatic approach will give industry extra time to make necessary arrangements.

We remain committed to engaging closely with businesses to ensure that delivery of any new administrative requirements works for everyone. This included a warning already given to stakeholders that they need to prepare to trade on different terms once the UK has left the Single Market.

■ Furs: Coronavirus

Christian Wakeford:

[\[113278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) the US, (b) China and (c) other countries that permit mink farming on the plans that they have in place to stop the spread of covid-19 in fur farms.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is monitoring the situation carefully and working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Public Health England. Our Chief Veterinary Officer and officials have regular contact with our European neighbours who farm mink for fur and with the USA where cases have also been reported.

We have not had any direct contact with China. Our FCDO colleagues are looking into the situation as we know China is one of the global leaders in farming animals for fur.

We have published a cross-Government risk assessment for the UK on this situation.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/hairs-risk-assessment-on-sars-cov-2-in-mustelinae-population

■ Green Recovery Challenge Fund

Caroline Lucas:

[113052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the £40 million allocated to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund to support that fund achieve its objectives in relation to (a) safeguarding current conservation jobs, (b) creating new jobs and training opportunities and (c) rolling out new projects to restore nature; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is part of the Government's wider green economic recovery, jobs and skills package. It brings forward funding for environmental charities and their partners to start work on projects across England to restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment.

I am very pleased that the fund has received a high-level of interest, and the Government has now confirmed that it will double the size of the fund by making an additional £40 million available. The projects funded will create and retain thousands of green jobs while delivering against the goals of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. We anticipate that we will be able to announce the first round of grant awards by the end of this year.

Caroline Lucas:

[113053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of jobs in the UK conservation sector (a) (i) safeguarded and (ii) created through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and (b) (i) at risk and (ii) lost as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

My department keeps under review the financial health of Defra-related sectors, including the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on jobs in these sectors.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund will create and retain jobs in the conservation sector in England, while also delivering against a range of environmental outcomes.

The Government has recently confirmed that it will double the size of the fund by making an additional £40 million available. This could create and retain thousands of jobs, depending on the projects chosen for grant awards.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[113054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of hectares of new wildlife habitat that will be created under the £40 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

Rebecca Pow:

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund will kick-start a pipeline of nature-based projects across England. This will include the creation of new wildlife habitat, in addition to a range of other outcomes such as species protection, nature-based solutions to climate change, connecting people with nature, and creating and retaining jobs.

We cannot yet confirm the successful projects and the outputs they will deliver. However, following the success of the first round, an additional £40 million is being invested in the fund, increasing the contribution the fund will make to the creation of new wildlife habitat across England.

■ Nature Conservation

Caroline Lucas:

[\[113056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect on job creation of investment in nature restoration in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The department considers a range of potential impacts of its policies relating to the natural environment, including the anticipated economic impacts, on a case by case basis.

We recently launched the Green Recovery Challenge Fund to invest in a range of nature projects across England as part of our green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Government has now confirmed that it will double the size of the fund by making an additional £40 million available. This could create and retain thousands of jobs, depending on the projects chosen.

■ Urban Tree Challenge Fund: Greater London

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees have been planted under the Urban Tree Challenge Fund in (a) London and (b) Erith and Thamesmead constituency to date.

Rebecca Pow:

To date 1,932 Government funded trees have been planted under the Urban Tree Challenge Fund in London, of which 18 trees have been planted in the Erith and Thamesmead constituency.

The planting of a further 10,918 trees is planned under the Urban Tree Challenge Fund in London by the end of March 2021, of which 13 are planned to be planted in the Erith and Thamesmead constituency. Some of these may be planted by charities or private organisations.

■ Zoo Animals Fund

Alex Sobel:

[\[115019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which zoos and safari parks have accessed the £100 million Zoo Animals Fund.

Victoria Prentis:

The Zoo Animals Fund opened for applications on 3 August and the closing date has been extended until 29 January 2021. We have received 36 applications, of which 9 have been approved. The rest of the applications are still being processed and none have been rejected.

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

1. West Midlands Falconry Display Team Ltd
2. Cheshire falconry ltd
3. Exotic Zoo Wildlife Park Ltd
4. Cornish Birds of Prey CIC
5. Ilfracombe Aquarium Ltd
6. Ponderosa Zoo & RTC
7. National Centre for Birds of Prey
8. Trust for Sustainable Living
9. Screech Owl Sanctuary

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bahrain: Overseas Aid

Andy Slaughter:

[\[113516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the hon Member for Glasgow East in the debate on the Transparency of the Integrated Fund on 22 October 2020, Official Report, col 475 WH that no Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment was carried out for the visits of officials from the Bahrain Ministry of Interior and judges from the Court of First Instance to the UK in March 2018 and August 2019, which were delivered under the Integrated Activity Fund, what assessment the Government has made of compliance of those matters with its (a) human rights safeguarding policies and (b) human rights obligations.

James Cleverly:

In helping Bahrain in the area of justice and security, we always consider when an OSJA assessment might be appropriate. The visits to the UK in 2018 and 2019 were arranged for Bahraini officials to meet, observe and ask questions of UK judges and officials about the approach to alternative sentencing by the UK's courts and National Probation Service. I am satisfied that both visits were consistent with our domestic and international rights and obligations and that OSJA assessments were not required.

■ **Bolivia: Elections****Catherine West:**[\[113179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the new Government of Bolivia following the recent elections in that country.

Wendy Morton:

Our Ambassador in La Paz maintains regular contact with high-level representatives in the Movement for Socialism (MAS), the party of the new President of Bolivia, Luis Arce. This includes conversations since the 18 October elections regarding the new Administration's initial plans for government. The Ambassador also attended the Presidential inauguration on 8 November, and an audience for the international community with the Vice-President elect on 7 November. Further contact will take place once all government positions have been appointed.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Overseas Aid****Alan Brown:**[\[113144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish details of the expenditure from the Chagossian Support Package; and which projects that funding has supported to date.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has spent approximately £570,000 from the Chagossian Support Package to date. The projects funded to date by the Support Package for eligible Chagossians are English language training in Mauritius, and eight heritage visits to the British Indian Ocean Territory.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Detainees****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[114271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the average length of time British citizens have been detained overseas in each of the last 10 years.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO provides consular assistance in approximately 5000 new cases of arrest or detention overseas each year. We do not hold information on the average length of

time British nationals have been detained overseas. Our consular officers monitor the welfare of British people in foreign custody and offer them non-judgemental support and assistance in line with our public guidance on gov.uk, however long or short their time in detention.

■ China: Christianity

Carla Lockhart:

[\[112162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports that an online Christian bookseller in China has been fined and given a seven-year prison sentence, what representations he is making to the Chinese Government on ensuring that (a) Christian books are available in China and (b) sellers of those books are not prosecuted.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of reports that a Christian bookseller has been arrested. The UK is deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and other religious groups on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practise, change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We regularly raise our concerns about freedom of religion or belief in China, including at the most recent session of the UN Human Rights Council on 25 September.

■ China: Sanctions

Layla Moran:

[\[114305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of different legislative options for imposing sanctions on China for breaching the terms of the Sino-British Declaration.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: On 6 July, the Government established the Global Human Rights ('Magnitsky') sanctions regime by laying regulations in Parliament under the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018. This sanctions regime gives the UK a powerful new tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. We will continue to consider designations under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations. As I stated to the House on 12 November in response to the Honourable Member's Urgent Question, it is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under this sanctions regime in the future, as this could reduce the impact of the designations.

■ China: Uighurs

Luke Pollard:

[\[113636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of reports by human rights lawyer, Emma Reilly, of the UN sharing the names of Uyghur dissidents with the Chinese Government.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is aware of these reports and has made enquiries into them. We note that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has said it stopped the practice of occasionally confirming the names of UN Human Rights Council participants to States in 2015 and does not believe that it has resulted in harm to any participants.

■ Ethiopia: Violence

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[113013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Ethiopian counterparts on the use of military force against protestors in that country.

James Duddridge:

I emphasised that space needs to be given for political debate when I met with the President and Deputy Prime Minister in July, during my visit to Ethiopia.

The Foreign Secretary wrote to Prime Minister Abiy and spoke with him on 10 November. In both communications he emphasised the need to protect civilians and allow humanitarian access in the Tigray region, where a conflict is ongoing between federal and regional forces, and other areas affected. He also urged for a de-escalation of violence and called for swift moves to political dialogue. I echoed the importance of protecting human rights in my tweet of 13 November.

■ Gulf States: Overseas Aid

Wayne David:

[\[114082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question HL9495 on Government Departments: Overseas Aid, on what date the Gulf Strategy Fund was established; which Government Departments have responsibility for that fund; and which Ministers were involved in the establishment of that fund.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The Gulf Strategy Fund replaced the Integrated Activity Fund on 1 April 2020 and is managed as part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's International Programme.

Wayne David: [\[114083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question HL9495 on Government Departments: Overseas Aid, which Government Departments have made applications to the Gulf Strategy Fund in financial year 2020-21; how many projects each Department has applied for; and how many of those applications have been (a) approved and (b) rejected for each Department.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Six country and two regional programme applications were received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In addition, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for International Trade, the Department for Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) and HM Revenue and Customs submitted applications to operate regional programmes. The DCMS bid was not approved.

Wayne David: [\[114084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of projects that have been applied for under the Gulf Strategy Fund to date in financial year 2020-2021 (a) were and (b) were not subject to an Overseas Security and Justice Assessment.

Wayne David: [\[114085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the titles are of the projects that have been approved to date for funding under the Gulf Strategy Fund in the 2020-2021 financial year.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Country and regional programmes have been approved. Programme teams are finalising individual projects taking account of a changed operating environment owing to COVID-19 and a reduced window for delivery. A programme summary for the 2020/21 Gulf Strategy Fund will be published next year.

Wayne David: [\[114086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2020 to Question 5457, what the allocated budget is for the Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF) for financial year 2020-2021; on what date the GSF allocated budget for the 2021-2022 financial year was decided; and what the duration is of the GSF financial cycle.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: £8.4 million has been allocated to the Gulf Strategy Fund for 2020/21. The budget allocations for 2021/22 will be agreed as part of the current Spending Review.

■ India: Detainees**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[113507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Indian counterpart on the detention of (a) Friar Stan Swamy and (b) other human rights activists in that country.

Nigel Adams:

On 9 October, British High Commission officials in New Delhi highlighted to the Ministry of Home Affairs criticisms of recent amendments to Indian security legislation, including their impact on activists and human rights campaigners in India. The British High Commission will continue to monitor political developments, including human rights. Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at ministerial level.

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review: Hostage Taking**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[114273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2020 to Question 99696 on Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review, whether the integrated review is making an assessment of the (a) effectiveness of hostage diplomacy, (b) growing practice of state hostage taking, (c) adequacy of UK hostage policy in relation to that growth and (d) increased risks arising from expansions in hostage taking by non-state actors.

Nigel Adams:

As I stated in my answer of 13 October to question 99696, the Integrated Review will cover all aspects of international and national security policy, such as defence, diplomacy, development and national resilience.

■ Mohammed bin Salman**John McDonnell:**[\[112990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, for what reason Mohammed bin Salman was not included in the list of individuals from Saudi Arabia sanctioned under the new Magnitsky legislation.

James Cleverly:

It is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime. We don't comment in relation to individuals who have not been sanctioned under the regime.

■ Overseas Aid**Patrick Grady:**[\[114935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the merger between his Department and the Department for International Development on the criteria for (a) acceptance and (b) refusal of international development grant applications.

James Duddridge:

There has been no change to the criteria for international development grants.

From 2 September, FCDO has been implementing a twin-track approach to programme delivery rules and accountabilities. This will remain in place until a harmonised programme delivery framework can be established at the start of the next financial year. Until that point, existing and new programmes, including those which make grant awards, will be governed by the rules framework for the department that the programme budget is drawn from.

■ Palestinians: Overseas Aid**Steve McCabe:**[\[113490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for International Development and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to ensure that UK Official Development Assistance funding was not used to cover payments made to prisoners or their families.

James Cleverly:

No UK Aid is used for payments to prisoners or their families. Our financial support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) health and education sectors goes into a dedicated bank account and is only paid to individual workers who have been carefully vetted through the PEGASE mechanism (Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism). Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient. This rigorous process means we are confident no UK aid is being diverted.

Our partnership with the PA is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating a credible commitment to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's partnership principles. Our partnership works to improve the lives of Palestinians and support the UK's commitment to maintain the viability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Steve McCabe:[\[113491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2018-19 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for International Development and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment he has made

of the adequacy of the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to ensure that UK Official Development Assistance funding was not used to cover payments made to prisoners or their families as administered by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

James Cleverly:

No UK Aid is used for payments to prisoners or their families. Our financial support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) health and education sectors goes into a dedicated bank account and is only paid to individual workers who have been carefully vetted through the PEGASE mechanism (Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism). Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient. This rigorous process means we are confident no UK aid is being diverted.

Our partnership with the PA is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating a credible commitment to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's partnership principles. Our partnership works to improve the lives of Palestinians and support the UK's commitment to maintain the viability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

■ **Palestinians: Schools**

Steve McCabe:

[\[113489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for International Development and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment he has made of the Palestinian Authority's progress on curriculum reform.

James Cleverly:

Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA) is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating a credible commitment to this Memorandum and the 'partnership principles'.

The PA is in the process of revising its textbooks. The PA have informed us that they have updated Grades 1-6 and intends to update the remaining textbooks as soon as possible. In the interim, the UK will continue to raise our concerns about incitement in education, which the Foreign Secretary did most recently with the PA Minister for Education on August 2020.

Craig Williams:

[\[113583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received a copy of the EU interim report on the Palestinian Authority school curriculum.

James Cleverly:

Publication of the interim report is not currently foreseen by the EU. The UK has repeatedly lobbied the EU to push for publication, but this is ultimately a decision for the EU.

■ Palestinians: Textbooks**Steve McCabe:**[\[113488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to encourage the EU to publish the interim report of the Georg Eckert Institute on the Palestinian Authority's school textbooks; and what response the Government has received from the EU.

James Cleverly:

Following UK calls for action, the EU commissioned the Georg Eckert Institute, a specialist textbook analysis centre, to undertake a robust, impartial review of Palestinian textbooks. We have remained in close dialogue with our European partners throughout the process, including urging them to complete the review as soon as possible. In July an interim report was submitted to the EU for approval. The EU used the report to inform partners, including the UK, about the current status of progress and to receive feedback. Publication of the interim report is not currently foreseen by the EU. The UK has repeatedly lobbied the EU to push for publication, but this is ultimately a decision for the EU.

■ Passenger Ships: Coronavirus**Nickie Aiken:**[\[113638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the steps that cruise ship operators have taken to ensure that their vessels are covid-19 secure; and when he plans to issue advice to enable cruise ships to operate and travel agents to sell places on cruises again.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO remains fully committed to working closely with public health experts, the Department for Transport and key industry leaders to agree on the steps required to restart cruises safely. We are in regular discussion with cruise representatives on this matter.

Our travel advice is based on medical risk assessments by public health officials. We keep this advice under continuous review.

■ Religion: Overseas Aid**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[113255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the £2.9 billion reduction to the Official Development Assistance budget on faith organisations throughout the world.

James Cleverly:

Faith groups play an essential role in reaching the "bottom billion" around the world, and we continue to engage extensively with them on development issues as part of our relationship with wider civil society. This engagement has included understanding the problems organisations are facing as a result of COVID-19, including financial. Furthermore, Lord Ahmad hosted a "faith in development" roundtable in June which discussed how faith groups are contributing to the response to COVID-19; where those interventions have been most effective, and what the challenges are for faith groups. We continue to assess the impact of potential Official Development Assistance reductions in all areas, and all amended programmes and projects are uploaded on DevTracker in the normal way.

■ Saudi Arabia: Human Rights**John McDonnell:**[\[112988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the UK will attach (a) the need to release human rights activists and women's rights defenders and (b) other conditions to their attendance at the upcoming G20 in Riyadh.

John McDonnell:[\[112989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what specific discussions his Department has had with its counterparts in Saudi Arabia on the release of senior political figures detained without charge in that country.

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.

■ South America: Diplomatic Service**Catherine West:** [\[113180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of British diplomats based in South America after the end of the transition period.

Wendy Morton:

South America is an important partner for the UK. Our friendship is based on our shared liberal and democratic values, economic strengths, and our championing of free trade. We want to strengthen partnerships with those that share our values, and are keen to seize the opportunities that leaving the EU brings. Since 2010, we have established a stronger network of posts in South America, with the opening of three Embassies and two Consulates-generals, with more staff on the ground focusing on trade, prosperity, global issues, strengthening the international system, and climate change.

■ Sudan: Overseas Trade**Harriett Baldwin:** [\[113086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to recommend to the Prime Minister that he appoint a trade envoy to Sudan as a result of the US removing its state sponsor of terrorism designation from that country.

James Duddridge:

We welcome the commitment to delist Sudan from the US list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. The Foreign Secretary has commended this as a historic step for the two countries, one that will deliver compensation for victims of terror and support Sudan's transition to democracy. Over time, delisting will make an important contribution to Sudan's economic recovery. Our immediate priority is to support the economic reforms that Prime Minister Hamdok has committed to deliver, that will be key to stability and improving the investment climate. As these reforms deliver that change, we will consider the best way to support economic development and to promote UK private sector investment, along with the Department for International Trade and Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Africa.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[113143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including in the permitted reasons for international travel during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown the reuniting of close family members.

Nigel Adams:

From 5 November to 2 December 2020, travelling away from home, including internationally, is restricted from England except in limited circumstances such as for work or for education. Different rules apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Travellers should follow the rules that apply to them.

FCDO travel advice aims to inform British nationals so they can make decisions about travelling abroad. We do not enforce our travel advice and it remains an individual's decision whether travel is essential or not. Only individuals can make an informed decision on whether or not to travel based on their personal circumstances, their judgement of the risks, and the relevant legislation or regulation where they are resident.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Abortion****Scott Benton:**[\[54271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the process is for a woman to report a medical complication after an at-home abortion; and whether those reports are recorded.

Helen Whately:

Abortion providers will discuss possible complications with the woman during the consultation and women will be provided with written advice and information about possible symptoms, including those which would necessitate urgent review. Women have access to a 24 hour telephone helpline should they have any concerns.

Any complication known to the practitioner terminating the pregnancy should be reported to the Chief Medical Officer on form HSA4. All serious incidents should be reported by the provider to their commissioner, the Care Quality Commission and other relevant organisations in line with the framework published by NHS England and NHS Improvement at the following link:

<https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/serious-incident-framework/>

■ **Autism: Health Services and Social Services****Paul Bristow:**[\[R\] \[105575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the collection of data on the needs of autistic children and adults in the health and social care system.

Helen Whately:

NHS Digital started collecting and reporting on autism diagnosis waiting times in November 2019. These are experimental statistics and NHS Digital are working to improve the data quality and completeness of these statistics for future use.

We are reviewing our autism strategy and we are extending it to include children. We expect the revised strategy will have a focus on improved data collection and reporting. We expect to publish this as soon as possible.

■ **Babies: Health Services**

Barbara Keeley: [\[113040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether clause 11, Exception 5: support groups of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 applies to baby sensory classes.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Under the national restrictions, all non-essential businesses must close. These restrictions are designed to reduce the number of face-to-face contact and limit the rate of infection. This includes baby sensory classes. Under the restrictions, no person may participate in a gathering which consists of two or more people, and takes place indoors, including within a private dwelling, gyms or specialist child service centres.

However, the use of online classes and virtual support classes are a potential means to support families of young children with social contact online and serve as a basis for support for parents to provide sensory experiences at home.

■ **Blood: Screening**

Fleur Anderson: [\[113238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to improve supply chains for the chemicals used to process blood tests.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Department has well established procedures to deal with shortages of medical products if and when they arise and works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, NHS England and industry to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise. These procedures operate at a national, regional and local level to address any supply-chain related issues that might arise.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are providing support to pathology networks and suppliers of chemicals and other diagnostics products to ensure continuity of supply and delivery of pathology services.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Navendu Mishra: [\[908884\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the second wave of covid-19 infections on the (a) recovery of cancer services in (i) Stockport and (ii) Greater Manchester and (b) waiting times for cancer treatment.

Jo Churchill:

We are pleased that September data shows, for Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, that general practitioner referrals for first consultant appointment were 135% higher than in April, and similarly, at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, they were nearly 120% higher than in April.

We are all working hard to see the restoration of services continue, including stepping up COVID-19 protected hubs for cancer surgery and diagnostics and, maximising use of independent sector capacity.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Ronnie Cowan:**[\[109474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department (a) is taking to improve access to medicinal cannabis for people living with multiple sclerosis and (b) if he will publish a Government strategy for improving access to medicinal cannabis.

Jo Churchill:

Two prescription medicines - Sativex – for the treatment of spasticity in Multiple Sclerosis patients, and Epidyolex – for the treatment of seizures associated with two rare forms of epilepsy, have been made available for prescribing on the National Health Service, where clinically appropriate. This follows clear demonstrated evidence of their safety, and clinical and cost effectiveness.

We continue to work hard with the health system, industry and researchers to improve the evidence base for other cannabis-based medicines, and to implement the recommendations of NHS England and NHS Improvement's review on barriers to accessing unlicensed cannabis based medicinal products. This includes the design of clinical trials and the establishment of a national patient registry.

■ Childbirth: Coronavirus**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[110101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the rules are on the presence of partners during the birthing process during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service has made arrangements to ensure that women are supported and cared for safely through pregnancy, birth and the period afterwards during this pandemic.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, women have been able to have one partner of their choice with them during labour and childbirth as long as their birth partner is well and does not have COVID-19 symptoms.

Guidance produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is clear that women should be encouraged to have a single birth partner, who has no

symptoms of COVID-19, present with them during any type of labour and birth, unless the birth occurs under general anaesthetic.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Richard Fuller: [\[101261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to modify the NHS covid-19 app to ensure that the app is compatible with phone handsets that are unable to run the iOS 13.5 software.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Test and Trace app requires users to be owners of smartphones that are able to use Apple iOS 13.5 and above and Android Marshmallow and above. This is because the app needs the Exposure Notification framework developed by Apple and Google, which is only available in these versions.

■ **Contraceptives**

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[109229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report Women's Lives, Women's Rights: Strengthening Access to Contraception Beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic, published by the all party Parliamentary group on sexual and reproductive health on 10 September 2020, whether his Department has made a recent workforce needs analysis for the future of contraceptive provision based on population need.

Jo Churchill:

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual and Reproductive Health's report, 'Women's Lives, Women's Rights: Strengthening Access to Contraception Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic', has raised a number of important issues. The recommendations including those relating to workforce, will be considered as part of our upcoming work to develop the sexual and reproductive health strategy.

■ **Coronavirus: Barnet**

Theresa Villiers: [\[90065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have been carried out in the borough of Barnet in the last six weeks.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: We publish data on the number of pillar 2 tests processed in each local authority weekly alongside the Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK at the following link:

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

The total number of pillar 2 tests processed in Barnet in the six weeks prior to 16 September is was 25,502, with a daily average of 607.

■ Coronavirus: Birmingham

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[89798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tests have been taken at each covid-19 testing site in Birmingham on each day since 31 August 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: We publish data on the number of pillar 2 tests processed in each local authority weekly alongside the Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK. The number total number of pillar 2 tests processed in Birmingham since 31 August 2020 to 28 October 2020 is 199,797 with a daily average of 3,386.

■ Coronavirus: Birmingham Airport

Steve McCabe:

[\[90036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people attending the Regional Testing Site at Birmingham International Airport are required to present a QR code in order to be tested for covid-19; and how those QR codes are provided.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: At all regional testing sites, including Birmingham Airport, people who have booked a valid appointment at a testing site will receive a test. QR codes are provided at the end of the booking journey and by email. Sites can use other key information to confirm an appointment if a QR code cannot be provided by the attendee.

■ Coronavirus: Buckinghamshire

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[88299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to covid-19 testing in Buckinghamshire.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: We have established a regional testing site at South Second Street Car Park in Milton Keynes and a local testing site at The Gateway Car Park, Buckinghamshire Council in Aylesbury. Our laboratories are processing more than a million tests a week and are scaling up our testing capacity even further to 500,000 tests a day by the end of October, expanding our network of testing sites and laboratories as well as investing in new testing technologies.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Kate Hollern:

[\[56003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of delays to local authorities receiving positive test results on the effectiveness of the NHS Track, Trace and isolate system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 June 2020]: NHS Test and Trace is working closely with local authorities. Every day local authorities receive test, case and contact tracing data, with further data shared with local Directors of Public Health, to help control and manage outbreaks in their area. For week commencing 10 October 2020 67.9% of test results were received the day after the test was taken an increase from 60.8% the previous week.

Chi Onwurah:[\[908897\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the NHS Test and Trace service.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We continue to make significant strides in our Test and Trace service, which forms a central part of the country's COVID-19 recovery strategy. The service helps identify, contain and control coronavirus, reduce the spread of the virus and save lives. We continue to increase national testing capacity and two million people have now been reached by the service since it was launched.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[908898\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the NHS Test and Trace service.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We continue to make significant strides in our Test and Trace service, which forms a central part of the country's COVID-19 recovery strategy. The service helps identify, contain and control coronavirus, reduce the spread of the virus and save lives. We continue to increase national testing capacity and two million people have now been reached by the service since it was launched.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[106499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he has issued on couples in established relationships who live apart in Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Legislation relating to social distancing in local Covid alert level high and very high applies to couples in established relationships.

Published Government guidance recommends not travelling into or out of the local Covid alert level very high area, except for exempted purposes. Those living in local Covid alert level very high areas should not stay overnight outside that area, and those living outside local Covid alert level very high areas should not stay overnight inside local Covid alert level very high areas without legitimate reasons.

Andrea Jenkyns:

[107060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect on mental health of enabling couples to form a bubble while living in separate households during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Until 3 December, people must not mix with any other households indoors apart from under certain exemptions, including being able to form a support bubble. If a person or their partner is in a single adult household, they can form a support bubble between your household and do not have to adhere to social distancing rules.

We understand these rules are difficult for everyone, but reducing social contact is paramount to protecting the National Health Service and saving lives. The Government will keep this under constant review and has published guidance on mental health and wellbeing which includes guidance on maintaining relationships, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#what-can-help-your-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Julian Sturdy:

[110802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting (a) leisure centres, (b) gyms, (c) golf clubs, (d) tennis clubs and (e) other outdoor sports facilities from the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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

The national restrictions are designed to get the 'R' rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. People are still allowed to leave their homes for exercise and recreation outdoors, with their household or on their own, or with one person from another household or support bubble. However, the Government have not introduced further exemptions because it is important that the restrictions are simple to understand.

Mr Marcus Fysh:

[110868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made at the time of the March 2020 lockdown of the capacity of the NHS to cope with a second wave of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

The focus in March 2020 was on the required National Health Service capacity to respond to the first wave of COVID-19 cases, rather than a potential second wave.

Guidance issued by the NHS in March had set out an operational aim to expand critical care capacity to the maximum and free up 30,000 or more general and acute beds.

Theresa Villiers:[\[113019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether shoe repair businesses can operate during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Evidence is clear that action is needed on a national scale to suppress the spread of the virus. We have introduced restrictions across England to reduce face to face contact and limit the rate of infection.

This includes the closure of many businesses and venues, except for essential retail. A business which has as its main activity shoe-repair services is permitted to operate. This does not include shops that would otherwise be considered non-essential retail, for example a shoe-shop, that offers some repairs.

Dan Jarvis:[\[113098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including women with children under the age of 12 months on the list of people permitted to form a social bubble with one other household during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Reducing social contact is the most important factor in driving down transmission. However, the Government knows that rules about social distancing are difficult for everyone, especially those with young children.

Women with children under the age of 12 months are already allowed to form a childcare bubble with one other household for the purposes of informal childcare for children 13 and under.

Parents of young children can socialise in a public, outdoors space with people they live with, their support bubble, or with one other person. Children under five years old do not count toward the limit on meeting outside.

Dan Jarvis:[\[114892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of November 2020 covid-19 restrictions on non-cohabiting partners.

Dan Jarvis:[\[114893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including couples in long-term relationships on the list of people

able to form a social bubble where they are unable to do so following the implementation of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Individuals who are eligible to form a support bubble may choose to do so with their partner and where this is not possible, couples can meet up outside. Guidance states “You do not need to socially distance from anyone you are in an established relationship with outdoors. If in the early stages of a relationship, you should take particular care to follow the guidance on social distancing.”

Jane Stevenson:

[\[99735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the criteria he has set for removing additional covid-19 restrictions in (a) Wolverhampton and (b) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: We work closely with local leaders and public health teams to inform decisions on local interventions, taking into account a range of factors, and all decisions are based on the latest data and advice from experts, including our epidemiologists and the Chief Medical Officer.

There is no single hard threshold. The thresholds are not fixed between the local COVID alert levels because they take into consideration a range of metrics and intelligence. This includes positivity rates, case rates through the age groups, and hospital pressures including COVID-19 admissions but also indirect impact, staffing levels and absences.

■ **Coronavirus: Exercise and Religious Buildings**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[113495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish the science-based evidence on the transmission of covid-19 in places of (a) worship and (b) exercise.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[113496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that gym closures during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown do not have long term effects on public health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic. 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.

Unfortunately, we know that the virus spreads readily in indoor environments. These restrictions are difficult in the first instance, including for those who want to use gyms

and places of worship, but that we have to find a balance to make sure we reduce the transmission rates and save lives.

We realise the impacts that these regulations have on people's health and wellbeing and we aim to minimise the impact wherever possible and noting that these restrictions are time limited. The Government have published guidance on mental health and wellbeing which includes guidance on looking after physical wellbeing and this is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#what-can-help-your-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

■ **Coronavirus: Hospitals**

Imran Ahmad Khan: **[102204]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been treated at the NHS Nightingale Yorkshire and the Humber since it opened.

Edward Argar:

NHS Nightingale Yorkshire and the Humber has been used to treat patients requiring a CT scan. Up until 22 September 2020 it has seen 2,210 patients.

■ **Coronavirus: Hove**

Peter Kyle: **[90193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have been carried out on each day in September 2020 in the Hove constituency.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: We publish data on the number of pillar 2 tests processed in each local authority weekly alongside the Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK at the following link:

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

The number total number of pillar 2 tests processed in Brighton and Hove in September was 14,582, with a daily average of 486.

■ **Coronavirus: Humber Bridge**

Dame Diana Johnson: **[48328]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timescale is for the return of covid-19 test results to patients tested for covid-19 at the Humber Bridge car park testing centre.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish the turnaround times for individual testing sites. The information on the turnaround times for testing through in person routes is published weekly as part of the NHS Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus: Isle of Wight**Bob Seely:****[107105]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people do not need to cross the Solent in order to access covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

For residents of the Isle of Wight we have established a regional testing site at Newclose Cricket Ground. The average distance travelled for tests across the country is 5.2miles and for the week 8 October to 14 October the median distance has decreased to 2.9 miles.

■ Coronavirus: Physiotherapy**Catherine McKinnell:****[107654]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure the provision of respiratory physiotherapy for (a) patients with covid-19, (b) patients with long-term symptoms related to covid-19 and (c) non covid-19 patients in the event that physiotherapists and physiotherapy support workers have to self-isolate on the basis of contact with covid-19 positive patients while wearing PPE.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Physiotherapists are established as a core part of the multi-disciplinary team treating patients with COVID-19. Through its communication to general practitioner practices and commissioners on 31 July 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement set out the requirement that general practice, community and optometry services should restore activity to usual levels where clinically appropriate, and reach out proactively to clinically vulnerable patients and those whose care may have been delayed. The communication also stated community health services should continue to support patients who have recovered from the acute phase of COVID-19 but need ongoing rehabilitation and other community health services. NHS England and NHS Improvement's letter is available at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Redbridge**Wes Streeting:****[89793]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data the Mildmay Road covid-19 testing centre in Ilford shares with the London Borough of Redbridge council.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: We are providing local authorities with a range of information. This includes testing and positive case data, including identifiable data to Directors of Public Health, from Public Health England (PHE) for residents within the local authority, whether they were tested at this site or otherwise. The Department also provides the council with management information about the site, for example how many tests have been done. Further information from NHS Test and Trace and PHE is provided to local authorities such as daily contact tracing information.

■ Coronavirus: Religious Practice**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[111413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidence of the risks to public health posed by the giving or receiving of the Sacrament in places of worship which are compliant with rules on covid-19 safety; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Public Health England had not been requested to research and publish detailed specific data on the numbers of COVID-19 cases related to place of worship and allied settings on outbreak investigation. This is now being performed.

■ Coronavirus: Schools**Fleur Anderson:**[\[106505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has provided to schools on managing and administering tests for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

As part of the Government's commitment to reopening schools, all schools in England have been provided with a small number of home testing kits to be offered in the exceptional circumstance that a school believes a pupil or staff member will not get a test by another route.

All schools were provided with an initial supply of kits ahead of the start of the new school year, and schools are now able to re-order a small number of kits, proportionate to their size. They are able to place these orders every 21 days.

The Government publishes guidance for schools about all aspects of COVID-19, including testing on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Chi Onwurah:**[\[104733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) systems and (b) data formats local authorities need to use to view all covid-19 test data for their residents.

Chi Onwurah: [\[104734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to ensure that local authorities receive covid-19 test data on their residents (a) in a consistent format and (b) under one system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 October 2020]: Public Health England (PHE) provides local authorities with a range of information in relation to COVID-19 outbreaks in their area. The nature and format of this information is constantly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of the local response. PHE provides local Directors of Public Health with detailed information about cases in their area via a Power BI portal. Through this one system local authorities are able to get information on all the COVID-19 test data results for their area.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[105492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date all people whose covid-19 tests had been misplaced as a result of the excel technical issue identified on 2 October 2020 had been contacted.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: While there was a delay in reporting these positive test results in the public data, and in transferring them to the contact tracing system, anybody testing positive received their results in the normal way, and in the normal timeframe. All outstanding cases were immediately transferred to the contact tracing system by 1am on 3 October.

Chris Green: [\[106377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 tests returned a positive result, in each month since January 2020, by English county.

Helen Whately:

We publish data on daily pillar 2 tests processed by lower tier local authority and sperate weekly demographic information on people tested and people testing positive for COVID-19 across pillars 1 and 2 throughout England each week alongside other Test and Trace statistics. This data is available at the following link:

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

Emma Hardy: [\[106468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who test positive for covid-19 antibodies are included in overall covid-19 infection rate figures in England.

Helen Whately:

COVID-19 cases in England are defined as the number of people with at least one laboratory-confirmed positive COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result.

People who test positive for COVID-19 antibodies are not included in the case count for England, unless they have previously received a positive PCR COVID-19 test result.

Further information on COVID-19 case data is available at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/about-data>

Apsana Begum: [\[107760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have been undertaken at the testing centre in Watney Market, Shadwell, London.

Helen Whately:

We publish data on the number of pillar 2 tests processed in each local authority weekly alongside the Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK. The total number of pillar 2 tests processed in Tower Hamlets between 28 May and 14 October was 38,272.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[45374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using routine hospital laboratories to support the processing of covid-19 tests.

Helen Whately:

NHS England is building COVID-19 testing capacity towards their target of 100,000 tests per day. Many hospital pathology laboratories are already conducting COVID-19 testing as part of their wider pathology services, where they can balance this with routine services.

It would not be appropriate to ask all National Health Service hospital laboratories to conduct COVID-19 testing and the Department is working with NHS England to ensure a pragmatic balance is struck between maximising COVID-19 testing capacity and the delivery of other services.

Afzal Khan: [\[53613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to integrate covid-19 testing with existing NHS community facing services; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

With the support of NHS England, we have been piloting COVID-19 swab testing in a small number general practices around the United Kingdom. The aim was to improve access to testing by enabling general practitioners to test symptomatic patients who present to general practice settings, when they deemed it clinically appropriate, for example for some patients who are vulnerable and may otherwise struggle to access a test through the main testing routes.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[64098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) accuracy of covid-19 testing and (b) correct diagnosis of patients with covid-19 symptoms.

Helen Whately:

The accuracy of National Health Service COVID-19 diagnostic testing is being ensured through our national medical laboratory accreditation programme, overseen by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service. This ensures that new COVID-19 diagnostic tests that are brought into service have their accuracy verified in every laboratory before they are used for patient care.

Their ongoing accuracy is then monitored through programmes of internal and external quality assurance, using reference materials developed by the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control and with oversight from the United Kingdom National External Quality Assessment Service.

Justin Madders:

[\[87570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been offered covid-19 tests more than 75 miles from their home address since 3 September 2020.

Helen Whately:

An issue with the booking portal resulting in some users being directed to tests sites a long distance from them has been resolved. There is now a travel restriction set at 75 miles. A few regional testing slots may remain visible outside of the 75 mile radius, but we continue to investigate and seek solutions to address these rare anomalies.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[88318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of regional demand for covid-19 tests ordered through the online booking system, and if he will publish that data by postcode area.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: Public Health England (PHE), the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and NHS Test and Trace are monitoring infection levels across the country so higher volumes of testing are targeted where they are needed most

We do allocate more testing to higher prevalence areas in line with JBC reporting (devolved administrations manage their own allocations on a geographic basis). Allocation decisions are frequently and systematically reviewed to ensure we are using our testing where it can be most effective. We are working with PHE and others to develop more sophisticated approaches, based on the latest evidence to manage the prioritisation process to ensure that we can provide appropriate testing for both outbreak management and surveillance purposes.

Rachael Maskell: [\[89782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria he is using to select locations to pilot the covid-19 saliva tests.

Helen Whately:

The pilot sites were selected based on their accreditation status and experience with LAMP and LAMPore, as the protocols would need optimising to work effectively in asymptomatic cohorts during a time of Low Positive Prevalence. Speed of readiness was also a deciding criterion in order to stand this up at pace.

Neil Coyle: [\[91055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of whether the covid-19 test booking system's algorithm is effective in allocating people a test close to their home if they live in an area where there is high demand for testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: We have improved the system for allocating regional testing slots to ensure the distance limit does not go beyond 75 miles. As of 6 November, the number of testing sites stood at 621.

Between 22 October and 28 October, the median distance to an in-person test site decreased to 2.7 miles from 2.8 miles in the previous week. 90% of people who booked a test at a test centre lived 10.2 miles or less away.

■ Coronavirus: Slough

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[99082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Montem testing facility in Slough will return to operating as a drive-through and walk-in facility.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: The Montem testing facility has at no time been subject to closure. Since its inception in June, this facility has been setup as a hybrid site that can receive walk-ins and drive through.

■ Coronavirus: South Yorkshire

Alexander Stafford: [\[103667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people in (a) Rother Valley constituency, (b) the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham and (c) South Yorkshire are tested for covid-19 each week per 100,000 of the population.

Helen Whately:

We publish data on the number of pillar 2 tests processed in each local authority weekly alongside the Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK. The number total number of pillar 2 tests processed in South Yorkshire for the week 15-21 October was 52,240, with a daily average of 1,865 tests taken.

■ Coronavirus: St Albans

Daisy Cooper:

[\[88404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when adequate covid-19 testing capacity will be available to allow all St Albans residents with symptoms to get tested within a reasonable distance of their home.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: We have rapidly built the country's largest network of diagnostic testing in history and are actively working to build this further to increase capacity to 500,000 tests per day by the end of October. The vast majority of people who use our testing service get a test that is close to home the median distance travelled for an in-person test decreased to 2.9 miles from 3.2 miles in the previous week. We have established a regional testing site at Tesco Plus in Welwyn Garden City and two local testing sites in Luton at Hockwell Ring Community Centre and Bury Park Community Centre.

■ Coronavirus: Students

Rachael Maskell:

[\[92822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the accessibility of covid-19 testing kits for students who are living in student accommodation and isolating.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: We have quickly established walk-through sites and deployed mobile test sites so that almost all universities are within three miles of an in-person test site and the majority within one and a half miles, allowing staff and students to get access to tests should they develop symptoms. In cases of outbreaks we are working with universities to deliver large batches of home test kits which can then be distributed to students isolating in their households or halls to residence to test themselves.

■ Coronavirus: Universities

Peter Kyle:

[\[102131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the minutes of the fifty-fifth meeting of SAGE on covid-19 on 3 September 2020, if he has developed a national strategy defining key principles for additional covid-19 testing in universities.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: We have quickly established walk-through sites and deployed mobile test sites so that almost all universities are within three miles of an in-person test site and the majority within one and a half miles, allowing staff and students to get access to tests should they develop symptoms. In cases of outbreaks we are working with universities to deliver large batches of home test kits which can then be distributed to students isolating in their households or halls to residence to test themselves. The Department for Education has updated its guidance in line with

the latest public health advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>

Rachael Maskell: **[90178]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he is providing to universities in areas where there is no campus or local walk in covid-19 testing centres.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: We have quickly established walk-through sites and deployed mobile test sites so that almost all universities are within one and a half miles, allowing staff and students to get access to tests should they develop symptoms. In cases of outbreaks we are working with universities to deliver large batches of home test kits which can then be distributed to students isolating in their households or halls to residence to test themselves. We also have a home testing programme that provides access to testing to anyone, anywhere in the United Kingdom.

■ **Coronavirus: York**

Rachael Maskell: **[99662]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the threshold is for the introduction of further covid-19 restrictions in York, given the increased infection rate in the city.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: There is no single hard threshold. The thresholds are not fixed between the local COVID alert levels because they take into consideration a range of metrics and intelligence. This includes positivity rates, case rates through the age groups, and hospital pressures including COVID-19 admissions but also indirect impact, staffing levels and absences.

Decisions to move from high to very high will therefore be taken by looking at these range of factors as well as advice from local public health teams and input from local council leaders.

■ **Dementia**

Colleen Fletcher: **[108243]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of dementia diagnosis in each of the last five years.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: The Challenge on Dementia 2020 sets out the ambition for two thirds of people with dementia to receive a formal diagnosis. The target was met consistently at the national level from July 2016.

The dementia diagnosis rate fell below the national ambition at the start of the pandemic, as many memory assessment services were temporarily closed and normal referral routes were disrupted. Memory assessment services have now reopened, adapting delivery of their service to offer virtual assessments using telephone or video conference so that diagnoses can be made. These adaptations are being supported and promoted at a national level through guidance and through working with dementia networks and other stakeholders.

NHS Digital collect data on the number of patients with a [recorded dementia diagnosis](#) in their clinical record and report this on a monthly basis, so that the National Health Service - general practitioners and commissioners - can make informed choices about how to plan their services around their patient's needs. The data is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/recorded-dementia-diagnoses>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Advisory Bodies

Paula Barker: [\[97748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department processes consultations held by his Department's advisory groups; and if he will publish a list of consultations undertaken in the last 12 months.

Edward Argar:

The Department runs a consultation if there is either a statutory duty to consult or a common law duty (a duty established by case law) to consult. It follows the Cabinet Office Guidance on Consultation and also guidance on GOV.UK on writing and launching a consultation. There is no set length of time that a consultation should run for, but most run for 12 weeks. The Cabinet Office's consultation principles recommend a 'proportionate amount of time'.

A list of consultations held in the last 12 months is not held centrally and to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost.

■ DNACPR Decisions: Care Homes

Anne Marie Morris: [\[107656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to protect people in care homes who have had Do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation added to their files, until the CQC report on the use of DNACPR decisions is published.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Until the review reports its findings in early 2021, we will continue to work across the health and care system to address the issue. Guidance from clinical bodies such as the British Medical Association, the Resuscitation Council UK and Royal College of Nursing reflects the policy that Do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) orders should only ever be made

on an individual basis and should be led by the clinical team. The adult social care winter plan published on 18 September 2020 reiterates this. The pandemic does not permit any health or care professional to deviate from that approach. All health professionals nationally are expected to follow the clear statements on the use of individual DNACPR orders.

■ General Practitioners

Jane Hunt: [\[95252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) officials of his Department and (b) NHS England on issuing guidance to GPs on dealing with pressures on their services during winter 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

In July NHS England and NHS Improvement set out in a letter to the system the priorities that the National Health Service must focus on for phase 3 of the COVID-19 response from August 2020, including over winter.

In November NHS England and NHS Improvement issued further guidance on winter pressures and priorities, and announced £150 million of ring-fenced funding to support expansion of general practice capacity up until the end of March 2021.

These communications and further guidance are available on the NHS website: www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-general-practice/

NHS England and NHS Improvement regularly reviews and updates its standard operating procedures and communications to primary care providers, to ensure that they are equipped to respond to the pandemic. Local commissioners will also have escalation plans in place to respond to and support general practice during winter.

■ Health

Jonathan Gullis: [\[97733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish a response to the Advancing Our Health: Prevention in the 2020's consultation, which closed on 14 October 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The Prevention Green Paper, 'Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s', consultation closed on 14 October 2019 and attracted over 1,600 responses. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the response has been delayed. We intend to publish the Government's response in due course.

Jim Shannon: [\[99609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish its response to the Advancing Our Health: Prevention in the 2020's Green Paper consultation.

Jo Churchill:

The Prevention Green Paper, 'Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s', consultation closed on 14 October 2019 and attracted over 1,600 responses. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the response has been delayed. We intend to publish the Government's response in due course.

Hearing Impairment: Coronavirus**Justin Madders:**[\[109438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve public awareness of exemptions to the rules on the wearing of face coverings for deaf people and those who assist people who rely on lip reading to communicate.

Jo Churchill:

Our guidance published online is clear that there are exemptions where people do not need to wear face coverings. We are also clear that people do not need to prove they are exempt and they should not be challenged about this

The Government is running a major proactive communications campaign on face coverings to alert the public where they are now required to wear a face covering, who is exempt from wearing one, and how to wear one correctly. As part of this campaign, we are prioritising the need to communicate who is exempt from wearing one.

We are actively engaging with stakeholders including disability charities to communicate new guidance to their members as well as highlighting this message to the general public on social media and via broadcasting opportunities.

Heart Diseases: Medical Equipment**Hilary Benn:**[\[112998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has received representations on the sustainable global supply of paediatric cardiology equipment from following the transition period.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Department, in consultation with the devolved administrations and Crown Dependencies, is working with trade bodies, product suppliers, and the health and care system to make detailed plans to help ensure continued supply of medicines, medical products and equipment to the whole of the United Kingdom at the end of the transition period.

This includes:

- medicines (prescription-only, pharmacy and general sales list and unlicensed medicines);
- medical devices and clinical consumables;
- supplies for clinical trials and clinical investigations;

- vaccines and countermeasures; and
- blood, tissue and transplant materials.

Further detail on the plans to help ensure continuity of medical supplies is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-3-august-2020/letter-to-medicine-suppliers-3-august-2020>

■ Heart Diseases: Young People

Jim Shannon: **[110835]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people aged 15 to 25 years old have had heart disease in the UK in the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

The numbers of people age 15-25 who have had heart disease in the United Kingdom, either currently or within the last five years, is not available in the format requested.

■ Higher Education: Coronavirus

Mr Marcus Fysh: **[107042]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of positive covid-19 test results in the last six weeks are from students in higher education settings in England, by (a) region and (b) local authority area.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England (PHE) does not publish data on COVID-19 cases in higher education settings in the format requested.

PHE publishes incidence data for educational aged cohorts at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930819/Weekly_COVID-19_and_Influenza_Surveillance_Graphs_W44.pdf

In week 43, there were 311 confirmed COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks in educational settings. Further information can be found at the following link:

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

■ Hospices: Finance

Conor McGinn: **[108253]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for hospices; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: There are 184 hospices in England almost all of which are majority funded from charitable and philanthropic donations and are therefore independent organisations. Most hospices also receive some statutory funding, mainly from clinical commissioning groups for providing local services.

The Department recognises that the hospice sector has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that subsequent social distancing measures have affected some aspects of community fundraising. We regularly assess the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on the hospice sector, and through NHS England and NHS Improvement are in discussions with stakeholders in the sector about the challenges they face. A range of steps have been taken to support hospices.

We have made up to £200 million available to the sector for additional capacity between April and July, and we continue to work closely with hospices to support their essential work.

Hospitals: Coronavirus**Dan Jarvis:**[\[55981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the reliability of covid-19 test results from tests performed in hospitals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 June 2020]: The validation of COVID-19 testing devices is covered by the Departmental Test and Trace Validation Group. Initial validation of COVID-19 tests was conducted by the Public Health England team.

National Health Service laboratories are accredited by the UKAS international standard for Medical Laboratories ISO15189.

Hypnosis: Coronavirus**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[113017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether hypnotherapy in a face-to-face session is permissible under the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: It is for each business to assess whether they are a business required to change the way in which they provide their services having considered the guidance and Regulations. All businesses should take steps to ensure they are COVID-19 secure including, where possible, providing services remotely or virtually.

■ Immigrants: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle:

[\[110144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Health and Social Care, whether all foreign nationals living in the UK will be able to access free covid-19 related healthcare treatment during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Edward Argar:

Regulations came into force on 29 January 2020 to add Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) (now known as COVID-19) to Schedule 1 of the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015. This means there can be no charge made to any overseas visitor, including anyone living in the United Kingdom without permission, for the diagnosis, or, if positive, treatment, of COVID-19.

This information has been widely communicated to National Health Service staff and the public, including a public-facing message which has been translated into 40 languages.

Furthermore, migrants who are ordinarily resident in the UK are entitled to all NHS secondary care without charge and certain groups, such as asylum seekers, refugees and victims of modern slavery are exempt from charge under the Charging Regulations.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Derek Twigg:

[\[109170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of flu vaccine doses that will be administered to people aged over 50 in winter 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

The flu vaccine programme is currently being delivered, with priority given to those who are most at risk from the effects of flu, and frontline health and social care workers. There will be further communication on extending the programme to those aged 50-64 later in the season.

Alex Norris:

[\[109583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 October 2020 to Questions 91703 and 91704 on Influenza: Vaccination, by what date will new mass vaccination delivery models be conceived and implemented.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: It is the role of regional NHS England and NHS Improvement public health commissioning teams to decide how best to implement new delivery models for flu, following consideration of the local provider landscape, the situation locally and intelligence on uptake. NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that in some areas, large scale vaccination models, such as drive in models, are already in place and vaccinating individuals at scale.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[110283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people who require an egg-free flu vaccine are able to access one.

Jo Churchill:

It is the responsibility of general practitioners and community pharmacists to order the seasonal flu vaccine for the adult programme directly from suppliers.

Public Health England have provided guidance for healthcare practitioners: Inactivated influenza vaccine 2020 to 2021, which is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/inactivated-influenza-vaccine-information-for-healthcare-practitioners

This provides advice on when the egg-free cell-based quadrivalent influenza vaccine should be offered.

If an individual has concerns about egg allergies, they should speak to a health professional.

■ Intensive Care: Coronavirus

Mr Marcus Fysh:

[110862]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients reported as being covid-19 patients in intensive care have (a) had a positive covid-19 test result, (b) respiratory symptoms and (c) both, by (i) hospital trust and (ii) English region.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Based on data from 15 March 2020 to week ending 1 November 2020 submitted to Public Health England's Severe Acute Respiratory Infection-Watch, 30% of new admissions for acute respiratory infection (ARI) to any ward, including intensive care units, (ICU) and high dependency units (HDU), in hospitals in England had a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 test.

Over the same time period, 42% of new admissions to ICU/HDU for ARI had a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 test.

Further information on ICU/HDU admission rates by region and by trust in the weekly surveillance reports is available at the following link:

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

■ Laboratories: Dorset

Sir Christopher Chope:

[44955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons NHS England has restricted the supply of chemical reagent for covid-19 testing to NHS hospital laboratories in Dorset; and if he will take steps to enable those laboratories to maximise their covid-19 testing capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The testing supplies team have already provided colleagues in National Health Service hospital laboratories in Dorset additional reagents that we have secured on behalf of the United Kingdom. They will continue to work with Dorset and the rest of the local pathology networks to address any localised supply issues when they arise. This includes ensuring that capacity is available and managed across the pathology network as well as making sure tests are sent to pillar 2 when appropriate to make better use of the available capacity across the system.

■ McKinsey and Company: Contact Tracing**Justin Madders:****[83844]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the project plan for the contract with McKinsey in relation to the new permanent test and trace body.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: McKinsey was asked to provide the fact base to support civil servants with decisions on organisation options for the United Kingdom's Test and Trace Programme as it matures. Details of the contract award are published online at the following link:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/1a720c8a-85fd-4255-85ee-3c891c664bf0?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review**Cat Smith:****[908883]**

If he will publish a timescale for the implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report, published in July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We welcome the report and we are considering Baroness Cumberlege's recommendations carefully.

There are currently no plans to publish a timescale for the implementation of the recommendations.

The report took over two years to compile and we therefore consider it vitally important – for the sake of patients and especially those who have suffered greatly – that we give this independent report the full consideration it deserves.

We will update hon. Members before the end of the year.

■ Mental Health Services**Margaret Greenwood:****[908887]**

What steps his Department plans to take to support mental health services during winter 2020-21.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The mental health of everyone is absolutely critical in these unprecedented times. We are working with the National Health Service, Public Health England, social care and others to take an expert look now at what we might anticipate by way of need coming through over the next few weeks and months. We will bring forward our winter plan for mental health and wellbeing in due course.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Daisy Cooper:**[\[111629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for a Covid Recovery Mental Health Strategy for children and young people involving (a) the NHS, (b) schools, (c) colleges and (d) the voluntary sector which will include (i) online, (ii) telephone and (iii) face-to-face support services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are ensuring that children and young people's mental health services remain open for business during this latest phase of the pandemic. Mental health providers continue to offer support using digital, remote and face to face approaches, where appropriate, to continue assessment and treatment during social distancing measures.

This is part of the wider support across the whole system supporting children and young people including education settings, local authorities, the voluntary sector and other services working in partnership to support children and young people's mental health. We are also working with the National Health Service, Public Health England and others to gather evidence and assess the potential longer-term mental health impacts of COVID-19.

We will bring forward a winter plan for mental health and wellbeing in due course.

■ Mental Health Services: Pupils**Daisy Cooper:**[\[111628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will fund age-appropriate mental health support for pupils beyond the trail blazer pilots and pre-covid-19 content in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are funding age-appropriate support beyond the trailblazer pilots. The first 59 mental health support teams are becoming operational and 123 teams will be in place in schools and colleges by early 2021 with the programme rolling out to at least 20-25% of the country by 2023.

In addition, as children and young people returned to schools and colleges for autumn term, we invested £8 million through the Wellbeing for Education Return project, enabling local authorities to fund mental health and wellbeing experts to provide advice and resources for education staff to support and promote children and young people's mental health.

We remain committed to the aims in the NHS Long Term Plan which will see an additional 345,000 children and young people in England having access to support via NHS-funded mental health services and school-or college-based mental health support teams by 2023/24.

■ **Mental Illness: Coronavirus**

Alex Sobel:

[\[112108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to enable people with mental health illnesses to form a support bubble with another person outside their household even if they do not live alone during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: We are keen to ensure that the most vulnerable have the support they need. We are ensuring that support groups can go ahead including for vulnerable people, new parents, survivors of crime, and those with or recovering from addictions.

People may visit a public open space for the purposes of open-air recreation to promote physical or mental health or emotional wellbeing. This can be done alone, with a person's bubble or household, or with one other person from another household.

■ **Nabiximols**

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[109475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions for Sativex have been issued by the NHS in each month since November 2019.

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[109476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions for unlicensed cannabis-based medicines the NHS issued in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

There have been 1,700 items for Sativex prescribed on an NHS prescription, dispensed in the community in England and submitted to the NHS Business Services Authority for reimbursement for the period November 2019 to August 2020, the latest data available. The following table shows the number of items by month.

MONTH	ITEMS
November 2019	172
December 2019	177
January 2020	175
February 2020	160

MONTH	ITEMS
March 2020	177
April 2020	187
May 2020	154
June 2020	167
July 2020	178
August 2020	153

The NHS Business Service Authority is unable to provide the number of National Health Service prescription items for unlicensed cannabis-based products dispensed in the community in England. This information is being withheld in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, due to the number of items attributed to less than five patients and potential for patient identifiable information to be published.

■ NHS: Productivity

Chi Onwurah:

[\[109346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff use Facebook's productivity tool Workplace.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not collected centrally.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[94431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a plan to ensure that the NHS is able to receive sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment for use in winter 2020-21 as recommended by the Public Accounts Committee in July 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 28 September 2020]: 'Personal protective equipment (PPE) strategy: stabilise and build resilience', published on 28 September, sets out how the Government has moved beyond the emergency COVID-19 response by stabilising the supply for PPE and build resilience. It also includes details about how Government is preparing for and managing the ongoing response to the pandemic alongside the usual seasonal pressures. We are confident we have secured enough supply for this winter period and that we have the processes and logistics in place to distribute PPE to where it is needed. The strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-strategy-stabilise-and-build-resilience>

We have around 32 billion PPE items on order and this month we will have a four month stockpile of all COVID-19-critical PPE in place, with a tremendous contribution from United Kingdom manufacturers.

■ Obesity

Andrea Jenkyns: [\[111577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of shopper intent when developing the scope for the proposed location restrictions set out in the Tackling Obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives strategy.

Andrea Jenkyns: [\[111578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to use the findings of Public Health England' report, Tackling Obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives, published on 27 July 2020 on the consumption of sugar and excess calories in developing the proposed promotion and advertising restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

A full public consultation and impact assessment has been carried out for the proposal to restrict the promotion of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in stores. The Government's response to the consultation and the impact assessment will be published shortly.

Policies on restricting the promotion and advertising of foods high in fat, salt and sugar are informed by the latest research, emerging evidence and various reports from key stakeholders including Public Health England.

■ Obesity: Mass Media

Martyn Day: [\[112090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of media representation of obesity on the stigma associated with living with overweight or obesity.

Martyn Day: [\[112091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle the stigma associated with living with obesity or overweight; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Department recognises the stigma associated with living with overweight and obesity. Our focus is on tackling the causes of obesity, improving diets and preventing ill health. We have been careful to consider the views of mental health charities and experts as we developed our plans for implementing the obesity strategy and we will continue to listen going forwards.

■ Operating Theatres: Fire Prevention

Jim Shannon:

[\[110129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to classify surgical fires in operating theatres as never events.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are no plans to classify surgical fires in operating theatres as Never Events.

Never Events are defined as serious incidents that are wholly preventable because guidance or safety recommendations that provide strong systemic protective barriers are available at a national level and should have been implemented by all healthcare providers.

Strong systemic protective barriers are defined as barriers that must be successful, reliable and comprehensive safeguards or remedies – such as a connector that stops a medicine being given by the wrong route or a window restrictor which prevents a window being opened wide enough for a patient to get through.

There is currently no national guidance or safety recommendations that provides such safeguards to prevent surgical fires in operating theatres. These types of incidents cannot therefore be defined as a Never Event.

■ Out-patients: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[908888\]](#)

What estimate he has made of the number of hospital patients diagnosed with covid-19 in October 2020 who contracted that virus while in hospital.

Edward Argar:

NHS England data shows that, in October, there were 3,934 new hospital admissions where the patient was diagnosed with COVID-19 in hospital from a test taken eight or more days after admission.

However, we know that the incubation period of COVID-19 can be as long as 14 days, so it possible that some of these patients may have contracted the virus before admission.

We continue to work to reduce hospital transmission as a priority.

■ Pregnancy: Coronavirus

Stella Creasy:

[\[112051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance is available for pregnant women in their third trimester on attending work during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: The Health and Safety Executive provides specific advice for new and expectant mothers and have recently updated their

guidance to protect vulnerable workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their guidance was updated on 5 November.

■ Pressure Sores

Conor McGinn: [\[106386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been treated by the NHS for pressure ulcers in each year since 2010.

Conor McGinn: [\[106387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the annual cost to the NHS of treating pressure ulcers in each year since 2010.

Conor McGinn: [\[106389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of pressure ulcers treated by the NHS since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

We do not hold the information in the format requested.

■ Protective Clothing

Gareth Thomas: [\[109146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) Personal Protective Coveralls have been used throughout the NHS and ancillary services since March 2020, (b) Personal Protective Coveralls were used throughout the NHS and supplied to ancillary services in the 6 months prior to March 2020 and (c) Personal Protective Coveralls will the NHS require to use and to supply to ancillary services in the next year; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Public Sector: Contracts

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[104690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 81561 on Public Sector: Contracts, what the average length is of contracts awarded to suppliers through direct award.

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[104691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 81561 on Public Sector: Contracts; what the average value is of contracts awarded to suppliers through direct award.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[104692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 81561 on Public Sector: Contracts, in which (a) regional areas and (b) constituencies have are companies awarded contracts by direct award based.

Edward Argar:

As of the beginning of November 2020, 937 contracts worth an estimated £17.8 billion have been awarded by the Department and its executive agencies in response to the Covid-19 pandemic for a wide range of products and services including personal protective equipment, the Test and Trace initiative, ventilators, IT, logistics, medicines.

The great majority of these contracts have been let using a direct award. Contract Award Notices are published for each contract which contain information on the value of the contract, its duration and the name and address of the supplier.

■ **Sodium Valproate: Females**

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[107603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to raise awareness of the potential health risks for women aged between 15-45 years who are prescribed sodium valproate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has updated the patient information leaflets for all valproate-containing medicines to ensure women have access to the latest information on the risk of neurodevelopmental disorders in children born to women who took the medicine during pregnancy. A pictogram warning of the risks of use in pregnancy has been added to the outer packing of valproate medicines and a patient card is available to provide more detail on actions to take.

The documents that form the basis of the valproate Pregnancy Prevention Program, including a patient guide, have been made available electronically and disseminated as hard copies to doctors and pharmacists to support discussion of the risks with women. Healthcare professionals have been reminded of their responsibility to inform women taking valproate of the risks through letters from the United Kingdom's Chief Medical Officers and Chief Pharmaceutical Officers and by articles in the MHRA's electronic bulletin Drug Safety Update.

We are working with the Valproate Stakeholder Network to explore additional ways of improving the reach of regulatory communications through platforms in the healthcare and patient setting.

■ Strokes: Rehabilitation

Derek Twigg:

[\[109172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the progress made by stroke teams in following up with stroke survivors, who had a stroke in the last 12 months, to review and address their rehabilitation needs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have ensured that stroke services across England continue to provide rehabilitation and post-acute services to stroke survivors and their families and carers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have funded the Stroke Association over the last six months to provide Stroke Connect, which was developed in direct response to COVID-19 to ensure stroke survivors and their carers had support when discharged from hospital.

■ Surgery: Coronavirus

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[99619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the use of minimally invasive procedures during the covid-19 outbreak on (a) hospital capacity (b) patient outcomes in hospitals in England.

Edward Argar:

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic all non-essential elective surgery was postponed, including minimally invasive procedures. The use of minimally invasive techniques was mooted as a potential solution to operating in a COVID-19 environment and, where clinically appropriate, this technique was used once non-urgent procedures resumed. As COVID-19 infection control measures have been developed, the need for minimally invasive techniques has receded and the use of these has now returned to normal levels.

■ Tobacco: Packaging

Alex Norris:

[\[110894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for his Department to undertake a review of the tobacco and related product regulations after the transition period; and whether (a) tobacco free nicotine pouches and (b) other novel nicotine products are planned to be covered by that review.

Alex Norris:

[\[110895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to ensure that UK regulations for tobacco and related products are not weaker than the EU Tobacco Products Directive.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Our commitment to tough tobacco control will continue post 1 January 2021, and we laid the Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 on the 28 September 2020 to reaffirm that commitment.

Post-transition period, Great Britain will no longer have to comply with the European Union's Tobacco Products Directive and there will be opportunity to consider, in the future, regulatory changes that help people quit smoking and address the harms from tobacco. Any changes to do so will be based on robust evidence and in the interests of public health.

The Department will be carrying out a post implementation review of the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 and Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products by 20 May 2021 to see if the regulations have both met their objectives. Part of this review process will involve a public consultation to start before the end of the year for people to submit their views and evidence.

■ Visual Impairment**Jim Shannon:**[\[111522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have lost their eyesight in the last five years in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

This data is not held centrally.

■ Vitamin D: Coronavirus**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[90882\]](#)

What steps he is taking to encourage the consumption of vitamin D supplements during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

As we move into the winter months, it is more important than ever to following existing Government advice on vitamin D supplements.

At this time, the evidence is insufficient to prove that vitamin D helps people respond to COVID-19.

Public Health England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence are currently re-reviewing the evidence, which will be published in mid-December.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Interviews****Stuart C McDonald:**[\[101029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 October 2020 to Question 96931 on Asylum: Interviews, whether the pilot of third parties carrying out asylum interviews will include interviews of those who are or claim to be under 18 years; and whether additional safeguards will be put in place for such interviews carried out by third parties.

Chris Philp:

Asylum Operations are exploring many options to reduce the number of outstanding asylum claims. Alongside seeking temporary resource from within the Home Office and other government departments, we are also exploring with third-party suppliers to test the viability of whether they can deliver the support required as a temporary, short term measure. Asylum interviews have not been outsourced, and at this stage we are only exploring the potential feasibility.

Third party interviewing officers will complete a bespoke training package, delivered by the qualified asylum operations training team, that has been designed specifically to meet their needs. The course will include training specifically about modern slavery and safeguarding awareness. Third party interviewing officers will not be carrying out the interviews of those who are or claim to be under 18 years.

Anyone who conducts asylum interviews receives thorough training to ensure they are fully equipped for the role. Third party interviewing officers will not be carrying out the interviews of those who are or claim to be under 18 years.

To guarantee governance and accountability, mechanisms are in place for the oversight of third-party interviews, the department has a quality assurance process which assesses the quality of decisions, interviews and the application of Home Office policy.

■ Asylum: Military Bases**Stuart C McDonald:**[\[114918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what Government Departments and agencies she has consulted on potential sites for asylum accommodation; what sites she has under consideration; and whether she plans to use additional Ministry of Defence sites for asylum accommodation in the 2020-21 financial year.

Chris Philp:

The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation. This has included the need to source sufficient accommodation to meet demand.

Following a review of available government property, the Ministry of Defence agreed to temporarily hand over two of their sites in Kent and Pembrokeshire which are now being used to house asylum seekers.

Whilst this is contingency accommodation used on a temporary basis, our primary focus remains to ensure that we maintain sufficient capacity to meet our statutory obligations during these unprecedented times and will continue to examine further opportunities which may be utilised if necessary.

■ **Asylum: Mobile Phones**

Sarah Champion:

[\[114198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) process is and (b) agreed timescales are for the return of confiscated mobile phones to asylum seekers by Border Force; and what steps her Department takes to communicate that process to affected asylum seekers.

Chris Philp:

Immigration Enforcement search all migrants upon arrival at the Tug Haven at Dover. In the event that a mobile phone is discovered it will be seized as part of an investigation into the organised crime group involved in the facilitation.

The migrant will be informed verbally that the phone will be kept for evidential purpose for three to six months. They are provided with a receipt and contact details. Attempts will be made, to communicate this in their first language, although this can be challenging due to external factors.

■ **Asylum: Universal Credit**

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reinstating the link with mainstream benefits by setting the asylum support rate at 70 percent of universal credit.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office review the level of the support allowances each year to ensure that they meet the essential living needs of asylum seekers and their dependants. There are no plans to link the level of the allowances with Universal Credit rates.

■ **Biometric Residence Permits**

Hywel Williams:

[\[114079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of (a) Biometric Residence Permit cards are issued within her Department's target time; (b) responses to BRP has not been delivered forms are answered within her Department's target time; and (c) correspondence in relation to BRP are answered within her Department's target time.

Chris Philp:

(a) The Home Office does not keep data relating to volume of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) issued and delivered within target, but it does have service level agreements (SLAs) with partners for the creation and delivery of BRPs. The Home Office can also check whether and how quickly an individual BRP was created and delivered.

The Home Office aims to deliver a BRP within 10 working days of an immigration application being approved.

The DVLA, which produces BRPs, has an SLA to complete 90% of production requests within one working day and the remaining 10% within two working days. While this was met consistently until early 2020 the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions and safe working practices have caused occasional delays of up to four working days since April.

Our delivery partner is required to attempt first delivery of 99% of BRP within two working days of collection from DVLA. This target was met up until February 2020 and is 91% since then. We are working to improve our performance in all areas.

(b) Based upon locally held records, for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st October 2020, the Home Office received 44,258 BRP delivery enquiry forms and answered 91% within the 5 working day target.

(c) Based upon locally held records, for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st October 2020, the Home Office received 38,226 items of correspondence relating to matters other than delivery and answered 76% within the 5 working day target.

■ Catalytic Converters: Theft**Gareth Thomas:**[\[112982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of (a) trends in the level of theft of catalytic convertors and (b) the involvement of those thefts in wider organised crime.

Kit Malthouse:

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) collects data on incidents regarding theft from a vehicle, including details of the items stolen, such as car parts. The number of incidents identified involving the theft of a catalytic converter are too small to provide a reliable estimate.

Since the introduction of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, there has been a steady downward trend in metal-related thefts, with recorded offences of metal theft having decreased by 74% from the year ending March 2013 to year ending March 2020. However, infrastructure-related metal thefts, which include catalytic converters, have increased by 21% in the year ending March 2020.

No assessment has been made as to the involvement of organised criminals in catalytic converter theft.

The Government recognises the negative impact this crime has on industry and the public, causing distress and disruption to victims. We continue to work to understand what more can be done to tackle the theft of catalytic converters. In May I held a meeting with representatives of the motor industry to discuss vehicle crime, including the theft of catalytic converters.

■ Immigrants: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[\[112106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on Government support for people with no recourse to public funds during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Government remains committed to protecting vulnerable people and has acted decisively to ensure that we support everyone through this pandemic. We have introduced a range of measures to ensure people can stay safe and many of these are available for those with a no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition.

The Coronavirus job retention scheme, self-employment income support and statutory sick pay are not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Contribution-based benefits are also not classed as public funds for immigration purposes.

The Government has made in excess of £4.3 billion of funding to local authorities in England, and additional funding under the Barnett formula to the devolved administrations to enable them to respond to Covid-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including services helping the most vulnerable.

We have launched a new scheme in England, through which local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment to individuals who have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for Covid-19 or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. This is available to those who are employed or self-employed who are unable to work from home and will, therefore, lose income as a result. Those with NRPF are eligible for this scheme.

Migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the NRPF restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances. Applications are being dealt with swiftly and compassionately.

■ Immigrants: Finance

Stephen Timms:

[\[114049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November to Question 105275, what routes are included in the other category referred to in the data for in-country extensions included in that Answer.

Stephen Timms:

[114050]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November to Question 105275, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the increase in the number of people in the other category extending their leave from Q4 2019 to Q1 2020.

Chris Philp:

Information regarding the routes included in the 'Other' category are included in notes for table Exe_01 'Grants of an extension of stay in the UK, by category of extension' available from *Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020* at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/list-of-tables#extensions>

The 'Category of leave group': 'Other' includes discretionary leave, long residence, parents of children at school, stateless leave, other reasons and cases where the category of grant has not been recorded. 'Other' also includes extensions granted to individuals who are unable to travel home because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus (COVID-19) as detailed in the notes to summary table Exe_01. A more detailed breakdown is available in the 'Category of leave sub group' variable in the published detailed dataset.

As indicated in the commentary accompanying extensions data in *Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020*, the increase in the number of extensions granted in Q1 2020 compared to Q4 2019 reflects extensions granted under the separate [policy for those currently unable to return home due to COVID-19](#) (63,048 grants up to the end of March 2020).

■ Immigration: Applications

Nadia Whittome:

[114352]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) backlog and (b) average length of time taken to process applications for indefinite leave to remain.

Chris Philp:

There are no backlogs on our ILR routes, we are deciding cases within published service standard, unless there is a specific reason we cannot, in which case we will contact the customer. Our service standard for the processing of ILR cases remains six months.

Performance against service standards for Indefinite Leave to Remain applications are included in the Migration Transparency data which is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

■ Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority**Chi Onwurah:** [\[114885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Fire on the LiBess battery explosion in September 2020.

James Brokenshire:

There have been no discussions with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service on the LiBess battery explosion.

■ Racially aggravated offences: Leicester**Bambos Charalambous:** [\[114991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the increase in racially-aggravated offences reported to Leicestershire Police during the period covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[114992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle hate crime during the autumn 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Kit Malthouse:

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 we know that some police forces have reported some increases in reported hate crimes, including where people of Asian origin have been targeted. These offences are completely unacceptable.

The Home Office are working closely with the National Police Chief's Council to ensure that all police forces are providing reassurance to affected communities and encouraging hate crime reporting during the pandemic. The Government are also working with civil society partners to understand what issues there are for communities.

Government continues to work with communities around the country and the police to ensure people of all backgrounds have access to the latest information and are supported through this period.

■ Refugees: Children**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[113252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on providing support to child refugees made homeless by the recent fires at the Moria refugee camp.

Chris Philp:

We were very concerned by the impact of the devastating fire that destroyed the Moria migrant facility. The UK government responded to requests by the Greek Government to provide specific humanitarian goods. The UK has provided kitchen

sets to nearly 2,000 vulnerable families to prepare and cook food, and solar lanterns to help them stay safe.

Throughout the pandemic the UK has remained ready to receive those accepted for transfer under the Dublin Regulation. We remain in regular contact with sending Member States, including Greece, who are responsible for arranging transfers. Three group flights from Greece arrived on 11 May, 28 July and 6 August, and we have received further transfers from Greece in recent weeks.

■ Refugees: Resettlement

Paul Blomfield: [\[111491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to restart refugee resettlement programmes.

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

■ Sleeping Rough: Deportation

Stuart C McDonald: [\[114916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the new discretionary powers in the Immigration Rules to refuse or cancel a person's permission to stay in the UK on the basis of that person's rough sleeping; whether consent was sought from the devolved Administrations for the introduction or exercise of such a power where housing and homelessness is devolved; what consultation her Department conducted with police forces in (a) Scotland (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland on the introduction of that power; what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of existing levels of co-ordination between police forces in England and the other UK nations in implementing that power; and what team in her Department leads on the implementation of that power.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[114917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with (a) housing and (b) homelessness charities on the new discretionary powers in the Immigration Rules to refuse or cancel a person's permission to stay in the UK on the basis of that person's rough sleeping, and how she plans to work with those charities in relation to use of that power.

Chris Philp:

Immigration is a reserved matter. The new Immigration Rules make provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping. The new rule will apply on a discretionary basis to non-EEA nationals from 1 December 2020 and to newly arriving EEA nationals from 1 January 2021. The provision will be used sparingly and only where individuals refuse to engage with the

range of support mechanisms available and are repeatedly engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

Tackling rough sleeping is not a primary responsibility for the police unless there is crime or anti-social behaviour perpetrated by a person who is sleeping rough. The police rely upon integrated support to be in place across relevant partner agencies and services to help rough sleepers move off the streets.

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government are working together to encourage local authorities and approved charities to resolve the immigration status of eligible rough sleepers and unlock access to any benefits and entitlements that rough sleepers may be eligible for.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Royston Smith: [\[113598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the average processing time for Building Safety Fund applications.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Prospectus, published in May, clearly sets out the timelines for the Building Safety Fund process and details the criteria that needs to be met in order to receive funding. MHCLG has since publicly committed to keeping these timeframes under review.

We are currently reviewing registrations and supplementary information that has been requested from building owners. We will be in contact with building owners as soon as we have completed the verification process. At this point, eligible registrants will be asked to apply for funding. We are working to do this as quickly as possible.

Royston Smith: [\[113599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much the average grant allocation is under the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We are committed to publishing information in the Building Safety Fund's data release and will be publishing grant approvals at a later date.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Apsana Begum: [\[113244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has taken steps with the (a) fire and rescue services and (b) Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors on increasing the number of skilled professionals able to undertake external wall fire safety assessments.

Christopher Pincher:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer for PQ UIN 94499, answered on 1 October 2020.

Business Improvement Districts: Coronavirus**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[114077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will take steps to require local authorities to cancel levies in relation to Business Improvement Districts for 2020 and until after the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a proven and effective vehicle for leveraging private investment and have a significant role to play in high street regeneration. Their role will be even more important in the recovery phase from the current crisis.

BID organisations are advised to work closely with their members, sector bodies and local authorities in coming to sensible arrangements on charging given the current circumstances. BIDs or local authorities may want to take legal advice on how they can manage their BID levy using their existing powers.

In March, the Government included provisions within the Coronavirus Act 2020 that enables BIDs to delay any renewal ballots due to take place before 31 December 2020 until 31 March 2021. This allows businesses to focus on recovery from the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic before deciding whether to participate in future BID arrangements.

In addition to this legislation, the Government made available up to £6.1 million of support to BIDs. The funding has been delivered to 260 BIDs in England via local authorities, including £53,270.30 paid to Scarborough Borough Council on behalf of the Yorkshire Coast BID, part of which covers the East Yorkshire constituency.

We will continue to work closely with the sector to look at how further we can support BIDs, and the businesses that contribute to them, during this time.

Housing: Construction**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[114903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the rate of house building.

Christopher Pincher:

The COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant effect on the housing market and the Government has taken unprecedented measures to help those facing challenges. To support housebuilders the Government has taken steps including the Stamp Duty holiday and increasing site opening hours to facilitate activity. In addition we have set out an ambitious package of measures to ensure we build the right homes in the right

places and level up opportunities across the country. This package includes, at £12.2 billion, the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in a decade; a once in a generation reform to the planning system, and plans for a £10 billion Single Housing Infrastructure Fund to tackle barriers to housebuilding.

Recent evidence shows housebuilding activity is picking up. For example Knight Frank, the estate agency, highlighted that land market transactions picked up in Q3, with housebuilders returning to the market after many withdrew in Q2. Some have publicly confirmed resilient sales levels and completion rates despite the pandemic, noting an increase in demand over the summer as the market reopened. Similarly the Construction PMI for housebuilding was 62.4 in October, above the 50 no-change mark which indicates that output expanded. Survey respondents highlighted pent up demand and a boost from improving housing market conditions. We continue to monitor the housing market and the effect on it over the pandemic.

■ **Housing: Fire Prevention**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[113212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of houses built without the necessary fire breaks in England and Wales in the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

This information is not centrally held. The Government is currently pursuing the biggest change in our building safety regime for a generation. This includes our landmark Building Safety Bill, which is currently undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny and builds on the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. The draft Bill contains provisions to help remedy the systemic failings that resulted in the Grenfell Tower fire.

■ **Housing: Older People**

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[114280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many companies have voluntarily opted out of charging event fees on retirement properties.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: This information is not held by my Department.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[114281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made on commissioning research on establishing an online database to provide information for prospective buyers on event fees associated with leasehold retirement properties.

Bambos Charalambous:[\[114282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made on a consultation on the implications for consumers and buyers of spouses' and live-in carers' succession rights to stay in a leasehold retirement property, without payment of an event fee.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: In 2017, the Law Commission published a report of their review of event fees on behalf of this Department. The Law Commission made a number of recommendations in its report, which can be downloaded at <http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/event-fees-in-retirement-properties>.

The Government responded to the Law Commission, thanking them for the report and agreeing to implement the majority of the recommendations. The Government is further considering two recommendations, on succession rights and a database of leasehold retirement properties with event fees, and will make an announcement in due course.

■ **Housing: Students****Nadia Whittome:**[\[112148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of regulation of student accommodation provision in the context of changing Higher Education provision as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is committed to ensuring that every student has a safe, decent and secure place to live. The Government supports the student accommodation Codes of Practice run by Universities UK/Guild HE and Accreditation Network UK/Unipol. There are currently no plans to review the mechanism by which the Codes are administered. The Codes of Practice set the standards for the safety of halls of residence and purpose built student accommodation, the management of the property and the relationship between managers and student tenants. The Department for Education has published guidance on reopening buildings and campuses which provides additional advice on student accommodation. The Government is also working with local authorities to raise standards in the private rented sector, including in student accommodation, and local authorities have been given a wide range of powers to tackle criminal landlords.

■ Planning Permission: Local Press

Bob Seely:

[\[113635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the contribution of the statutory requirement to publicise planning applications in local newspapers to ensuring that there is (a) transparency and (b) democratic engagement in the planning process; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities are required to publicise certain types of planning applications in local newspapers as set out in Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

In response to coronavirus restrictions, temporary regulations have been introduced to supplement the existing statutory publicity arrangements for planning applications.

Local planning authorities now have the flexibility to take other reasonable steps to publicise applications if they cannot discharge the specific requirement for newspaper publicity – for instance, if the local newspaper is not now in circulation. These steps can include the use of social media and other electronic communications, such as local online news portals, and must be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development.

However, if a local planning authority is required to publicise a planning application in a local newspaper, and that paper is still in circulation, then they must continue to do so.

■ Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[114247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the allocation to local authorities of (a) £15 million funding through the Protect Programme and (b) £10 million funding through the Cold Weather Fund.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: On 5 November the Protect Programme was announced. The fund will provide a further £15 million to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This programme will help areas that need additional support most throughout winter.

Local authorities who will be receiving Protect Programme funding have been informed. All local authorities are eligible for the £10 million Cold Weather Funds, to help keep rough sleepers safe this winter.

Our Policy and rough sleeping advisers are working intensively with councils on their specific local needs and challenges to develop delivery plans and confirm funding allocations for both these funds.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Energy: Morocco**

Alex Sobel: [\[114311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to support UK businesses to develop energy projects in Morocco.

Graham Stuart:

Department for International Trade teams work closely with UK companies to identify and highlight opportunities in the Moroccan energy sector, and with our Moroccan partners to showcase the expertise and value UK businesses can bring to energy projects.

■ Exports

Gareth Thomas: [\[112985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish her Department's long term strategy to increase exports; and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The Export Strategy was published in 2018 and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/export-strategy-supporting-and-connecting-businesses-to-grow-on-the-world-stage>.

Andrew Griffith: [\[114356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of UK exports.

Graham Stuart:

UK trade was performing strongly before the pandemic, with exports increasing 4.4% to £690.8bn last year and increasing year-on-year since 2016. According to UNCTAD the UK was the only one of the world's ten largest exporting countries to increase exports in 2019, overtaking France to become the fifth largest exporter. Latest figures show the value of UK exports in the 12 months to September 2020 was £626.8bn, down 7.9% on the same period last year.

■ Renewable Energy

Alex Sobel: [\[114310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what support her Department provides to UK companies seeking to develop international renewable energy projects to provide energy to the UK.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) undertakes a range of promotional activities to help UK companies to access international opportunities. DIT has an established renewable energy team, an international network of trade and investment advisors, and a network of UK-based regional trade advisors who support UK-based

companies to find export opportunities in renewables, including any that would supply energy to the UK. In addition, DIT works to encourage investments into the low carbon economy and support international ambitions to accelerate the global transition to net-zero.

■ Trade Agreements

Bill Esterson: [\[114846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of the Which? report entitled National Trade Conversation, published 11 November 2020.

Greg Hands:

The Government engages with all evidence and we are committed to ensuring the voice of the consumer is represented in trade policy. We have committed to maintaining the consumer standards that the UK public currently enjoys.

The Department has worked with Which? as they have undertaken the National Trade Conversation, including sitting on the Advisory Group established as part of the programme and my personal involvement in the launch event for the Research Report.

The work of Which? represents a valuable addition to our understanding of how consumers engage on trade and their core interests and values.

■ Trade Promotion

Gareth Thomas: [\[112987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will list every trade mission organised by her Department in each of the last five years.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade has run 660 Trade Missions in the last 5 years. A count of missions per year is included, and a full list of these missions can be found in the attached Annex.

YEAR	TRADE MISSIONS RUN
2016	141
2017	192
2018	182
2019	112
2020 (As of 11 th November)	33

■ Tradeshow Access Programme: Finance

Gareth Thomas: [\[112986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much funding she plans to provide to the trade show access programme for 2021-22; and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

Departmental budgets for 2021-22 are subject to HM Treasury's ongoing spending review.

■ UK Export Finance

Gareth Thomas: [\[112984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many companies were in receipt of UK export finance in each of the last five years by (a) region of the UK, (b) type of business (c) size of the business by annual turnover and (d) in total; and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The number of businesses that UK Export Finance (UKEF) supported over the last five years is shown in the table below. UKEF does not hold information about individual companies' annual turnover centrally, but the table shows the numbers and proportions of supported businesses that were small and medium-sized enterprises. It should be noted that the figures in the table refer to individual companies that received help. Some of those companies may have received more than one instance of UKEF support throughout the year in question but are only counted in the table once.

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total exporters supported, of which:	279	221	191	262	339
Direct support under a UKEF product	176	148	145	142	135
Companies who secured business with a project supported by UKEF	N/A*	N/A*	N/A*	81	140
Private market assist	100	71	45	34	62

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Direct support and private market assist	3	2	1	5	2
Number of SMEs	215	174	147	207	261
%age of SMEs	77%	79%	77%	79%	77%

*Information not collected for these years

The volume of business that UKEF supports year-on-year is a reflection of private sector liquidity and risk appetite as much as of its activity and success. UKEF complements rather than competes with private sector finance and insurance providers. If support is available from a commercial bank or insurer, UKEF does not seek to displace this. In many cases, UKEF will work with companies and financial service providers to find a solution from the commercial sector (which UKEF reports as a 'private market assist')

The breakdown of UKEF's support by business sector is included in the Annual Report and Accounts for each year, which are available online. The relevant information for the various years can be find at the following locations:

YEAR	URL	PAGE
2019/20	www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-export-finance-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-to-2020 .	13
2018/19	www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-export-finance-annual-report-and-accounts-2018-to-2019 .	15
2017/18	www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-export-finance-annual-report-and-accounts-2017-to-2018 .	13
2016/17	www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-export-finance-annual-report-and-accounts-2016-to-2017	20
2015/16	www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-export-finance-annual-report-and-accounts-2015-to-2016 .	18

The regional breakdown of businesses that received direct support under a UKEF product is only collated centrally in respect of short-term business deals. The figures held are shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. UKEF - Regional Breakdown [Regional breakdown.docx]

JUSTICE

■ Coroners: Perinatal Mortality

Tim Loughton:

[\[114755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish his response to the consultation on Coronial investigations of stillbirths, which closed on 18 June 2019; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

Further consideration of the responses to the consultation on Coronial investigations of stillbirths has been delayed during the Covid-19 pandemic, but we hope to publish the response to the consultation as soon as possible.

■ Courts: Legionnaires' Disease

Alex Cunningham:

[\[114854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of legionella within the HMCTS estate.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS carefully manages the risk of legionella across the estate and has robust protocols for monitoring and testing with preventative measures in place to ensure the safety of all those who use our buildings.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to changes in water demand across the HMCTS estate. All buildings have been assessed and legionella controls have been adapted as necessary. We have also increased the frequency of sample testing, temperature checks and water outlet flushing across the estate.

■ Courts: Wales

Gerald Jones:

[\[114969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much has been spent on additional court space in each constituency of Wales since March 2020.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS has so far spent £283,922 to create additional court space in Wales. We have opened a temporary Nightingale court in Swansea, established extra jury capacity in Cardiff and installed modular buildings (Portaccabins) in Caernarfon and Swansea.

Recovering from the impact of the pandemic is our top priority. HMCTS has published updates on their response to Covid-19 in the criminal and civil, family and tribunals jurisdictions in England and Wales. They provide comprehensive updates on recovery plans and include details about Nightingale courts and our actions to make sure our buildings are covid-secure.

We've unlocked vital capacity across England and Wales by opening 16 Nightingale Courts to provide 29 extra court rooms, 10 of which are being used for non-custodial jury trials. Portacabins are being installed to enable jury trials and therefore increase crime/jury hearing capacity. They are primarily being used as jury deliberating rooms and for assembly/jury management.

Gerald Jones:

[\[114970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which parts of the HM Courts and Tribunals Service estate in each constituency of Wales have been sold since 2010; what the date was of each such sale; and how much was paid for each part of the estate sold.

Chris Philp:

The table below provides the details of all court and tribunal buildings in Wales that have been sold since 2010.

COURT	DATE SOLD	PROCEED
Aberdare Magistrates and County Court	Apr-12	£275,000
Abergavenny Magistrates' Court	Mar-19	£499,809
Abertillery Magistrates Court	Sep-11	£81,000
Ammanford Magistrates Court	Oct-12	£90,000
Barry Magistrates Court	Jun-12	£250,000
Brecon Law Courts	Mar-19	£575,000
Bridgend Law Courts	Mar-17	£375,000
Caerphilly Magistrates' Court	Mar-18	£445,000
Cardigan Magistrates Court	Apr-13	£48,910
Carmarthen Law Courts (The Guildhall)	Dec-16	£223,004
Denbigh Magistrates Court	Dec-13	£165,000
Dolgellau Crown & Magistrates' Court	Nov-17	£67,509

COURT	DATE SOLD	PROCEED
Flint Magistrates Court	Apr-15	£87,500
Holyhead Magistrates' Court	Oct-17	£112,500
Llangefni Civil and Family Court	Mar-18	£72,000
Llangefni Magistrates Court	Sept - 12 Leasehold property - Lease sold	£32,228
Llwynypia Magistrates Court	Dec-11	£471,010
Neath and Port Talbot Civil and Family Court	Oct-17	£250,000
Neath Magistrates' Court	Jul-14	£450,000
Pontypool County Court	Jun-14	£200,000
Pontypridd Magistrates' Court	Mar-17	£350,000
Pwllheli Magistrates Court	Dec-12	£131,013
Rhyl County Court	Sep-17	£92,150

■ Criminal Proceedings

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[114842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the modelling in respect of the criminal courts backlog published by CREST Advisory on 30 October 2020.

Chris Philp:

CREST Advisory's report highlighted the challenges of running the criminal courts during COVID where the need to maintain social distancing has limited the courts abilities to use court capacity. However, the modelling carried out of the criminal courts by CREST Advisory, represented an extreme scenario showing vast rises in charging of crimes which do not bear reasonable scrutiny. They also fail to take account of our extensive efforts to limit the impact of the pandemic on the justice system. As a result of these measures, magistrates' courts are completing more cases than they are receiving and are tackling the number of outstanding cases. We've installed Perspex into more than 300 rooms to significantly increase volumes in the Crown Court and there are now over 250 rooms safely open for jury trials.

My department will next week publish updated projections of the prison population as National Statistics which will show how we expect demand for prisons places to change in coming years.

■ Debt Collection: Coronavirus

Karl Turner: [R] [[114839](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance his Department has issued to enforcement agents on taking control of goods during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Karl Turner: [R] [[114840](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether any exemptions to the normal practice of enforcement action have been specified by his Department for the duration of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Alex Chalk:

On 6 November, the Lord Chancellor wrote to the enforcement agent trade associations asking their members not to enter homes to take control of goods during the period of time that the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020 (the health protection regulations) are in force.

On 16 November the Government laid the Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction and Taking Control of Goods) (England) Regulations 2020. From 17 November, the regulations prevent enforcement agents taking control of goods inside homes while the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020 are in force. They also prevent enforcement agents from enforcing evictions (other than in limited circumstances) until 11 January.

Karl Turner: [R] [[114841](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the statutory basis is for his request to the Chairman of The High Court Enforcement Officers Association for enforcement agents not to enter residential properties for the purpose of enforcement.

Alex Chalk:

The Guidance was issued by the Lord Chancellor pursuant to his functions, duties and powers in relation to the civil justice system, including his general duty under section 1 of the Courts Act 2003 to ensure that there is an efficient and effective system to carry on the business of the High Court and the county court, and his common law powers under the *Ram* doctrine.

On 16 November the Government laid the Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction and Taking Control of Goods) (England) Regulations 2020. From 17 November, the regulations prevent enforcement agents taking control of goods inside homes while the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No.4) Regulations 2020 are in force. They also prevent enforcement agents from enforcing evictions (other than in limited circumstances) until 11 January.

■ Debt Collection: VAT

Alex Cunningham: [\[114855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to publish guidance on the application of VAT on judgement debts in the cases of High Court enforcement.

Alex Cunningham: [\[114856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of different practices employed by enforcement agents and High Court enforcement agents in relation to charging VAT to debtors.

Alex Cunningham: [\[114857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the level of consistency among High Court enforcement agents when applying VAT on their fees in identical circumstances.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is aware that there are differing interpretations within the enforcement industry of the application of the VAT payable on High Court Enforcement fees, which has led to different approaches being taken.

We are working to produce guidance to clarify the circumstances and manner in which VAT costs can and should be recovered from judgment debtors as an enforcement cost. We will publish that guidance as soon as we are able to.

■ Domestic Abuse: Homicide

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[113138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to paragraph 3.18 of the A Smarter Approach to Sentencing White Paper published in September 2020, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of excluding domestic violence related murder in the home from the Minimum term starting points of 25 years for adult mandatory life sentences for offenders who took a knife or weapon to the scene.

Chris Philp:

The law requires a mandatory life sentence to be imposed on anyone convicted of murder. The time an offender will spend in prison before being eligible to be considered for release on licence is set by the judge at sentencing. Schedule 21 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 sets out a range of starting points and aggravating factors for the judge to consider when deciding this minimum tariff. This Schedule does not set out all possible scenarios, but rather provides a framework and affords the judge the ability to make decisions on the specific facts of the case. Aggravating factors which will be considered, regardless of where the murder took place, will include the level of premeditation, the level of suffering inflicted on the victim, and the vulnerability of the victim.

■ Family Proceedings: Reform

Fiona Bruce: [\[114830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the second report of the Private Law Working Group entitled, The Time for Change, The Need for Change, The Case for Change, published in March 2020.

Alex Chalk:

The work of the Private Law Working Group, set up by the President of the Family Division, has been invaluable in helping to inform our programme of reform currently underway in the private family law system.

The report features a number of recommendations which we are working to develop alongside our colleagues in the judiciary and other representatives from the family justice system through the Family Justice Board.

■ Feltham Young Offender Institution

Peter Kyle: [\[114974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to pp. 67-68 of Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons' Annual Report 2019-20, what steps he is taking to remedy the increase in violence and self-harm at Feltham A.

Lucy Frazer:

Following the annual inspection of Feltham A by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) last Summer, a resulting action plan saw changes to the senior leadership team at the site as well as a number of actions for urgent improvements including an intervention plan focused on reducing the risk of violence. This included a targeted review of specific Use of Force incidents, focussing on governance, reporting procedures, techniques, practice and review.

Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that Feltham A has not been fully inspected by HMIP since, they visited in July as part of scrutiny visits during the Covid-19 period with HMIP praising the 'swift actions' taken at the start of the pandemic, communication and creativity shown by managers and noting that the YOI appeared 'calm and well-ordered' and that recorded self-harm had reduced since the start of the pandemic. Whilst this is encouraging, there is still more work to do and the Youth Custody Service will continue to monitor levels of violence and self-harm at Feltham A to ensure stability within the site.

■ Remand in Custody: Community Orders

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[114985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 111584 on Remand in Custody: Community Orders, how many people are on remand for breach of community orders, by nationality.

Chris Philp:

I refer the Hon. Member to the previous response to PQ 111584.

Offenders who fail to comply with the requirements of their orders can be returned to court for breach of their community orders. As a sanction, the courts can then amend the CO so as to impose more onerous requirements or revoke the order and resentence. In some instances, where an offender has breached his community order, a magistrates court may commit him to custody until he can be brought or appear before the Crown Court.

Information relating to the number of offenders who are committed to custody for breaching a CO could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

■ Secure Training Centres: Standards**Peter Kyle:**[\[114976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to page 74 of Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2019-20, for what reason the secure training centres at (a) Oakhill and (b) Medway have not achieved the changes recommended to improve their effectiveness.

Lucy Frazer:

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) have been working with the contractors at Oakhill to drive improvements in the service delivered to children. Since 2017, Oakhill has moved from overall 'Inadequate' inspection rating to 'Requires Improvement to be Good' for the Centre in 2018. The YCS continued to work with the Centre to drive improvement with the April 2019 annual inspection showing all areas assessed as being either 'Good' or 'Requiring Improvement to be Good' displaying upward progress from the previous year. However, inspectors observed that significant progress was still needed for the Centre to achieve an improved overall rating of 'Good'.

Inspectors said after visiting in April 2019 that "Incremental progress has been made by a newly formed permanent senior leadership team in addressing some, but not all, of the recommendations made at the last inspection. The recently introduced range of structural changes and newly introduced initiatives are intended to accelerate the progress of improvement over the coming year. However, at the point of the inspection, several significant shortcomings in critical areas of the centre's work with children continue to require significant improvement, particularly the need for stronger operational management oversight, in order to embed their implementation".

The YCS recognises the need for further change at Oakhill and since the April 2019 inspection G4S have strengthened their management through the appointment of a new Deputy Director and a new Head of Education. To ensure Oakhill are making progress on the actions, the Centre is being overseen by an external assurance team led by an experienced operational manager and former interim Director of Oakhill.

Medway STC stopped accommodating children in January 2020 and was decommissioned at the end of March 2020 as part of plans to establish our first

Secure School run by Oasis Charitable Trust. We have now launched the tender for the refurbishment of classrooms and residential areas For the Oasis Restore Secure School. These refurbishments are being carried out to provide an environment where young people feel able to engage with integrated care, health and education services in order to begin to turn their lives around.

■ Young Offender Institutions: Restraint Techniques

Peter Kyle:

[\[114973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to page 68 of Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons' Annual Report 2019-20, for what reason the use of force and persistent use of pain-inducing techniques have increased in young offender institutions.

Lucy Frazer:

The safety and wellbeing of children in custody is paramount and I am clear that restraint should be used only when there is no other suitable alternative. Whilst the number of children in custody has reduced by 68% over the last ten years since 2009/10, this has resulted in a concentrated cohort with particularly complex needs or challenging behaviour, with children and young people (including 18 year olds) serving sentences for violence against the person offences accounting for over half (55%) of the youth custody population in 2019/20.

Following the publication of Charlie Taylor's independent review in June, we have committed to removing the use of pain inducing techniques (PITs) from the Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint (MMPR) syllabus, to ensure that these are a last resort to prevent serious physical injury to children or staff. Work is well underway on this, and we are looking to remove the use of PITs from the MMPR syllabus by the end of the year, with a suite of training to commence throughout 2021 to ensure full implementation and understanding across sites. In line with the recommendations made, an independent review panel has been set up which will sit for the first time in December to agree Terms of Reference, prior to the panel reviewing incidents involving PITs or serious injury or warning signs (SIWS) in each establishment twice a year and creation of individual action plans for each site.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) have visited all under 18 Young Offender Institutions for scrutiny visits during the Covid-19 period. It is encouraging that they found all sites to appear 'calm and well-ordered'. However, there is still more work to do and the Youth Custody Service will continue to closely monitor levels of violence, self-harm and restrictive physical intervention across the youth secure estate as work continues to evaluate and learn lessons from the Covid-19 period and inform future planning.

■ Young Offender Institutions: Standards

Peter Kyle:

[\[114972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to page 65 of Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons' Annual Report 2019-20, for what reason more than 50 per cent of

recommendations made by the inspector in the outcome categories of safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement had not been achieved by young offender institutions.

Lucy Frazer:

Unlike the adult estate, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) run an annual inspection process for under 18 Young Offender Institutions (YOIs). Whilst it is of great importance that sites take necessary actions to improve outcomes for children, in line with recommendations, it can be challenging to fully implement all recommendations within this timeframe. To ensure HMIP recommendations are implemented as fully as possible, the Youth Custody Service is increasing assurance activity in this area to ensure that support and challenge can be directed as needed.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Government Departments: Procurement

John Spellar:

[\[114775\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, with reference to his oral contribution of 12 November 2020, when the Government plans to issue new procurement guidelines for Government departments and public bodies.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Procurement guidelines are a matter for the Cabinet Office.

The UK's exit from the EU offers us a huge opportunity to reform public procurement so that it better meets the needs of the country. Following extensive engagement, the Government has developed a package of proposals to reform the UK's procurement regulations. Our aim is to create simpler, less bureaucratic processes for our businesses, and better commercial outcomes for our public bodies; all while continuing to comply with our international obligations. We plan to publish our proposals soon and bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Virtual Proceedings

Alison Thewliss:

[\[114933\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reintroducing virtual parliamentary proceedings during the autumn 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

I refer the hon. Member to the response I gave to an urgent question on Monday 16 November 2020, available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-16/debates/5A282C48-FAE0-4214-8B3E-EE545E2C6DF7/ParticipationInDebates>

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Summertime: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood: [\[115041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department has made of the potential for Northern Ireland to be operating in a different time zone from the rest of the island of Ireland in the event that the EU goes ahead with plans not to continue daylight savings hours as proposed by the EU Parliament.

Mr Robin Walker:

The setting of time zones is a devolved matter for the locally elected political institutions in Northern Ireland to consider.

The Withdrawal Agreement does not require Northern Ireland to align with the European Union approach to time zones.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury: [\[113215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2020 to Question 59592 on Bus Services: Coronavirus, what progress the Government has made on a sector-based financial support package for the coach sector; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

We have announced several financial support measures available to UK businesses, including the coach industry. This includes measures announced on 24 September as part of the Winter Economy Plan, further support on 22 October for businesses in local lockdown areas, changes to the Job Support Scheme (JSS), and increased business grants. With the introduction of new national restrictions on 5 November, the COVID-19 Job Retention Scheme has also been extended until March 2021.

The full return to education supports a key revenue source for the industry and this has been augmented by the additional vehicles needed compared to previous years. The Department of Education has announced over £70 million to local transport authorities to provide additional dedicated school and college capacity in our transport system, helping children and young people to get to and from their schools and colleges whilst social distancing reduces the capacity of existing public transport

We continue to work closely with representatives from the coach sector including the Confederation of Passenger Transport, and with other government departments, to understand the ongoing risks and issues the sector faces and how these could be addressed.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus**Peter Gibson:**[\[113641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the DVSA on temporarily extending the validity period for test theory certificates following the introduction of additional covid-19 restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of the theory test certificate is set in legislation and the Government has taken the decision not to lay further legislation to extend it. The primary reason is that the two-year validity is in place to ensure that a candidate's theoretical knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point they drive on their own for the first time. Extending the validity would provide less reassurance that this is the case. Those whose certificate previously expired and have since passed the theory test will now have a further two years in which to pass the practical test.

Drew Hendry:[\[114943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the DVSA on ensuring people are not able to book tests that would require travelling from an area with a high level of covid-19 restrictions into an area under lower restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency is following guidance and advice issued by the devolved administrations when taking the decision to suspend driving tests. It is working with Transport Scotland following the Scottish five-level system, the Welsh Parliament, and the Cabinet Office to ensure local and national restrictions are adhered to.

As was the case in March, people in England should stay at home to reduce day-to-day contact with other people, and reduce the spread of the infection. The DVSA has asked candidates, approved driving instructors and approved training bodies to respect and adhere to local and national restrictions when taking lessons and tests, and carrying out any form of training.

■ Electric Vehicles: VAT**Matt Western:**[\[114996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT for charging electric vehicles on street to the rate for charging them at home.

Rachel Maclean:

The Transport Secretary has regular and ongoing discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as well as other Ministerial colleagues, about a wide range of issues regarding supporting the electric vehicle market. Any proposed changes to the VAT system is ultimately a matter for HM Treasury.

■ Global Travel Taskforce

Henry Smith: [\[113058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the Global Travel Taskforce has made and what proposals it has put forward in response to the challenges posed by covid-19 to international travel, since its establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The Secretary of State for Transport jointly chairs the Global Travel Taskforce with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. They and other Ministers have very regular discussions about its work with officials and industry partners.

The Taskforce has undertaken extensive consultation with the transport industry, international partners, the tourism sector, business leaders, and the private testing sector, and invited submissions from all of these partners on its work.

The Taskforce will submit its recommendations to the Prime Minister in November.

■ Highway Code: Pedestrians

Apsana Begum: [\[113664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent public awareness-raising campaigns his Department has undertaken on rule 170 in the Highway Code.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport promotes road safety messaging through the THINK! campaign. While we are not directly running a campaign on rule 170 of The Highway Code, THINK! has incorporated messaging around taking extra care at junctions in its recent campaigns. In March 2019, THINK! ran a campaign for new drivers, which featured a short film on looking out for cyclists, motorcyclists, and horse riders at junctions. This summer, with the increase in cycling and walking, THINK! collaborated with the Department's Safer Transport campaign to promote cycle safety tips, including advice for drivers to check for cyclists when pulling out at junctions.

We are analysing consultation responses following a review of The Highway Code which aims to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians, particularly at road junctions. THINK! continues to review its campaign priorities and will ensure that communications on changes to The Highway Code, including key messaging on how to behave at junctions, will be incorporated into future campaigns.

■ Motorhomes

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[113010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to improve the UK's network of motorhome stopover points.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport holds policy responsibility for on street parking facilities only. The Department has no plans in that context for the UK's network of motorhome

stopover points. This question may be relevant to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government who hold policy responsibility for off street parking facilities and planning decisions.

■ Railways: Environment Protection

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[115003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many incidents of train delay were attributed to vegetation on each Network Rail Region in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020 to date.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Office for Rail and Road (ORR) publish summary statistics on the number of delay minutes and their causes. These statistics can be found here:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/table-3184-delay-minutes-by-operator-and-cause-periodic/>

The following data produced by ORR shows the number of incidents on the railway attributed to vegetation management failure in 2019 and 2020 (to date) by Network Rail Region:

NETWORK RAIL REGION	2019*	2020 (TO DATE)*
Eastern	174	145
North West & Central	147	112
Scotland	67	95
Southern	129	188
Wales & Western	193	115

**This data is aggregated from data for (4-weekly) railway periods and therefore does not align precisely with calendar years. 2019 data represents the time period from 06/01/2019 to 04/01/2020. 2020 data is from 05/01/2020 to 12/10/2020 (railway period 7, latest data available).*

Source: Network Rail data

■ Railways: Fares

Ian Mearns: [\[114836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date the changes to rail fares from 2 January 2021 will be published.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Government is considering plans for regulated rail fares and further details will be communicated in due course.

This year the industry, commuters and society are all facing unusual pressures due to the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. Taxpayers have been very generous in their support to keep trains running throughout the pandemic, and it's only fair that passengers also contribute to maintaining and improving the services they use. Any fares rise will help fund crucial investment in maintaining railway services to enable social distancing and support our economic recovery.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[114743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the Global Travel Taskforce has made on assessing the steps that can be taken to facilitate business travel without the need for a quarantine period during the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

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

The Taskforce is also considering what steps we can take to facilitate business and tourist travel on a bilateral and global basis, through innovative testing models and other non-testing means.

TREASURY

■ Beer and Public Houses: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[113220\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what sector specific support is being provided for (a) independent brewers and (b) public houses during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions period.

Kemi Badenoch:

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

- An extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March
- Cash grants of up to £3,000 per month to help businesses that are closed with their costs, including paying their supply chains
- £1.1 billion of Discretionary Grant funding for local authorities to target support to the businesses that are most important to their local economy

- Plans to extend existing loan schemes to the end of January and an option to top-up Bounce Back Loans
- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England until the end of March, worth £10 billion in tax foregone.

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

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Grahame Morris:

[\[114833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of retaining the Small Brewers Relief threshold at 5000 hectolitres rather than lowering that threshold to 2100 hectolitres.

Kemi Badenoch:

An estimate is not possible at this stage as the Government has not consulted on its announced plans for a new, more gradual taper for the SBR scheme. This will take place later this year.

■ Bowling: VAT

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[113502\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 109655 on Bowling: VAT, for what reasons bowling centres were not included in the reduction in VAT on admissions that was applied to sectors such as cinemas and theme parks.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT for hospitality and tourism was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors which have been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Hospitality for the purposes of this relief includes the supply of food and non-alcoholic beverages from restaurants, cafes, pubs and similar establishments for consumption on the premises. It also includes the supply of hot food and non-alcoholic hot beverages to take away.

Where a ten-pin bowling business provides such hospitality, that hospitality will benefit from the reduced rate. In general, admission charges that entitle a person to participate in events where the primary focus is a sporting activity will not be eligible for the reduced rate.

In addition to the reduced VAT rate, the Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses through the winter months, which includes a new Job Support Scheme, an extension to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme

(SEISS) grant, and an extension of the application window for the government-backed loan schemes.

■ Buildings: VAT

Carol Monaghan: [\[114942\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to reduce VAT on essential repairs to pre-1919 properties.

Jesse Norman:

There was previously a zero rate of VAT on restorative work to listed and historic buildings. However, the relief was mainly being used to carry out extension work, which was contrary to the intent of the legislation to preserve heritage, and was removed following consultation in 2012.

The Government has no current plans to change the VAT treatment of restorative construction work on listed and historic buildings.

■ Community Housing Fund

Layla Moran: [\[115018\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of extending the Community Housing Fund on (a) business confidence and (b) local construction jobs in that sector.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government leads on the Community Housing Fund, and analysis of its impact. The Fund closed at the end of March this year, however community organisations that are registered as providers of social housing may seek capital funding from the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes programme operated outside London by Homes England.

■ Companies: Registration

Alison Thewliss: [\[114930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many supervised company formation agents HMRC visited from (a) 1 Jan 2018 to 31 Dec 2018 and (b) 1 Jan 2019 to 31 Dec 2019.

Alison Thewliss: [\[114931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of company formation agents that should be registered for supervision but are not have been identified by HMRC since 8 May 2019.

Alison Thewliss: [\[114932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC full time equivalent staff are tasked with identifying company formation agents that should be registered for supervision but are not.

John Glen:

HMRC supervises businesses in nine sectors under the Money Laundering Regulations (MLRs), including those Trust or Company Service Providers (TCSPs) not supervised by other bodies. HMRC does not publish information relating to targeting of supervisory visits in particular sectors. Such information could be used by criminals to aid their efforts to attempt to launder money or finance terrorism.

HM Treasury publishes aggregate details of HMRC's supervision activity in its annual "Anti-money laundering and counter terrorist finance supervision report".

Since 8 May 2019, HMRC has not identified any company formation agents who should be but are not registered with HMRC.

HMRC's Anti Money Laundering Supervision team employs 16 full time equivalent staff to identify businesses that should be registered with HMRC under the MLRs but are not. These 'policing the perimeter' staff are not designated to specific sectors.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[114957\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress has been made on implementing the rules governing the extension of the maximum loan term under the coronavirus business interruption loan scheme from six to 10 years.

John Glen:

As part of the Winter Economy Plan, the Chancellor announced a range of measures to extend and reinforce the support provided to businesses during this challenging time.

The Chancellor announced Pay as you Grow options, providing greater flexibility to help Bounce Back Loan borrowers repay their loans on the terms which work best for them. In addition, we have since extended the application deadline for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme and the Future Fund until 31 January.

The Chancellor also announced our intention to allow lenders to extend the repayment period for CBILS loans where this is needed up to 10 years. This is not a blanket extension of the term of CBILS loans. Rather, the change is to enable lenders to offer an extension of the term as forbearance where a borrower is in difficulty and could be helped by the extension. We are working to implement this change as soon as possible and will provide an update in due course.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Paul Blomfield:**[\[113073\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the support available under the extended Coronavirus Job Retention

Scheme to people who were made unemployed between 20 March 2020 and 22 September 2020.

Jesse Norman:

An employer can claim for employees who were employed and on their PAYE payroll on 30 October 2020. In addition, employees that were employed and on the payroll on 23 September 2020 (the day before the Job Support Scheme announcement) who were made redundant or stopped working afterwards can be re-employed and claimed for under the CJRS extension.

This cut-off date aims to include as many people as possible, while also addressing the risk of fraud that existed as soon as the fact that the Government was providing a further employment support scheme became public.

The Government has also provided wider support to individuals throughout the pandemic. In March, the Government announced a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants.

Jamie Stone:

[\[114993\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether people who were on a permanent part-year contract from 1 May to 31 October 2020 and did not receive a P45 at the end of that period are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme during winter 2020-21.

Jesse Norman:

For claim periods starting on or after 1 November 2020, employers can claim for employees who were employed on 30 October 2020, as long as the employer has made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee.

Employees can be on any type of employment contract. This includes full-time, part-time, agency, flexible or zero-hour contracts.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[113079\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the potential economic effect of an extension to the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England beyond 2 December 2020.

John Glen:

The Prime Minister has been clear that the measures that were announced on 31 October and came into force on 5 November are time-limited. They will end on Wednesday 2 December, when the Government will seek to ease restrictions, going back into the tiered system on a local and regional basis.

Throughout the pandemic, the government's economic priority has remained the same: to protect jobs and livelihoods. Since the start of the pandemic the government

has provided support for people, businesses, and public services totalling an estimated £200 billion.

Julian Sturdy: [\[113080\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish an economic impact assessment of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions in England.

John Glen:

As the Chancellor said in his letter to the TSC on 4 November, HM Treasury does not prepare formal forecasts for the UK economy, which are the responsibility of the independent OBR. They will publish their next forecast on 25 November.

In addition, within their statutory mandates, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) produce analysis which reflect their independent judgements regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the likely path of the economy. They updated their projections in their Monetary Policy Report published on 5 November. This reflected UK restrictions announced up to 31 October, including "heightened England-wide measures for the period 5 November to 2 December". In this scenario, GDP was revised downwards and is now expected to contract by 2% in Q4 reflecting the impact of stricter measures to control Covid-19.

■ Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas: [\[113471\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to allow credit unions to (a) provide loans for members to buy cars, (b) offer insurance products to members and (c) offer credit cards; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[113472\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Fair4All will support the expansion of credit unions under the Dormant Assets programme.

Gareth Thomas: [\[113473\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to require large employers to offer payroll deduction to allow employees to join and save with a credit union.

Gareth Thomas: [\[113474\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to allow credit unions to offer (a) Premium Bonds and (b) other National Savings & Investments products; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the vital role credit unions play in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.

The Chancellor announced at Budget earlier this year that the Government intends to bring forward changes to the Credit Unions Act to allow credit unions to offer a wider

range of products and services. This will be done at a future legislative opportunity. The Government is carefully considering options before bringing forward legislation to ensure that we are delivering reforms which meet members' needs and support the development of the credit union sector.

Fair4All Finance, the independent body set up to distribute dormant assets funding to support financial inclusion, has set up a £5 million resilience fund to support credit unions and community development finance institutions in England through the coronavirus pandemic. Fair4All Finance has also launched its Affordable Credit Scale-up Programme, designed to provide tailored support to sustainably scale affordable credit.

The Government has no plans to require large employers to offer payroll deductions to allow employees to join and save with a credit union.

In Budget 2018, the Government announced a prize-linked savings pilot called PrizeSaver. This is currently operating in 15 credit unions across the country, helping to support the sector through increased membership, awareness and deposits, as well as encouraging participants to build up savings to help them cope with financial shocks. The pilot is scheduled to end in March 2021. The Government has no plans to allow credit unions to offer Premium Bonds or other National Savings and Investments products.

■ **Directors and Self-employed: Coronavirus**

Kim Johnson:

[\[113680\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial assistance to (a) freelancers, (b) small company directors, and (c) people who mix self-employment with employment who have been ineligible for financial support since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to Question 110191 on 05 November.

■ **Directors: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[113213\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional steps he has taken during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown to support small company directors who in normal operating periods would have received dividend payments.

Jesse Norman:

The Winter Economy Plan set out a package of targeted measures in response to the current economic context that will enable businesses to protect jobs and manage their finances in the face of reduced or uncertain demand. This includes the extension of the temporary VAT reduced rate for hospitality and tourism, extending the application window of the access to finance schemes, and further support for employees and the self-employed.

Company directors who pay themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme are able to apply for CJRS support, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of the scheme. In addition, company directors may be eligible for other elements of the package of financial support available. This includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, increased levels of Universal Credit, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ Food: Wholesale Trade

Alan Brown:

[\[114950\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what targeted rates relief support the Government has provided for food service wholesalers whose rateable value exceeds £51,000.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors. Rates relief is available to all eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties regardless of their rateable value. Business rates are devolved in Scotland, and so are a matter for the Scottish Government.

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

■ Government Securities: Environment Protection

Ben Lake:

[\[114997\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on Green Sovereign Bonds.

John Glen:

On Monday 9 November, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the UK's intention is issue its inaugural Sovereign Green Bond (SGB), subject to market conditions, in 2021. This bond will be a UK-wide financing instrument, like a conventional UK government bond.

In the coming weeks and months, officials at HM Treasury and the Debt Management Office will be looking to engage with a range of stakeholders on this policy and would welcome discussions with officials representing the Welsh Government.

■ Green Recovery Challenge Fund

Caroline Lucas:

[\[113055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to allocate an additional £1 billion to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in the forthcoming spending review.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government remains committed to pursuing a green recovery, with concern for our environment at its heart. The £40m Green Recovery Challenge Fund opened to applications in September and will provide funding for projects across England to restore nature while creating and safeguarding jobs.

In order to prioritise the response to Covid-19, and our focus on supporting jobs, the Chancellor and the Prime Minister have decided to conduct a one-year Spending Review, setting departments' resource and capital budgets for 2021-22, and Devolved Administrations' block grants for the same period.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT**Patrick Grady:**[\[114934\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the temporary 5 per cent reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, hotel and holiday accommodation businesses for the 2021-22 financial year.

Jesse Norman:

The Government initially cut the rate of VAT applied to hospitality, accommodation and attractions, from 20 per cent to 5 per cent, for a period of six months to 12 January 2021.

The Government extended this relief in September 2020, and it will now end on 31 March 2021. The reduced rate aims to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses in the affected sectors and will help protect 2.4 million jobs.

The Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Investment Income: Taxation**Henry Smith:**[\[113057\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide support to people who receive income via company dividends that are taxed, during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

Dividends are not covered by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) or the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Grant Extension. Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages.

Those who pay themselves a salary through their own company are eligible for the CJRS. The CJRS is available to employers, including owner-managers, and individuals paying themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme. Where furloughed directors, including companies with a sole director, need to carry out particular duties in order to fulfil their statutory obligations, they may do so provided it is no more than would reasonably be judged necessary for that purpose.

As with the previous SEISS grants, it is not possible for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company

and dividends from other sources, and between dividends in lieu of employment income and as returns from other corporate activity.

This means, unlike the SEISS grants that use information HMRC already hold, targeting additional support would require owner-managers to make a claim and submit information that HMRC could not manageably verify to ensure payments were made to eligible companies for eligible activity.

The SEISS Grant Extension continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, and other business support grants. The Government has also temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 by £20 per week and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Alan Brown: [\[114952\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, dated 1 October 2020, reference ZA10051.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, and apologises for the delay in responding to the Member. The Member's correspondence is receiving attention and will be replied to as soon as possible.

■ **Mortgages**

Claire Hanna: [\[115040\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the proposals made by the London School of Economics on mortgage prisoners, published 11 November 2020.

John Glen:

We are grateful to London School of Economics (LSE) and Martin Lewis for their contribution to this conversation.

We remain committed to supporting these borrowers and are pleased that active lenders have started offering switching options specifically for mortgage prisoners taking advantage of the new flexibilities given to them by the FCA. We will monitor the impact of this in the coming months.

■ **Public Expenditure**

Liam Byrne: [\[113001\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility's Public finances databank, 27 May 2020, what proportion of the five

capital budget of £358 billion included in Treasury statements in May 2020 remains unallocated to programmes and projects.

Steve Barclay:

Departmental capital budgets have been fully allocated for financial year 2020-21 and were confirmed at Main Estimates. Any revisions to these budgets will be set out at the Supplementary Estimates. Departmental budgets for the next financial year (2021-22) will be set in the upcoming Spending Review. Alongside these one-year settlements, the SR will set some longer-term settlements for certain capital budgets to provide certainty and deliver on the government's ambitious plans to unite and level up the country and drive our economic recovery. With the exception of these multi-year capital settlements, spending for future years beyond 2021-22 will be determined at the next Spending Review.

■ **Public Health: Finance**

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[112974\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the forthcoming spending review, if his Department will preserve the current ring-fence on public health funding for local authorities.

Steve Barclay:

Details on public health funding for local authorities for 21/22 will be set out at the Spending Review on 25 November.

Investing in prevention is a vital part of the NHS Long Term Plan to help people live longer, healthier lives. In 2020/21, we invested £3.279 billion in local authority public health services through the Public Health Grant, in addition to what the NHS spent on preventative interventions such as immunisation and screenings.

■ **Remote Working: Non-domestic Rates**

Emma Hardy:

[\[113205\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the eligibility criteria of the 12-month business rates holiday scheme to include the flexible workspace sector.

Jesse Norman:

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

A range of measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for business rates relief such as flexible workspaces, have also been made available.

■ **Self-employment Income Support Scheme**

Stephen Hammond:

[\[113036\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing people who receive less than 50 per cent of their income from self-

employment to claim support from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension.

Jesse Norman:

The self-employed are very diverse and have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations even in normal times, and in some cases with substantial alternative forms of income too. The design of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), including the eligibility requirement that an individual's trading profits must be at least equal to their non-trading income, means it is targeted at those who need it most, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

Those ineligible for the SEISS may still be eligible for other elements of the package of financial support available. The Government has temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor for the duration of the crisis meaning that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[113072\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to people who set up their business after 6 April 2019.

Jesse Norman:

The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the original Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), namely that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will not have access to their self-assessment returns in order to be able to verify their eligibility, still remain. The latest year for which HMRC have tax returns for all self-employed individuals is 2018/19. 2019/20 returns are not due until the end of January 2021.

Unlike for employees, self-employed income is not reported monthly, but at the end of each tax year on the individual's Income Tax Self Assessment return. This means that the most reliable and up-to-date record of self-employed income is from 2018-19 tax returns.

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

Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[113007\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the covid-19 stamp duty exemption beyond 31 March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary increase in the Stamp Duty Land Tax nil rate band was designed to create immediate momentum within the property market, where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown. The downturn in the market meant that the future was uncertain for many people whose jobs relied on custom from the property industry. There are already early signs that demand and transactions have increased, and are continuing to rise, since the increase to the SDLT nil rate band was announced in July.

As the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief and will continue to monitor the property market.

VAT: Coronavirus**Stephen Hammond:** [\[113035\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the deferral of VAT payments due to the implementation of a further period of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

The VAT payments deferral scheme ended on 30 June 2020 as planned.

As part of the Winter Economy Plan, the Government announced that businesses which deferred VAT due from 20 March to 30 June 2020 will now have the option to pay in smaller payments over a longer period up to March 2022. They will need to opt-in to the scheme, and for those that do, this means that their deferred VAT liabilities do not need to be paid by the end of March 2021.

Businesses that need extra help can contact HMRC and agree a Time to Pay arrangement.

Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[114797\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the ineligibility of wholesalers for Business Rates Relief on the integrity of public sector supply chains.

Alan Brown: [\[114951\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the hospitality venue covid-19 restrictions on the food service wholesale industry; what targeted support has been provided for that sector in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has provided unprecedented levels of support for workers and businesses to protect, as much as possible, against the current economic emergency. Food and drink wholesalers have been eligible for a number of these support schemes, with the most relevant likely to include:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help keep millions of people in employment;
- £10,000 cash grants for all business properties in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief and Rural Rates Relief;
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000, with no interest payments or fees for the first 12 months.

Food and drink wholesalers have also benefited from the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme which provided over 100 million half price meals during August and helped to protect the livelihoods of the 1.8 million people working in the hospitality sector.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Pay and Redundancy: Coronavirus****Helen Hayes:**[\[109511\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what comparative assessment she has made of the effect of (a) redundancies and (b) reductions in pay during the covid-19 outbreak on women and men.

Kemi Badenoch:

The effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on employment is complex. This year the UK's gender pay gap fell to a record low of 15.5%. Redundancy rates for men have increased more than for women. In the latest data available from ONS, July to September 2020, redundancy rates for men have increased to 11.6% up from 4.3% the same time last year, while the rate for women is 10.9% up from 4.3%. And, whilst there is variation in furlough rates across the UK, the furlough take up rates for men and women were similar within each region or country.

Equality Impact Assessments have been systematically produced on COVID-19 regulations; considering equality impacts is part of an ongoing process to support policy development. Impact assessments are kept under review, and the data on outcomes by gender are being monitored.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Laura Trott:**[\[115031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many businesses in the (a) South East and (b) UK have signed up to the Kickstart Scheme.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the Parliamentary Question HL10193, answered on 12 November. We are not yet able to break Kickstart data down by region.

■ **Commonwealth Games 2022: Employment and Training****Stuart Anderson:**[\[113222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with Birmingham 2022 and the West Midlands Combined Authority to ensure that the Commonwealth Games generates local opportunities for employment and training.

Mims Davies:

DWP and WMCA are working closely with Birmingham City Council and the Organising Committee for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games to secure new opportunities for residents. WMCA have recently launched a Commonwealth Games Jobs and Skills Academy to link local residents to the thousands of training, volunteering and employment opportunities expected to be generated through the Games.

The Jobs and Skills Academy will be supported by a joint team of DWP and WMCA staff who will work closely with Games contractors, local authorities, local Jobcentres and the region's college and provide network to match local people in to the opportunities generated.

To date, we have already supported a number of local residents into construction training and jobs linked to the Games and WMCA has invested over £1m in higher level skills training to help local businesses prepare for Games related opportunities.

DWP are supporting through the secondment of staff to support the Academy and in considering the opportunities our Flexible Support Fund may offer to engage with communities to break down barriers to accessing these opportunities

■ **Local Government: Audit****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[115035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the audit process is to ensure that funds to support local authorities to provide for the most deprived people in their communities are received by those people.

Will Quince:

Grants to local authorities will be made under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and will be subject to conditions and reporting requirements to ensure that the

primary focus of the scheme is on supporting vulnerable families with children and other vulnerable people. Detailed guidance is being developed in consultation with local authorities and will be published shortly on gov.uk.

■ Older Workers

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[114796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of Government programmes on the employment prospects of the over-60s.

Mims Davies:

The department is supporting people of all ages back in to work. The Government's recently announced Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people, including older workers, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work. This includes £895m to double the number of Work Coaches in Jobcentre Plus by March 2021; a £150m increase in the Flexible Support Fund which will also boost the capacity of the Rapid Response Service to help those facing redundancy move into other jobs; £40m for a new online support service will provide tailored one-to-one job finding support to the recently unemployed.

The Government also aims to triple the number of sector-based work academy programme placements, supporting unemployed claimants of all ages through training and work experience to find a job. A further £95m will expand the Work and Health programme to offer new support to those who have been made unemployed.

■ Pension Credit

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of the Pension Credit report from Independent Age.

Guy Opperman:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Pension Credit: Coventry North East

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[114902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of pensioners in Coventry North East constituency (a) receive the basic state pension, (b) receive pension credit and (c) are eligible for pension credit but do not claim it.

Guy Opperman:

a) 14,422 (93.0%)

b) 3,205 (20.7%)

c) This data is only available at Great Britain level.

Note that not all pensioners in Coventry North East will be eligible to receive State Pension / Pension Credit.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

■ State Retirement Pensions

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[113673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on financial support for people in receipt of the state pension.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with the Chancellor on a range of issues. The Government is committed to ensuring that older people are able to live with the dignity and respect they deserve and the State Pension is the foundation of state support for older people. It is supported by further measures for older people, which include the provision of free bus passes, free prescriptions, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Defence Estate Optimisation Update

Minister of State, Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin):

[\[HCWS582\]](#)

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to deliver on its 25-year strategy to modernise its estate.

As part of this work we wish to confirm programme changes to individual sites: The disposal of DSG Colchester can be brought forward one year to 2021; the disposal of Middlewick Ranges also in Colchester will however be delayed by one year to 2022; the disposal of Fort Blockhouse 1 in Gosport will be delayed by at least three years to not before 2023; and the disposal of the remainder of the Southwick Park site in Fareham will be delayed to 2031. These delays are to meet military requirements.

We are also exchanging two parcels of land as part of the Forthside Stirling disposal to create a more sensible proposition for future development and will be enclaving Napier Lines at Woolwich Barracks as the long-term home for The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery. The disposal of the remainder of both sites will continued as planned.

There is the potential for adjustment to other site disposal dates as we continue to evaluate the movement of personnel and refine the portfolio timeline to meet military capability requirements. Any changes will be reflected in updates to the Defence Disposal Database on the Gov.uk website. This maintains a complete list of all MOD disposals including those that are part of Defence Estate Optimisation. It is routinely updated throughout the year to provide the most accurate and current information as the Department continues to rationalise and enhance its estate.

The MOD remains committed to making the right decisions to support Defence capabilities and offer best value for money for the taxpayer, balanced with our commitment to working with communities over the future use of sites released for disposal as part of the Portfolio.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Social Housing Update

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):

[\[HCWS581\]](#)

I am today announcing the publication of the Social Housing White Paper. This White Paper will bring transformational change for social housing residents and the new approach and regulatory changes we set out will make a measurable difference to their lived experiences.

A home should always be more than just four walls and a roof. This country has a long tradition of providing homes for those most in need, going back many centuries. Today, the social housing sector provides homes to four million households. Many landlords provide a good service to their residents. They provide a decent, safe home. They support thriving neighbourhoods and communities. They are open with their residents, listen to them and treat them with respect. But this is not true of all landlords.

The tragedy at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 raised critical questions for everyone involved in social housing. The Chair of the Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, identified broader questions on social housing policy raised through the consultation on the Inquiry terms of reference. It was agreed that these broader questions should not be within the scope of the Inquiry itself.

Through the 2018 social housing Green Paper we sought views on a wide range of potential changes by talking to residents across the country as well as launching a Call for Evidence about how social housing is regulated. Many residents reported positive experiences, but others did not. We heard concerns about safety, and about complaints being handled slowly or poorly; that residents were not listened to or not treated with basic courtesy and respect. This is why today I am delivering on our manifesto commitment and publishing the Social Housing White Paper: The Charter for Social Housing Residents.

Alongside the changes we are making to improve building safety, our package of measures will make a real change to residents. It will ensure that there will be action for those landlords whose services fall below expectations so that they can be brought up to the level of those that we know already deliver a good service.

Summary of proposals

The White Paper establishes a new Charter for social housing residents, setting out what every social resident should be able to expect of their landlord:

1. To be safe in their home. We will reinforce the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer regulation objective to include safety explicitly. We will legislate to place an obligation on landlords to identify a nominated person responsible for ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements. We will consult on how we apply the stronger legal requirements on smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in the private rented sector to the social rented sector, followed by a consultation on how to ensure social tenants are protected from poor electrical safety. We will support residents to have a stronger voice on safety matters and promote best practice on safety engagement with landlords.
2. To know how their landlord is performing. We will establish tenant satisfaction measures for social landlords to report against on issues that matter to tenants. We will make sure landlords are reporting clearly on how they spend their income and introduce a new access to information scheme for housing association tenants. And, we will require landlords to identify a senior person in their organisation who is clearly identified as responsible for ensuring they comply with consumer standards.

3. To have their complaints dealt with promptly and fairly. We will build on the changes we have already implemented with the Housing Ombudsman Service to improve its performance and reduce its decision times, ensuring swift and effective resolution of complaints. We will raise awareness of how residents can make and escalate complaints. We will expect social landlords to take greater responsibility for upskilling their staff to serve residents better when they make a complaint or raise an issue.
4. To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants. We will transform social housing regulation by creating a new, proactive consumer regulation regime for social housing, delivering robust oversight of all social landlords. This means establishing a new arm of the Regulator of Social Housing to regulate proactively on consumer standards including quality of homes, repairs, engagement with tenants and complaints handling. The new approach will raise standards and include routine inspections of the largest landlords every four years, alongside risk-based reactive inspections to deliver scrutiny and investigation of landlords most at risk of failing residents. We will ensure residents can access information about their home and the services they receive, and can raise concerns about systemic failure to the Regulator of Social Housing. We will maintain the robust economic regulation that is already working effectively to support a well-governed and financially viable sector, and make sure the whole system is cohesive and balanced.
5. To have their voice heard by their landlord. We will empower residents by requiring landlords to improve tenant engagement. We will deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support them in engaging with landlords and holding them to account. We will review professional training and development to ensure residents are treated with courtesy and respect.
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in. We will encourage investment in neighbourhood, place and decency. We will review the Decent Homes Standard and boost the quality of, and access to, green spaces. We will tackle anti-social behaviour by enabling tenants to know who is responsible for action and who can support and assist them.
7. To be supported to take their first step to ownership. We will enable delivery of good quality, affordable homes including the investment of £11.5 billion in the new Affordable Homes Programme to deliver up to 180,000 homes. The programme will unlock a further £38 billion in public and private investment in affordable housing. We are also introducing a new Affordable Homes Guarantee Scheme and implementing a new, fairer and more accessible model for Shared Ownership.

Alongside the Social Housing White Paper I am publishing the analysis of the consultation responses to the social housing Green Paper 2018 and to the Call for Evidence on the Government's Review of Regulation 2018. I am also publishing a consultation on mandating smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in social rented homes with the aim of ensuring the same legal protections for social housing tenants as for those in private rented homes.

This new Charter with its focus on transforming social housing regulation, ensuring homes are decent and safe, offering residents swift and effective resolution of complaints and empowering residents will rebalance the relationship between landlords and tenants. This is a strong, coherent package that is going to make a real difference in people's lives.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Third substantive report of the Independent Reporting Commission**

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):

[\[HCWS584\]](#)

I have received the third substantive report from the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC).

The IRC emanated from the Fresh Start Agreement of November 2015. The Agreement set out the Northern Ireland Executive's commitments around tackling paramilitary activity and associated criminality. This work continues to be taken forward through a Northern Ireland Executive Action Plan which contains 43 recommendations.

This third substantive report builds on the work already undertaken by the Commissioners. The inclusion of a commitment to continue to tackle paramilitarism in the New Decade New Approach Agreement, in January 2020, highlights the ongoing importance of this issue, but the Commission's report again reminds us of the challenging work still to be done.

I would like to thank the Commissioners for their work, particularly in delivering this year's report in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic.

TRANSPORT

■ **HS2 Land and Property Review**

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[\[HCWS583\]](#)

High Speed Two (HS2) is at the heart of our plans to build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic, creating thousands of skilled jobs, boosting connectivity between our towns and cities and helping to rebalance opportunity across the country for years to come.

However, as part of that commitment to build back better, it is crucial that we deliver HS2 in a way that is as considerate as possible of those disrupted by the project, who may face losing their homes and relocating their businesses.

In confirming HS2 would go ahead in February 2020, the Prime Minister also committed to a step change in HS2 Ltd's performance and to drive improvements in transparency, accountability and value to the taxpayer. This included a renewed focus on placing people - the communities and individuals who will be impacted by HS2 - at the heart of everything the Government does.

So following my appointment as the Minister for HS2, I initiated a review of the HS2 land and property acquisition programme, to ensure that those most directly affected were placed at its heart.

The review examined HS2 Ltd's operational acquisition processes and, where the evidence demonstrated it, associated wider-government policies. It focussed on four areas:

- How to deliver a step change in community engagement on the land and property acquisition programme;
- How to protect the interests of those impacted;
- How to improve process efficiency and delivery by HS2 Ltd; and
- And how to drive a better tone, showing conspicuous respect, courtesy and understanding.

Today, I am pleased to publish the findings of this review. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

The Government is grateful for the contributions made by Members of the House and their constituents, external stakeholders, the HS2 Residents' Commissioner and the HS2 Construction Commissioner. The review also considered lessons from Phase One of HS2 and examined compensation regimes employed on other UK infrastructure projects and abroad.

The review generated a number of proposals that are designed to speed up property valuations and disturbance payments, settle cases and disputes more quickly and build on the improvements HS2 Ltd have been introducing to engage more effectively with people.

The focus now will be on how the Government and HS2 Ltd turn these proposals into long-lasting changes that not only improve the delivery of HS2, but also the experience and well-being of individuals, businesses and communities impacted by them.

The Government wants to ensure that those living near the route receive the right support at all stages of the project. Importantly, it remains committed to ensuring that those affected are properly compensated and treated with compassion, dignity and respect.

Attachments:

1. HS2 Review [201013 HS2 Land and Property Review.PDF]