



Daily Report

Wednesday, 18 November 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:49 P.M., 18 November 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[91976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support local businesses in (a) Coventry and (b) the West Midlands during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

As part of grant support totalling £2.2 billion made available via local authorities in England, the Government is providing Coventry City Council with £4.38 m to support business that have to close between 5 November and 2 December as well as £7.43 m to support those businesses impacted by lockdown even though they are not required to stay shut.

This is on top of the unprecedented package of support for business in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. Between March and September, over £1.15 billion has been paid out in grants to 104,145 business premises across the West Midlands.

In addition, as at 18 October, 84,773 Bounce Back Loans have been made in the West Midlands to the value of over £2.6 billion, as well as 3,770 Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans to the value of over £871 million, to help SMEs affected by Covid-19. Employees and self-employed people in Coventry and across the West Midlands are being supported via the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) respectively.

In November, Government announced plans to extend the CJRS until the end of March, confirmed an extension to the existing loan schemes to the end of January and an ability to top up Bounce Back Loans, as well as an increase to self-employed support and over £200 billion in VAT relief, business rate relief, tax deferrals, loans and support for individuals: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-furlough-to-march-and-increases-self-employed-support>.

■ Climate Change

Kevin Brennan:

[91952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the 2015 Paris climate change agreement, what recent progress he has made on submitting the UK's post-2020 Nationally Determined Contributions by the deadline of 31 December 2020.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Under the Paris Agreement, all Parties have committed to communicating or updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2020 and every five years after that.

We are considering the UK's NDC and will set this out by the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020.

■ Electricity: Storage

Alan Brown:

[\[113591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to address barriers to electricity storage deployment, particularly large-scale, longer-duration storage such as pumped hydro storage; what stakeholder discussions have taken place on pumped hydro; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government and Ofgem's 2017 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan and subsequent 2018 Progress Update set out a range of actions to facilitate the deployment of storage of all sizes by removing regulatory barriers, reforming markets and investing in innovation, for example ending double charging of network and policy costs for storage.

We are now working closely with Ofgem and industry to develop the next phase of smart systems policy. This includes engaging with the storage industry and academics to understand any barriers specific to the deployment of large-scale, longer-duration storage such as pumped hydro.

■ Energy Supply

Alan Brown:

[\[113592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to future-proof the electricity grid by ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to secure supplies and flexibility enabling investment in a diverse mix of technologies; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The capacity market is our main tool for ensuring security of supply. It has successfully brought forward a diverse range of new capacity, such as demand side response, renewables, storage and gas plants, to replace older capacity as it retires off the system. We are confident it will enable us to meet energy demand into the future.

We are working closely with Ofgem and electricity network operators to ensure market mechanisms are in place to drive investment in flexibility solutions, such as storage, where doing so provides value to the grid or is cheaper than building new infrastructure.

Ofgem's statutory objective is to act in the interests of all consumers, enabling the investment necessary for net zero at the same time as ensuring value for money and continued security of supply for consumers. Ofgem ensures that the investments needed to maintain and upgrade the network are made through the price controls that regulate network companies.

■ Fireworks

Peter Gibson:

[\[113642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to (a) limit the effect of fireworks on pets and livestock, (b) prohibit the illegal import of unsafe fireworks, (c) make an assessment of the adequacy of existing legislation on the sale of safe fireworks and (d) control the use of fireworks between the hours as set out in the Fireworks Regulations 2004.

Paul Scully:

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

Using fireworks outside the curfew hours is a criminal offence, enforced by the police and can lead to imprisonment and a substantial fine. Local Authority Trading Standards work with retailers to ensure fireworks sold are safe, and they have powers to enforce against those who place non-compliant fireworks on the market, including those imported illegally or via the internet.

It is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal, including through the misuse of fireworks, and is enforced by authorities including the police and Local Authority Trading Standards.

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

■ Fossil Fuels: Finance

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[91999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on ending public financing of fossil fuels overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

At the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January we announced an end to the Government's support for thermal coal mining and coal power plant overseas, and we continue to keep our approach to other fossil fuel investments and financing overseas under review.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[113595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will to extend the domestic Green Homes Grant scheme for twelve months to March 2022 to allow the full uptake of the scheme and to help stimulate new green jobs.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Green Homes Grant voucher scheme is designed to help stimulate economic recovery and to support and create tens of thousands of jobs. The time-limited nature of the Scheme is determined by the nature of the funding available from HM Treasury. Any potential funding allocations for future years will be determined in the next Spending Review.

Greg Clark:[\[91959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason chimney draught excluders are not eligible as secondary measures under the Green Homes Grant.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Chimney draught excluders are eligible for the Green Homes Grant scheme, including the cost of their purchase and installation.

BEIS officials are currently reviewing the published text on the Simple Energy Advice (SEA) website regarding this measure and will update it shortly to reflect the inclusion of chimney draught excluders in the scheme.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[113596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the domestic Green Homes Grant through to March 2022 in the context of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make it his policy to extend that scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We understand that COVID-19 restrictions may affect the availability of installers, along with their ability to install measures in households. We have therefore stated installers must follow government guidance on '[Construction and other outdoor work](#)' and any other relevant COVID-19 guidance when undertaking installations. Based on the latest advice from my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister, tradespeople may continue to work as they are unable to do so from home.

The Green Homes Grant voucher scheme is designed to help stimulate economic recovery and to support and create tens of thousands of jobs. The time-limited nature of the Scheme is determined by the nature of the funding available from HM Treasury. Any potential funding allocations for future years will be determined in the next Spending Review.

Kim Johnson:[\[113677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend the deadline for the Green Homes scheme to 31 March 2022 to mitigate the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We understand that COVID-19 restrictions may affect the availability of installers, along with their ability to install measures in households. We have therefore stated installers must follow government guidance on '[Construction and other outdoor work](#)' and any other relevant COVID-19 guidance when undertaking installations. Based on the latest advice from my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister, tradespeople may continue to work as they are unable to do so from home.

The Green Homes Grant voucher scheme is designed to help stimulate economic recovery and to support and create tens of thousands of jobs. The time-limited nature of the Scheme is determined by the nature of the funding available from HM Treasury. Any potential funding allocations for future years will be determined in the next Spending Review.

■ Holiday Leave: Coronavirus**Paula Barker:****[113682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the compliance of the Insolvency Service's rules on annual leave carry-over with the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Insolvency Service has delegated authority for annual leave from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Insolvency Service has reviewed its policy and guidance and is content that it is compliant with the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Sector Council**Lucy Powell:****[91973]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many times he has met with (a) the Retail Sector Council and (b) the Hospitality Future Group in 2020; and whether he will publish minutes from those meetings.

Paul Scully:

The industry led Retail Sector Council, which I co-chair, meets three to four times per year. The Council has met three times in 2020, with the next meeting due to take place on Thursday 3rd December 2020. Priority workstreams have been selected and agreed by industry and work is advancing. Minutes are published by the Secretariat on the Council's website: <https://retailsectorcouncil.co.uk/retail-sector-council>.

BEIS Ministers meet regularly with a wide range of stakeholders from the hospitality sector. I also chair a weekly hospitality round table with senior representatives of the sector.

The Hospitality Futures Group was established by leaders from within the hospitality industry to provide a forum for discussion on possible ways to support the recovery of

the sector following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Group has met weekly since June 2020 and engages with a small number of Government officials.

■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: Coronavirus

Mark Menzies:

[\[113540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for the (a) tourism and (b) hospitality sectors during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Paul Scully:

This Department and our colleagues at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are in regular contact with HM Treasury colleagues to discuss the impact of support measures on the tourism and hospitality sectors.

We recognise the difficulties faced by businesses in these sectors and will continue to engage with stakeholders and across Government to assess how we can most effectively support them.

■ Mortality Rates: Coronavirus

Sir George Howarth:

[\[114779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on employees of the increased rate of bereavement during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

We recognise that the death of a close family member, friend, or colleague can be deeply upsetting. Grief is an extremely personal issue which affects different people in different ways: some people may find it helpful to take time off work whereas others may find work a helpful distraction.

The Government believes that individuals are best placed to understand their own specific needs and we encourage their employers to respond in an appropriate and sensitive way.

In April this year we introduced a new entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay, recognising that the death of a child is particularly tragic. Whilst there is no equivalent entitlement for 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 Dependents 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.

■ OneWeb

Chi Onwurah:

[91963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the independent technical assessment carried out by the UK Space Agency into the investment in OneWeb.

Amanda Solloway:

Due to commercial sensitivities, the Government will not be able to publish the advice used by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State in making the decision to purchase OneWeb.

■ Public Relations: Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord:

[113541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the veracity of the reported £670,000 of expenditure on public relations consultants by the Vaccine Task Force.

Amanda Solloway:

Specialist communications support was contracted by the Vaccines Taskforce for a time-limited period, in line with existing public sector recruitment practices and frameworks.

Details of commercial arrangements with all firms and contract labour used by the Vaccines Taskforce will be published in line with the usual transparency arrangements.

■ Tickets: Repayments

Julian Sturdy:

[113550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that customers are refunded the whole ticket price, including the booking fee, for live events that have been cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has issued guidance to explain to consumers and business the circumstances when refunds are due as a consequence of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. The Government has always been clear that these refunds must be paid when asked for by the consumer.

The guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>.

The CMA has also created a Covid-19 taskforce and set up an online form to enable consumers to report any business they believe is behaving unfairly during the pandemic. The CMA has taken enforcement action in a number of cases as a result.

■ Tidal Power and Wave Power

Alan Brown:

[\[113593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what policies the Government has in place to support the development of wave and tidal stream renewables.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government has a long history of supporting the development and deployment of wave and tidal stream technologies in the UK. To date, we have provided sustained and targeted support enabling the wave and tidal stream sectors to move from initial concept onto prototypes and now the first arrays. Since 2003 various bodies across Government have provided innovation funding of £175m to the wave and tidal sectors. Both technologies are eligible to participate in the Contracts for Difference scheme.

In the Clean Growth Strategy, which the Government published in October 2017, we underlined the need for renewable technologies to demonstrate on-going cost reduction and to compete with other forms of low carbon generation. The Government will continue to consider policy related to wave and tidal stream in light of this strategy and the information received under the recent Marine Energy Call for Evidence, which launched on 28 August.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Contracts

Rachel Reeves:

[\[113542\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many orders through contracts awarded by his Department are currently unfulfilled.

Julia Lopez:

Departmental contracts are not managed centrally. Therefore, the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. It is Cabinet Office policy that all contract managers have appropriate skills to ensure contracts are managed correctly. Any potential unfulfilled orders would be dealt with in accordance with the contract's terms and conditions.

■ Coronavirus

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113667\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the procurement policies are for the securing of services from private companies for the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Julia Lopez:

The driving principle behind public procurement policy is to award contracts on the basis of value for money, which means the optimum combination of cost and quality over the lifetime of the project, not just price alone.

■ Coronavirus: Death**Dr Dan Poulter:****[113531]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether all deaths recorded within 28 days of a positive Polymerase Chain Reaction test are recorded as covid-19 related regardless of the cause of death.

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 PQ113531 [PQ113531.pdf]

■ Music: Coronavirus**Munira Wilson:****[113655]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether door-to-door carol singing is permitted under the new national covid-19 lockdown restrictions in operation from 5 November 2020.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 5 November, the Government 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 from 5 November until 2 December you must stay at home and avoid meeting people you do not live with (except for specific purposes).

From 2 December, we will return to a regional approach and any guidance on carol singing will be updated depending on the Local COVID alert level of the area in which you live. For further information on COVID-19 restrictions, please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

■ Protective Clothing: Exemptions**Mark Menzies:****[113064]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people who are exempt from wearing face coverings are able to use (a) shops and (b) indoor public facilities during the November 2020 covid-19 restrictions.

Chloe Smith:

Social distancing, and other non pharmaceutical interventions, mitigate the risk of transmitting COVID-19 including for those exempt from wearing a face covering. Further information is available on GOV.UK.

DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

John Healey: [\[115476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost has been of each covid-19 related Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) request.

James Heappey:

The Military Assistance to the Civil Authorities (MACA) mechanism has been used by Defence to meet the support requirements of other Departments during COVID-19.

At present, 342 MACAs have been requested in support of Government's domestic COVID-19 response at an estimated total cost of £29.7million. Costs vary according to each task, although marginal costs are the default charging regime when military support is requested.

John Healey: [\[115477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost of Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) requests has been to his Department since March 2020.

James Heappey:

At present, the total recoverable costs related to MACA activity since March are estimated to be £29.7million.

Defence has taken a forward leaning approach towards supporting the Government's response to COVID-19, in order to ensure that costs are not a barrier to Other Government Departments requesting and receiving the military support they need.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Broadband**

Damian Green: [\[112970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to reform the Electronic Communications Code to support the rapid rollout of full fibre digital infrastructure to (a) private new build developments, (b) publicly owned social housing and (c) unadopted roads.

Matt Warman:

We intend to consult on whether further reforms to Electronic Communications Code (the Code) are necessary to support investment in networks. My Department is working closely with stakeholders within the private and public sector to understand whether the current legislative framework supports the delivery of the gigabit-capable infrastructure.

In developing the consultation, officials will take into account changes needed to ensure the Code is fit for purpose. This will include considering publicly owned social housing and unadopted roads. The Government has recently published guidance to

local authorities with regard to public assets, such as social housing. This is available on the Government's [Digital Connectivity Portal](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-connectivity-portal) here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/digital-connectivity-portal>

We will also bring forward legislation to deliver gigabit broadband to the majority of new homes at minimal costs to developers. As part of this, the Government is seeking to amend the Building Regulations 2010 to require housing developers to provide gigabit broadband unless the costs to the developer exceeds £2,000.

■ Churches: Community Development

Chris Green:

[\[114222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the economic benefit of the contribution made by church buildings used for community purposes.

Nigel Huddleston:

Many places of worship do accommodate additional uses, including those for community purposes, alongside worship. These buildings provide economic and social positive externalities to the country as a whole, and at a local level, they provide a thriving community asset. Places of worship forge social capital by strengthening community cohesion and belonging, alongside providing significant social benefits in times of need. Social action at places of worship is equally prevalent and valuable, such as food banks, blood donation centres and night shelters.

The Government has set out its vision and strategy to protect the historic environment, including England's places of worship, in the 2017 Heritage Statement. The DCMS-funded Taylor Review Pilot, and its subsequent evaluation, published in October 2020, underlines the importance of a strategic approach, based on understanding the gaps in local community provision, when considering additional uses of places of worship.

■ Churches: Repairs and Maintenance

Chris Green:

[\[113567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to allocate funding to churches for the maintenance of church buildings as a result of their contribution to the provision of public services.

Nigel Huddleston:

Many places of worship do accommodate additional uses, including those for community purposes, alongside worship. These buildings provide economic and social positive externalities to the country as a whole, and at a local level, they provide a thriving community asset. Places of worship forge social capital by strengthening community cohesion and belonging alongside providing significant social benefits in times of need. Social action at places of worship is equally prevalent and valuable, such as food banks, blood donation centres and night shelters.

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The Government has supported the maintenance of historic churches throughout the UK since 2001 through the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. The Scheme, which is currently funded until the end of March 2021, provides grants towards VAT paid on repairs and maintenance. It presently handles around 7000 claims per annum, is open to all faiths and denominations and is delivered UK wide.

In addition, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has announced significant cross-sector support. This includes a £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund announced earlier this summer, aimed at helping key cultural organisations, including places of worship, through the pandemic. The fund represents the biggest ever one-off investment in UK culture, complementing the Covid-19 support schemes launched earlier in the year by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Any extension to the existing funding is subject to the Spending Review, which is due to conclude later this month.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Helen Hayes:

[110190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the role of collective approaches by the Government, charities and community organisations in solving the complex challenges faced by vulnerable people as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Charities, community organisations and volunteers are playing a vital role to support the coronavirus effort. Government continues to work closely with the civil society sector to assess both the needs of vulnerable people and the sector itself, and how government can best support the continuation of critical work.

Government has granted £4,803,089 to the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergency Partnership (VCSEP), which brings the sector together with government and statutory agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable people during the Covid-19 outbreak. Specifically, this funding will allow the VCSEP to improve coordination across the sector, establish a system to capture unmet need at a local level, and enable volunteer demand and supply from government departments and VCS organisations to be matched.

■ Entertainments: Churches

Chris Green:

[\[113565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) economic and (b) social effect of using church buildings for cultural and entertainment purposes.

Nigel Huddleston:

Many places of worship do accommodate additional uses, including those for social support, cultural and entertainment purposes, alongside worship. These buildings provide economic and social positive externalities to the country as a whole, and at a local level, they provide a thriving community asset. Places of worship forge social capital by strengthening community cohesion and belonging alongside providing significant social benefits in times of need. Social action at places of worship is equally prevalent and valuable, such as food banks, blood donation centres and night shelters.

The Government has set out its vision and strategy to protect the historic environment, including England's places of worship, in the 2017 Heritage Statement. The DCMS-funded Taylor Review Pilot and its subsequent evaluation underlines the importance of a strategic approach, based on understanding the gaps in local community provision, when considering additional uses of places of worship.

■ Gambling

Philip Davies:

[\[R\] \[113034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how long it takes the Gambling Commission to approve an application from a charity for accreditation to receive LCCP RET contributions.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Gambling Commission requires all operators licensed under the Gambling Act 2005 to make an annual contribution to fund research, prevention and treatment of problem gambling, and publishes a list of organisations to which operators may direct this contribution. The time taken by the Commission to reach a decision about whether an organisation can be included on that list depends on a number of factors. These include the quality and completeness of the information provided by the organisation, the complexity of issues associated with information provided and whether further investigation into independent oversight or potential conflicts of interest is required.

■ Internet: Training

Chi Onwurah:

[\[114870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on tackling the digital divide of the Good Things Foundation report, Great Digital Catch Up, published in September 2020.

Caroline Dinenage:

I received the report, 'The Great Digital Catch Up', with interest and have discussed it recently with the Good Things Foundation. We will take it into account as we develop further policies.

■ **Social Media: Epilepsy****Munira Wilson:**[\[92020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implication for his policies of social media videos with images embedded designed to provoke epilepsy seizures.

Caroline Dinenage:

The targeting of epilepsy sufferers online already constitutes a UK criminal offence. Someone who sends flashing images to a person with epilepsy, thereby causing a seizure, could be found guilty of an offence against the person (such as assault) under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861. As part of the Online Harms White Paper proposals, the new duty of care will ensure companies have robust systems and processes in place to tackle illegal content on their services. This includes tackling illegal online abuse which provokes epilepsy seizures.

We are also ensuring the criminal law is fit for purpose to deal with online abuse. The Law Commission's review of abusive and offensive communications is considering law reforms to account for serious harm and criminality arising from abuse online. This includes abuse targeted at users with epilepsy. They are consulting on proposed reforms and will issue final recommendations early 2021.

EDUCATION■ **Department for Education: Data Protection****Darren Jones:**[\[113625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he will publish his (a) response, (b) agreed actions and (c) timetable for change to the Information Commissioner's compulsory audit of his Department, published on 7 October 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has been working closely with the Information Commissioner's Office since the audit was undertaken in February 2020 to address all the recommendations. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education will be publishing a formal response in January 2021.

■ **Primary Education: Literacy****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[91982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children starting primary school in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the

West Midlands and (d) England had literacy skills below the expected school-ready level in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

The table attached shows the number and percentage of children not achieving the expected level in literacy (the reading and/or writing early learning goals) at the end of their reception year. Figures are provided for each of the four requested regions, for the previous five academic years recorded. No data was recorded for 2019/20 due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Attachments:

1. 91982_Table
[91982_Table_showing_no_of_children_not_achieving_literacy_targets_Coventry.xlsx]

■ **Schools: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[114205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has allocated to schools for building improvement programmes in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry in each year since 2010.

Nick Gibb:

The Department allocates condition funding each year to those responsible for school buildings to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate. Most condition funding allocations are calculated at a responsible body level and cannot be broken down to constituency level, as decisions on investment are often taken at a local level.

Schools and those responsible for school buildings receive condition funding through different routes depending on their size and type. The majority of condition funding is paid to responsible bodies through annual School Condition Allocations (SCA). Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) is also allocated to schools to spend on their own capital priorities.

The Department has allocated over £48 million in condition funding to Coventry local authority since 2011. This includes SCA (and up to the 2019-20 financial year, funding paid via the local authority Voluntary Aided Programme for voluntary aided schools), and DFC. In the 2018-19 financial year, additional funding was also made available through the Healthy Pupils Condition Fund (HPCF), as well as £400 million additional DFC. In the 2020-21 financial year, the Government made an additional £560 million available for essential maintenance and upgrade projects, with Coventry local authority's share included below. Data for allocations prior to the 2011-12 financial year is not readily available. For each financial year since 2011, the Department has allocated Coventry local authority the following:

FINANCIAL YEAR CONDITION FUNDING (SCA, LCVAP, DFC, HPCF AND ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR 2020-21)

2011-12	£6,959,545
2012-13	£5,914,506
2013-14	£5,383,002
2014-15	£5,136,341
2015-16	£5,202,103
2016-17	£4,351,401
2017-18	£3,913,977
2018-19	£4,984,484 (including Coventry local authority's allocation from an additional £400m DFC funding and HPCF)
2019-20	£3,526,009
2020-21	£3,560,085 (including £975,268 in additional funding from the additional £560m announced this year)

Large multi-academy trusts and from the 2020-21 financial year, large voluntary aided school bodies, also receive SCA funding to invest in schools for which they are responsible. A full breakdown can be found on GOV.UK. Smaller trusts, voluntary aided schools and sixth form colleges that are not eligible for SCA can bid into the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) each year. Since 2015, the Department has allocated over £19 million to local authorities in Coventry for CIF projects. Data prior to the 2015-16 financial year is not readily available.

In addition, the Department delivers major building programmes centrally, including the Priority School Building Programme (PSBP), which is rebuilding or refurbishing school buildings in the poorest condition at over 500 schools. There are 6 PSBP projects in Coventry including two in your constituency. In June, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced plans for a new, ten year school rebuilding programme. Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Students: Housing

Nadia Whittome:

[113688]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he is having with university representatives on students who have signed contracts for university accommodation in relation to courses that have no in-person teaching as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to ensuring that students that have been living away from home are able to return home at the end of term, if they choose to do so. Higher education (HE) providers should ensure they have plans for how they support students to return home safely. As part of these plans, HE providers should plan to have moved all teaching online by 9 December, at the very latest, for a short period until the end of the autumn term. We expect providers to stagger the end of face to face provision between 3 to 9 December, both between faculties and universities in the same city (and region if possible).

Anyone who remains at university after 9 December will run the risk of having to undertake a period of isolation of up to 14 days at university, if they contracted COVID-19, or were identified as a contact of someone who had, and would therefore be at risk of not being able to travel home for the end of term break.

The government plays no direct role in the provision of accommodation, whether university or privately owned.

Officials speak regularly with representatives of private and university owned accommodation, as well as sector bodies. The government worked closely with universities to ensure they were well prepared for the return of students, and we have published guidance to help them keep students and staff as safe as possible. Protecting students' education and wellbeing is vital, so we are supporting universities to continue delivering a blend of online and face-to-face learning where possible in a COVID-secure way. More information is available at:

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

Libraries and study spaces on campus should remain open to students and staff, for educational purposes, and must continue to maintain COVID-secure measures. This is important to ensure that student learning can continue as planned while the national restrictions are in place.

Students who have an accommodation contract and, because of COVID-19, think it may no longer fit their requirements, should talk directly to their housing provider.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This guidance can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>.

Students may be entitled to refunds from accommodation providers depending on the terms of their contract and their particular circumstances. If students need help, organisations such as Citizens Advice offer a free service, providing information and support.

If a student thinks that their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice, as long as their provider is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/> ; <https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and <https://www.rla.org.uk/about/nrla-code-of-practice.shtml>.

Hilary Benn:

[114778]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations he has made to providers of accommodation on behalf of university students who wish to terminate their contracts early in order to be able to go home to study online.

Michelle Donelan:

We are committed to ensuring students receive high-quality education. Higher education (HE) providers remain open and face-to-face teaching has continued throughout the period of national restrictions. We are only asking HE providers to move online by 9 December for the remainder of autumn term to enable students to return home prior to the winter break, safely following the national restrictions, and to still be able to continue their studies.

The government plays no direct role in the provision of student residential accommodation whether the accommodation is managed by universities or private sector organisations. We urge accommodation providers to be fair in their decisions about rent charges for this period. A number of universities and large companies waived rents for the summer term or released students early from their contracts.

If students face financial hardship and struggle to pay their rent, support is available. In the first instance, a student should speak to their landlord if they think they will have difficulty meeting a rental payment, and in this unique context tenants and landlords are encouraged to work together to put in place a rent payment scheme. Many HE providers will have hardship funds to support students in times of need, including emergencies. The expectation is that where any student requires additional support, providers will support them through their own hardship funds.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>.

Students may be entitled to refunds from certain accommodation providers depending on the terms of their contract and their particular circumstances. If students need help, organisations such as Citizens Advice offer a free service, providing information and support.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Cats: Tagging****Kevin Brennan:**[\[91951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce regulations for the compulsory microchipping of cats by 31 March 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport on 29 October 2020, [PQ UIN 107106](#).

■ **Food Supply****Daisy Cooper:**[\[113646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the National Food Strategy Part One report published on 20 July 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

Since Henry Dimbleby published the first report from his independent review of the entire food sector, we have been carefully considering its findings, and will be responding fully in due course. Part 2 of the independent review is expected to be published in spring 2021, and the Government has committed to responding to this final report with a Food Strategy White Paper within six months.

■ **Sanitary Protection: Plastics****Selaine Saxby:**[\[113687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of supporting producers of plastic-free sanitary products to reduce their environmental impact.

Rebecca Pow:

We recognise the need to address the issues associated with the environmental impact of absorbent hygiene products (AHPs). In line with the Resources and Waste Strategy published in December 2018, we are considering the best approach for a range of products. There are a number of policy measures available to us, including standards and consumer information, and we believe the right approach for each product requires careful consideration taking account of various factors, for example, waste benefits versus energy usage. Therefore, we are carrying out new research into the impacts of reusable and disposable AHPs, which will help us decide on the best course of action. The tender for this project is currently live and more information is available here: www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/2d7f60a0-658a-460a-870d-839c5fb52305

We are also seeking new powers in our landmark Environment Bill to drive the market towards more sustainable products. These measures form a package of

powers that will help incentivise and shift the market towards more reusable alternatives.

However, plastic has an important role to play in many products due to its strength and sterility. We must therefore think carefully about how we solve the problems arising from plastic waste in order to avoid unintended consequences.

■ Water: Phosphates

Bill Wiggin:

[\[91953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to introduce practical measures for offsetting phosphates being discharged from homes.

Rebecca Pow:

The main sources of phosphates in the water environment are from agricultural land, and discharges from wastewater treatment works. The approach being taken by Natural England in response to housing applications in water sensitive European site catchments (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites), where nutrients have been identified as a specific reason for sites failing condition, is to require development to demonstrate nutrient neutrality.

The nutrient-neutral approach ensures that development does not lead to an increase in nutrients entering the European site, therefore enabling development to meet the tests of the Habitats Regulations. The approach enables development to mitigate for their nutrient impacts, by reducing existing nutrient inputs from other sources, such as through securing land use change from intensive agriculture. Changing land use from intensive agriculture to woodland, restored grassland, wetlands etc. not only reduces nutrients entering watercourses but also has significant biodiversity, carbon, and natural flood management benefits. Public access is also encouraged, potentially providing significant new public access to the countryside with all the health and wellbeing benefits associated.

Another mechanism for achieving nutrient neutrality is to create engineered wetlands at the outfall of a wastewater treatment works. This approach works by running the treated wastewater through a wetland prior to it discharging into a watercourse, removing additional nutrients in the process.

Over the past few years, several innovative and more strategic schemes have been developed to deliver more effective site protections. We have proposed an amendment to the Environment Bill to provide for Protected Site Strategies. This will provide legal underpinning for such strategic approaches and support their development. They will be particularly useful where evidence shows that the condition of protected sites is affected by a range of problems.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Mozambique: Terrorism****Mark Pritchard:**[\[113526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what additional support the Government is giving to the Government of Mozambique in response to recent terrorist attacks in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in northern Mozambique, and the increasing attacks by groups with links to Islamic extremism, including recent reports of horrific beheadings of civilians in Cabo Delgado province. On 10 November, The Foreign Secretary and I publicly condemned the recent attacks.

We are working with the Government of Mozambique to address the root drivers of conflict and instability in northern Mozambique, including through engagement with the Government of Mozambique's regional development authority in Cabo Delgado, and by providing targeted technical assistance under the framework of a Defence Memorandum of Understanding. I spoke to Foreign Minister Macamo on 23 July, noting Mozambique's efforts to address the causes of instability through the creation of the Integrated Department for the Development of Northern Mozambique (ADIN), and to encourage a holistic approach to tackling the insurgency.

■ Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[91996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the projection of the Bank of England in its Monetary Policy Report, published in November 2020, that GDP will reduce by 11 per cent in 2020, what recent projection the Government has made of the value of Official Development Assistance in 2020.

James Cleverly:

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is responsible for producing forecasts of the economy and public finances, not the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The last official OBR forecast of Gross National Income (GNI) for 2020 was published on 11 March 2020 and so did not reflect the impact of COVID-19. OBR will publish their next forecast of GNI for 2020 on 25 November.

■ Palestinians: Foreign Relations**Steve McCabe:**[\[114058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of any potential breach of the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority in the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between His Department and the Palestinian Authority.

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:[\[114059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of any potential breach in the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority in the 2018-19 Memorandum of Understanding between his Department and the Palestinian Authority.

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 the 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.

■ Saudi Arabia: Detainees**Patrick Grady:**[\[91984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Saudi Arabian counterpart to secure the release of (a) Loujain AlHathloul and (b) other human rights defenders in that country; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

Our Ministers, Ambassador and Embassy in Riyadh have raised concerns over the continued detention of human rights defenders, including Loujain al-Hathloul and other women's rights defenders, at senior levels with the Saudi authorities. We have consistently pressed for due process, raised concerns about the use of solitary confinement, lack of family contact and allegations of torture. I most recently raised the women's rights defenders' cases with the Saudi Ambassador to the UK on 16 November.

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 women's human rights defenders and called for the release of all political detainees. We continue to raise concerns and are monitoring the situation closely.

Turkey: Hamas**Robert Largan:**[\[113686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on regional stability of recent reports that Turkey has granted citizenship to senior Hamas operatives.

Wendy Morton:

We are aware of reports about the granting of Turkish citizenship to Hamas figures. Hamas continues to pose a threat to Israel and Israeli civilians. The UK is clear that Hamas' failure to renounce violence and recognise Israel remains a significant barrier to peace. We continue to call upon Hamas to end permanently their incitement and indiscriminate attacks against Israel. The UK retains a policy of no contact with Hamas, in its entirety. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Abortion****Carla Lockhart:**[\[112164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to HSA4 Abortion Notification forms received since 1 January 2020, how many women who underwent abortions had previous pregnancies ending in (a) livebirths and stillbirths over 24 weeks, (b) spontaneous miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies, and (c) abortion.

Helen Whately:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ Bereavement Counselling: Coronavirus

Sarah Champion: [\[113111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations the Government has received from specialist bereavement organisations on a bereavement support policy during periods of (a) national and (b) regional Tier 3 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are taking a cross-Government approach to address bereavement support and help ensure that families and friends of those deceased get the support they need – particularly during this difficult time. We are engaging with a range of specialist bereavement organisations to assess the need for support.

We will continue to engage with specialist bereavement organisations to assess how we can support them in doing their important work.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers: [\[39494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that care home workers and NHS staff are regularly tested for covid-19 even when those people are not displaying symptoms.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: We have made testing available to all symptomatic National Health Service staff and social care staff as a priority. We are also testing those in these groups who are asymptomatic in specific circumstances where appropriate.

For NHS workers specifically, NHS England has recently published guidance on when testing of this nature might be appropriate, including where an incident has taken place, an outbreak or where high prevalence has been established. We are now introducing twice weekly testing.

For care home workers, all adult care homes are able to access testing kits, for weekly testing of staff through the care home testing portal. We have the capacity to send out over 120,000 test kits a day to care homes.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson: [\[112121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support parents to mitigate the detrimental effects of covid-19 lockdown on the social development of (a) new born babies and (b) toddlers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: Community health services have continued to provide support during the pandemic with greater use of digital and remote technologies providing support and prioritising higher needs families. Health visitors,

as the lead for the Healthy Child Programme, and maternity settings will continue to be key contacts between the health system and families. NHS England and NHS Improvement's community health services prioritisation/restoration document and standard operating procedure make clear that these services will continue to perform vital functions, virtually or face to face if there is a clinical or safeguarding concern.

The Early Years Health Adviser (Rt hon. Andrea Leadsom MP) is carrying out a review focusing on the period from birth to age two and a half. The review will look at the lessons learned from COVID-19, including minimising the risks from the pandemic to very young children.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Sarah Owen:

[\[92903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure a high download and usage rate of the covid-19 contact tracing app.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: The more people who use the NHS COVID-19 App, the better it works therefore we are aiming for mass adoption. We will ensure a strong focus on building trust and coverage in communities that are at greater risk from COVID-19 and/or are currently less likely to engage with NHS Test and Trace.

■ **Coronavirus and Influenza: Exercise**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[111537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage (a) older people and (b) people restricted by a health condition to stay active during winter 2020-21 to improve their resistance to (i) covid-19 and (ii) flu.

Jo Churchill:

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. For those who are vulnerable, all movement around the house is beneficial. Keeping moving can also help maintain muscle strength and reduce risk of falls for frail older adults.

Throughout the pandemic, parks and outdoor green spaces remained open. People are 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.

■ **Coronavirus: Almshouses**

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[45413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing priority access to personal protective equipment for

use in almshouses to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable people in those settings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Dan Jarvis: [46072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy that care homes will be subject to parity of esteem with NHS acute settings for the provision of personal protective equipment.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The Government recognises that securing the right personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline workers is of paramount importance, not only for their protection, but to enable them to continue to deliver the first-class level of care that is amongst the best in the world. Where we were in an emergency situation at the start of the pandemic, we have now moved to a stable position, and this month will have a four month stockpile of all COVID-critical PPE in place, with a tremendous contribution from United Kingdom manufacturers.

Amid unprecedented global pressures on supply chains, over 4.6 billion items of PPE have been delivered to frontline workers. This includes over 245 million items of PPE authorised for release to designated wholesalers for onward sale to adult social care providers, as well as over 203 million items to Local Resilience Forums and 21.5 million items to local authorities.

Guidance for commissioners and providers of accommodation services for vulnerable people is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-services-for-people-experiencing-rough-sleeping/covid-19-guidance-for-commissioners-and-providers-of-hostel-services-for-people-experiencing-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping>

■ Coronavirus: Clinics

Munira Wilson: [46166]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure private clinics that are offering covid-19 tests are not price gouging.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The Department does not regulate the cost of CE marked COVID-19 tests by private healthcare providers.

However, any individual with symptoms can access a COVID-19 test completely free of charge. Further information on those eligible for testing is available on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

Anyone concerned that a business is acting unfairly or taking advantage of the COVID-19 outbreak to make money is encouraged to contact the Competition and Markets Authority and report their concerns via the following link:

<https://www.coronavirus-business-complaint.service.gov.uk/>

Munira Wilson:

[46167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of private clinics offering covid-19 tests on the supply of testing available through the NHS.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: As testing technology has become more widespread, we know that some organisations and individuals are choosing to procure tests outside the NHS Test and Trace service.

The Department and the National Health Service are working with test manufacturers and test providers to ensure the private sector can offer testing services whilst ensuring NHS capacity is protected, so that everyone who needs a test can access one.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**

Alex Sobel:

[60858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contacts the NHS Test and Trace scheme has received on average each day since its introduction.

Helen Whately:

Between the launch of NHS Test and Trace on 28 May and 5 August, we identified 53,427 people who tested positive in England during this period. 78.2% (41,254) of the people who tested positive for coronavirus and were transferred to NHS Test and Trace were reached by our contact tracers and asked to share details of their close contacts. Where contact details were provided, 89.1% (214,890) of close contacts were reached and advised to self-isolate.

Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-test-and-trace-england-and-coronavirus-testing-uk-statistics>

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Neil Coyle:

[110841]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources his Department is providing to public health teams in local authorities to help them manage the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

National restrictions apply in England from 5 November until 2 December. The Government has already committed £6.4 billion directly to councils since the start of the pandemic and we are now providing additional funding support as we move from local to national restrictions. The new funding consists of the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund across England, Additional Restrictions Grant support,

business grants for closed businesses, backdated cash grants for businesses in local alert level 2 and 3 areas and additional funding for the clinically extremely vulnerable. Individual allocations for each of these additional funding streams will be confirmed by the relevant departments.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[53315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to provide Local Resilience Forums with local operational control for covid-19 tracking and tracing.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 June 2020]: Upper tier local authorities are leading local outbreak planning within a national framework, and with the support of NHS Test and Trace, Public Health England and other Government departments. In tier 2 areas, county councils are working closely with district councils who have responsibility for environmental health.

Each upper tier local authority has a local outbreak plan developed in line with the Association of Directors of Public Health guiding principles setting out how partners should work together to implement the plans and take a preventative approach.

Alex Sobel:

[\[67751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has a policy on how many local lockdowns can take place concurrently in different cities before a decision on a further full lockdown of the UK is made in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The decision on restrictions is not purely one made on case numbers and rates. It is also important to look at the pattern of transmission, the geography involved and whether the local and national assessment is that the outbreak is under control. A variety of indicators are used in considering levels of risk, including but not limited to incidence rates, positivity rate, Public Health England exceedance data, outbreaks data, 111 referrals, hospital admissions and mortality rates. With effect from 5 November until the start of December new national measures restrictions will be introduced. We must do this to curtail the exponential growth in hospitalisations and deaths. At the end of the period, we will look to return to a local and regional approach, based on the latest data.

■ Coronavirus: International Cooperation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with representatives of the global medical research community to ensure that progress in (i) improving diagnostics and (ii) treatments for non-covid-19 medical conditions is not put at risk as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Jo Churchill:

The Department continues to invest in non-COVID-19 research and development, including clinical trials and therapeutics. This includes research and development investments across infectious and non-communicable diseases. The Department continues to engage with global partners to deliver this work. The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research, published a Restart Framework in May 2020 and has established groups to oversee and coordinate the restart of non-COVID-19 research. This is part of a significant programme of work which aims to restore a fully active portfolio of research as soon as practical, while continuing to support COVID-19 research as part of the Government's response to tackle the pandemic.

Coronavirus: Leicester**Alberto Costa:**[\[68721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether enforcing the local covid-19 lockdown in Leicester will require the introduction of additional legislation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

With effect from 5 November until the start of December new national measures restrictions will be introduced. We hoped that by strong local action, and with strong local leadership, we could get the rates of infection down where the disease was surging. But it is now clear that we need to take action immediately to protect the National Health Service and to get 'R' decisively below 1. We must do this to curtail the exponential growth in hospitalisations and deaths. At the end of the period, we will look to return to a local and regional approach, based on the latest data.

Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne**Chi Onwurah:**[\[71760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with Newcastle City Council on the introduction of the test, track, and trace system for covid-19 in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 July 2020]: NHS Test and Trace has always been a partnership between local and national government. Since August, NHS Test and Trace has provided local authorities with dedicated team of contact tracers to work alongside local public health officials to provide a more specialist service. Local public health officials can use the data provided by NHS Test and Trace to follow up with cases, which in some areas has involved local teams and voluntary partners visiting people at home. We are working with local authorities to see what further responsibilities could be handed down. More specifically, the Department and the Cabinet Office have engaged with local leaders and Directors of Public Health to discuss managing local outbreaks how local alert level restrictions may be implemented to reduce transmission of the virus and help protect the local population.

■ Coronavirus: Public Houses

Sarah Owen: [\[93696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Prime Minister's statement of 22 September 2020, Official Report, if the Government will publish the evidential basis for the effectiveness of implementing a 10pm curfew for pubs in slowing the spread of covid-19 infections.

Rachael Maskell: [\[96104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the evidential basis for the decision to introduce a 10pm closing time for pubs as part of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on 22 September 2020.

Rachael Maskell: [\[96105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the decision to close pubs at 10pm was recommended by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 October 2020]: The Government receives a range of inputs in order to make all of its decisions relating to COVID-19 restrictions, including monitoring the impact of restrictions in local areas via the Joint Biosecurity Centre and monitoring international experience.

These restrictions on operating hours have been applied in local areas where the evidence suggests it can play a role in reducing the transmission of the virus while allowing businesses to trade for the majority of the evening. We have also seen in Belgium that the package of measures introduced, including early closures in some regions, was effective in controlling transmission rates.

The Government keeps all of its COVID-19 restriction measures under review and will closely monitor the impact of this policy.

Hospitality settings have higher environmental risks than other places. We saw in Bolton how, when the 10pm curfew was deployed as part of a package of measures, the weekly average number of cases fell from 31 to 28 cases per 100,000. Cases were previously higher than anywhere else in Greater Manchester.

This is supported with Public Health England's Weekly Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) surveillance report highlighted that from 21-27 September, 13% of those testing positive for COVID-19 reported eating out in the time before symptom onset, when there is a high risk of asymptomatic transmission.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies will continue to publish minutes from its meetings and the supporting scientific papers on GOV.UK, as has been the case since the start of the pandemic.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[48331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which countries his Department has sent covid-19 tests to for processing.

Helen Whately:

The vast majority of our tests are processed through the Lighthouse Laboratories and associated laboratories domestically, and only a very small proportion of tests have been sent abroad for processing.

In May 2020, 66,648 tests sent to the United States of America as demand exceeded laboratory network capacity. We have, and continue to, work hard to expand capacity.

Beginning late August 2020 to 3 October, 271,716 tests were sent to Italy and 126,338 to Germany.

The Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) national surveillance study currently sends around 150,000 tests per month to Germany for processing as part their agreement with the testing provider.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[52560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the double-counting of covid-19 tests.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The Department has moved to split out the recording of numbers of tests sent out and the recording of numbers of tests processed in our laboratories. This has made double-counting very unlikely.

Afzal Khan:

[\[53605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the roll-out of antibody testing for covid-19 will be integrated into the NHS test and trace service.

Helen Whately:

Whilst antibody testing is a critical part of our national testing programme there are no plans currently to integrate it into the wider NHS Test and Trace system.

Steve Reed:

[\[55994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all positive covid-19 test results are shared with relevant local authorities within a time frame that enables an individual's contacts to be traced.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 June 2020]: All upper tier local authorities have access to record level test and case data, including sex, age, occupation and postcode. Directors of public health are also receiving fully identifiable test, case and contact tracing data where the case data includes, address, postcode, sex, age, National Health Service

number, occupation, test date, and additional data describing progress through the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing process.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[62458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests performed at home were sent to testing centres on each day from 27 April 2020 to 5 May 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 June 2020]: Using data from Royal Mail the number of home tests conducted in this time frame are shown in the following table. It should be noted that the Royal Mail's data captures when the kit is delivered at their delivery office near the laboratory. For example, if the kit is 'scanned as delivered' on 4 May, it will then make it to the laboratory the following morning, 5 May, at the agreed 'drop-off' time.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[71905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 tests mailed to care home residents with symptoms lead to a successfully delivered result.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Social Distancing

Nadia Whittome:

[\[112137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of exempting children under 12 from future applications of the Rule of Six social distancing guideline.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Ministers and officials across government have regular discussions about social distancing, including the rule of six, and keep the legislation and guidance under review.

■ Coronavirus: Travel

Hilary Benn:

[\[112997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether someone is able to travel abroad under the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown rules to attend a commemorative event to celebrate the life of someone who has died or to visit their grave.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: In England, individuals must remain at home unless they meet an exemption, which includes attending a commemorative event celebrating the life of a person who has died. In addition, all but essential travel is

advised against, including foreign and domestic travel. Any individual who travels abroad to attend a commemorative event must follow the guidance set out by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In addition, adherence to the COVID-19 rules in the destination travelled to must be followed. This may include self-isolating, providing details to local authorities, testing for COVID-19 or even restrictions on entry.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Henry Smith:

[109297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who live in the same home as people who are clinically extremely vulnerable will receive a vaccine for covid-19 before the rest of the general public.

Jo Churchill:

Whilst there is a desire for the whole United Kingdom population to be vaccinated, there may need to be an element of prioritisation based on vaccine supply, availability and evidence as data emerges from clinical trials on safety and efficacy in different cohorts of the population.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to Government on which vaccine(s) the UK should use and which groups within the population to prioritise. The JCVI and the JCVI sub-committee are currently reviewing evidence on clinical risk factors associated with serious disease and mortality from COVID-19. Following a review of the evidence, the Committee will develop advice on risk groups for any future COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The latest JCVI recommendations on the priority groups for a COVID-19 vaccine is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-25-september-2020>

The minutes of JCVI committee meetings and statements on COVID-19 vaccination are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation>

Mr Marcus Fysh:

[110171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 vaccine candidates for which the Government has provided funding, how much funding from the public purse has been allocated to the process of preparing each of those potential vaccines for (a) marketing, (b) manufacturing, (c) distribution and (d) administration.

Jo Churchill:

In terms of the six supply agreements that have and are being negotiated, these cannot be provided at this time due to commercial sensitivity. We are currently also

unable to provide information on funding allocated to each potential vaccine for marketing, manufacturing, distribution and administration, as they have not yet been finalised.

Mr Marcus Fysh:

[\[110174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of the (a) development and (b) authorisation of a covid-19 vaccine that doesn't prevent (i) transmission and (ii) fatalities on public confidence in (A) the Government response to covid-19, (B) public health programmes and (C) economic growth.

Jo Churchill:

A COVID-19 vaccine will only be deployed once it has been proven to be safe and effective through robust clinical trials and approved for use by the appropriate licensing authority. There are numerous potential vaccine candidates in development, which the United Kingdom will have access to. Once a vaccine is ready, it will be deployed to those most at risk, and then rolled out more widely. Regular testing of virus samples will be undertaken to assess any changes in the virus that may impact on vaccine effectiveness. Safe and effective vaccines rolled out to the population will form part of our overall recovery effort from the impact of this global pandemic.

■ **Coronavirus: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[105604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether cases of covid-19 at HMP Wakefield were included as part of the decision to place the Wakefield area in a tier 2 local covid alert level.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The decision to place the Wakefield area in to local Covid alert level 2 was based on an assessment of a number of factors including epidemiological analysis of the rates of COVID-19 across the population and in certain age groups. It also took account of pressures on the National Health Service across the system. The 'R' rate is still above 1, meaning infections, hospitalisations and deaths continue to double and the virus is now a national problem. From 5 November everyone must stay at home, with a limited set of exemptions. Non-essential shops, hospitality, leisure and entertainment venues will close, schools, colleges and universities will stay open and those needing treatment urged to continue using the NHS. Time limited restrictions are set to be eased on 2 December, going back to a regional approach according to the latest data.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[105605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether cases of covid-19 at Pinderfields hospital diagnosed in people living outside of the Wakefield area were included as part of the decision to place Wakefield into a tier 2 local covid alert level.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The decision to place the Wakefield area in to local Covid alert level 2 was based on an assessment of a number of factors including epidemiological analysis of the rates of COVID-19 across the population and in certain age groups. It also took account of pressures on the National Health Service across the system. The 'R' rate is still above 1, meaning infections, hospitalisations and deaths continue to double and the virus is now a national problem. From 5 November everyone must stay at home, with a limited set of exemptions. Non-essential shops, hospitality, leisure and entertainment venues will close, schools, colleges and universities will stay open and those needing treatment urged to continue using the NHS. Time limited restrictions are set to be eased on 2 December, going back to a regional approach according to latest data.

■ Coronavirus: Weddings**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:****[109534]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made available mental health support to small businesses in the wedding sector affected by the covid-19 restrictions on weddings since March 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise how important it is that people get the support they need with their mental health during this unprecedented time, including those working in small businesses such as the wedding sector.

We have provided £10.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities to support people struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time.

In addition, the Department for Work and Pensions continues to work with the Thriving at Work Leadership Council and Mind to promote the best practice and guidance offered on the Mental Health at Work website, which includes links to toolkits for small businesses and the self-employed affected by COVID-19 pandemic. The Government is signposting these resources via GOV.UK at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Wycombe**Mr Steve Baker:****[112038]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to open a long covid clinic in Wycombe.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: On 7 October the National Health Service announced that £10 million funding will go towards designating specialist 'long COVID-19' assessment clinics that will be available to all patients in England.

Commissioning guidance to support the establishment of these clinics was published on 6 November and local health systems are currently developing plans to implement them as soon as possible. More information about the clinic locations and how to access them will be released in the near future.

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

Feryal Clark: [\[37930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that people are able to access emergency dental treatment during the covid-19 outbreak; and what discussions he has had with representatives of the dentistry industry on the provision of such treatment.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer have been working closely with key stakeholders from the profession including the British Dental Association throughout the pandemic to ensure appropriate services are in place for all who need them.

The over 6,000 National Health Service dental practices in England have been able to see patients face to face since 8 June, where appropriate personal protective equipment and infection prevention and control procedures are in place. NHS England and NHS Improvement issued guidance setting out the priority order in which patients should be seen – focused on urgent treatment, care for vulnerable groups and then routine care which is overdue. Over 600 urgent dental centres remain open to support the provision of urgent and emergency face to face care.

■ Dental Services: Protective Clothing

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[33431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to provide PPE for (a) dentists and (b) dental hygienists who have to see patients face-to-face during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jack Lopresti: [\[33510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that dental practices have access to adequate personal protection equipment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Dentists normally purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) through dental wholesale suppliers. However, for PPE which is needed as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has made supplies available free of charge for National Health Service dental contractors. A dedicated PPE portal has been developed to deliver these items. As of 4 November, over 5,100 NHS dental and orthodontic providers in England have registered with the PPE portal and over 36 million items have been delivered.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[39663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that dental surgeries receive supplies of personal protective equipment.

Jo Churchill:

Dentists normally purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) through dental wholesale suppliers. However, for PPE which is needed as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has made supplies available free of charge for National Health Service dental contractors. A dedicated PPE portal has been developed to deliver these items. As of 4 November, over 5,100 NHS dental and orthodontic providers in England have registered with the PPE portal and over 36 million items have been delivered.

Janet Daby:

[\[48628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that dental practices are provided with adequate personal protective equipment.

Jo Churchill:

Dentists normally purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) through dental wholesale suppliers. However, for PPE which is needed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has made supplies available free of charge for National Health Service dental contractors. A dedicated PPE portal has been developed to deliver these items. As of 4 November, over 5,100 NHS dental and orthodontic providers in England have registered with the PPE portal and over 36 million items have been delivered.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Advisory Bodies and Committees

Paula Barker:

[\[97743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advisory groups and (b) committees in his Department.

Paula Barker:

[\[97744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department monitors the work of its (a) advisory groups and (b) committees.

Paula Barker:

[\[97745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the latest minutes for each advisory group meeting overseen by his Department.

Edward Argar:

Information on the Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies and advisory committees can be found on GOV.UK.

The Department has representatives on all committees, and officials regularly attend committee meetings. Chairs have regular appraisals and report to a Senior

Departmental Sponsor. The Department provides secretariat either directly or through Public Health England or the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

Each body publishes details of its role, with meeting minutes and annual reports, under their appropriate listing on GOV.UK. Reports of external reviews are also published. Those groups that do not publish minutes, such as the NHS Pay Review Body and the Review Body on Doctors and Dentists Remuneration (UK), do so on the grounds that it might prejudice further discussions with stakeholders.

Paula Barker:

[97746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on the functioning capacity of his Department's advisory groups and committees.

Paula Barker:

[97747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many officials of his Department performing a secretariat function for an advisory group were redeployed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; how many such staff worked for each such advisory group; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

Departmental support of advisory non-departmental public bodies (ANDPBs) and committees and their respective functioning capacity, has been largely unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic and meetings have been successfully operating online. For example, of the 13 Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) staff providing secretariat support to the British Pharmacopoeia Commission and the Commission on Human Medicines, only one was redeployed to the COVID-19 taskforce. Similarly, out of four staff supporting the Advisory Committee on Clinical Excellence Awards, one was seconded to the taskforce but the vacancy has since been filled.

With regard to expert/advisory committees, these operate like ANDPBs but as part of the Department, with some sponsored through Public Health England or the MHRA. Dedicated secretariat support ranges from one full time equivalent (FTE), such as the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO), up to nine FTE, such as the UK National Screening Committee. Their functioning capacity and Departmental support has been largely unaffected. Meetings have generally continued after a short pause, and in some cases meeting frequency has increased, such as with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, SaBTO, and the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group.

An exception is the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling. It is now supported by nine analysts due to evolving from a planning and preparedness advisory committee that met three to four times a year, to a fully operational subgroup of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies that meets at least weekly, with additional specialised subgroups of its own.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: TAEG Energy**

Alyn Smith: [\[109657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) value and (b) purpose is of his Department's contracts with TAEG Energy Ltd to date.

Alyn Smith: [\[109658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what due diligence was undertaken by his Department before the award of contracts to TAEG Energy Ltd.

Alyn Smith: [\[109659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department had a contractual relationship with TAEG Energy Ltd before the awarding of a contract to provide hand sanitiser in April 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: The Department has two contracts with TAEG Energy Ltd for the delivery of hand sanitiser products. The first has a value of £5 million; the second £53 million.

TAEG Energy Ltd were evaluated by Departmental officials on their financial standing; compliance with minimum product and technical specifications; and ability to perform the contract. Contracts are awarded by the appropriate Departmental accounting officer in line with Departmental terms and conditions.

The Department's procurement records show that the Department has had no contracts with TAEG Energy Ltd over the last five years prior to the award of the contracts for hand sanitiser.

■ **Doctors: Business Interests**

Carol Monaghan: [\[109467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on the implications for his policies of Baroness Cumberlege's recommendation of creating a statutory register of interest for doctors in the UK.

Carol Monaghan: [\[109468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to implement Baroness Cumberlege's recommendations on a compulsory declaration of interest register for doctors in the UK.

Carol Monaghan: [\[109469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the General Medical Council on the setting up of a compulsory declaration of interest register for doctors in the UK.

Carol Monaghan:

[\[109470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the General Medical Council in the setting up of a compulsory declaration of interest register for doctors in the UK.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: The Government is carefully considering the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review and will provide an update in due course.

■ **East Sussex County Council: Contact Tracing**

Sally-Ann Hart:

[\[67817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to allocate additional funding to East Sussex County Council for the NHS test and trace system; and what guidance he has published on developing local plans for the allocation of that funding.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As of 5 November 2020, England is now under national restrictions. Local authorities in England were allocated up to £8 per head of population inclusive of any amounts previously provided through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. Payments will be made to upper tier local authorities for onward disbursement. East Sussex County Council will receive funding of £4,457,832.

■ **Exercise Cygnus**

Tim Farron:

[\[113045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the report into Exercise Cygnus was not published until 20 October 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Government does not routinely publish reports on exercises. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a degree of public interest in the report of Exercise Cygnus.

Prior to publishing the report on Exercise Cygnus and its outcomes, the Department engaged with officials from a range of Government departments and agencies to determine whether publication during the current pandemic was in the public interest. The Department took a cautious approach to publication because of the risk that the response to the current pandemic could be negatively impacted.

Tim Farron:

[\[113046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Public Health England report published on 20 October 2020 the only report that exists on the findings of Exercise Cygnus.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Public Health England was commissioned by the Department to organise, deliver and evaluate Exercise Cygnus. 'Exercise Cygnus Report: Tier One Command Post Exercise Pandemic Influenza 18 to 20 October 2016', published on 20 October 2020, is the complete report of the exercise setting out all the lessons identified.

Health Insurance**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[112992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he holds information on the number of NHS employees in England who have access to private medical insurance.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Department does not hold the data requested.

Health: Exercise**Philip Davies:**[\[111463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the contribution of regular exercise to helping people to prevent the contraction of (a) the common cold, (b) influenza, (c) covid-19, (d) heart disease and (e) other (i) common pathogens and (ii) serious illnesses.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessments have been made. The Chief Medical Officer is clear that being physically active is important to long-term health and crucial for keeping people healthy during the ongoing pandemic. Evidence suggests that regular physical activity can promote good physical health and help manage stress and anxiety.

Throughout the pandemic, parks and outdoor green spaces have remained open. People are 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.

Heart Diseases: Health Services**Steve McCabe:**[\[110287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is planning to take to improve support for older people with heart conditions who are vulnerable to severe covid-19 complications.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are developing plans to trial an NHS@Home scheme. This is a self-management scheme to enable patients with heart conditions to look after themselves in their own homes. Working with a specialist clinician,

patients will be supported to ensure they understand their medications, reduce their salt intake, monitor and record daily weights and blood pressure, and recognise symptoms if they deteriorate. NHS England and NHS Improvement have advised that this will improve support for all patients with heart conditions, including older people, and will enable patients to manage their condition at home where possible and clinically appropriate.

To tackle COVID-19 complications following infection, the National Health Service has recently announced an additional investment of £10 million to support the establishment of post-COVID-19 clinics in each part of the country. These clinics will support people of all ages by offering appropriate diagnostics and referrals, including support for older people with cardiac complications related to post-COVID-19 syndrome.

■ Hospital Beds: Coronavirus

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[113105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the (a) total number of beds available to the NHS and (b) number of beds occupied by covid-19 patients as at 9 November 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Information on the total number of National Health Service beds is not available in the format requested.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[83843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of hospital interventions to (a) minimise the risk of covid-19 outbreaks and (b) bring hospital acquired covid-19 outbreaks under control; and what support and resources are available for hospitals to help implement those interventions.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement provide Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) support to trusts in the implementation of wide-ranging hospital interventions to prevent and control COVID-19 transmission, including a targeted IPC Safety Support Programme to multiple regions. An England wide surveillance system is available to provide trusts with data for tracking COVID-19 infection rates and allowing them to take local action to tackle outbreaks.

In addition, an operating framework for urgent and planned services in hospital settings during COVID-19 was published on 14 May, with a key objective of minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection within hospitals and supporting NHS organisations to maintain capacity to care for COVID-19 patients.

The Government has updated and published the United Kingdom guidance 'COVID-19: Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings: Infection prevention and control recommendations', providing guidance based on the

latest scientific evidence for minimising COVID-19 transmission in healthcare settings.

NHS England and NHS Improvement oversee the dissemination of guidance and provides oversight through its regions to support local policies and interventions in healthcare settings. To further support implementation of the UK IPC Guidance within local settings, a Board Assurance Framework is available to all healthcare organisations.

■ **Housing: Fire Prevention**

Marsha De Cordova:

[111611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to encourage housing providers to prohibit smoking on private balconies to prevent the problem of smoke drift.

Jo Churchill:

The Health Act 2006 and the subsequent Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006 made it illegal to smoke in public enclosed or substantially enclosed areas and workplaces. There are no current plans to change this legislation. However, organisations can make their own non-smoking policies for outside space which is not captured under the Act or Regulations.

■ **Hyperactivity**

Alex Sobel:

[109614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to increase the uptake by services throughout England of the NICE guidance on Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management, NG87, last updated on 13 September 2019.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

During 2019 the Department worked with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and their Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Implementation Working Group to look at how the current NICE guidance and quality standard on ADHD were being implemented and to identify and disseminate examples of best practice in respect of care and support for people with ADHD. The Department is considering the working group's findings in discussion with NICE and other key partners.

■ **Influenza: Vaccination**

Derek Twigg:

[109169]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to maintain the temporary expansion of the eligibility for flu vaccination to people aged over 50 into future years.

Jo Churchill:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) considered the expansion of the flu vaccination programme at a meeting on 6 July 2020. The JCVI was supportive of extending vaccination to all adults aged between 50 and 64 years of age, starting at the oldest age groups as a temporary measure for the 2020/21 influenza season.

The minute of the JCVI Extraordinary Meeting on COVID-19 Immunisation prioritisation held 6 July 2020 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes>

A decision was made this year to extend the seasonal flu programme to people aged 50 and over in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, and concerns about the co-circulation of flu and COVID-19. A decision has not yet been made in relation to the inclusion of people aged 50 and over in future years.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[110225]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of flu vaccination appointments in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: Delivery of the flu vaccine programme has begun and will continue over the winter months with priority given to those who are most at risk from the effects of flu, and frontline health and social care workers.

General practitioners (GPs) and pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season. The Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available this winter. GP practices and pharmacists can schedule appointments for flu vaccinations to coincide with deliveries.

In addition to the usual vaccination appointments, practices in Slough have offered mass vaccination clinics in community settings, such as Salt Hill Activity Centre, Britwell Centre, Chippenham Centre, and the Langley Pavilion Community Centre. Additional vaccination clinics are also being offered by the School Immunisation team at weekends.

Marsha De Cordova:**[111610]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to include (a) teachers in SEND schools and (b) other teachers in the winter 2020-21 flu vaccine programme.

Jo Churchill:

The flu vaccination is recommended for those in at risk groups, and frontline health and social care workers who have direct contact with patients, so they can protect themselves and the vulnerable people that they care for. This is based on advice

from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Responsibility for offering a free flu vaccination to frontline health and social care workers rests with their employers, as part of their occupational health responsibility.

Teachers and other key workers, aside from frontline health and care staff, who are not in an at-risk group are not eligible for a free flu vaccination. However, they may have access to the flu vaccine under their employers' occupational health scheme.

■ **Learning Disability: Prescription Drugs**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[113041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the information collected in the General Practice Extraction Service data for pandemic planning and research indicates whether the frequency of use of antipsychotic and antidepressant drugs in people with learning disabilities has changed in (a) England and (b) local areas during the covid-19 outbreak .

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Loneliness: Coronavirus**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[111540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the effects of loneliness on physical and mental health in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: To tackle the effects of loneliness on physical and mental health in Coventry, the National Health Service and local authority are working together with other organisations through the community resilience workstream to support co-ordinated efforts in terms of community resilience in the city. Actions include building a new mental health and suicide prevention website; rolling out social prescribing with referrals from general practitioners or individuals; providing opportunities to link up locally through the Grapevine 'Connecting for Good' programme.

In the West Midlands, the West Midlands Combined Authority is ramping up its mental health support as the COVID-19 crisis continues and has refreshed its Thrive 2031 Mental Health Strategy.

■ **Malnutrition: Children**

Philip Davies:

[\[110098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of children who suffer from undernutrition in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Estimates of the number of children who suffer from 'undernutrition' is not available.

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) reports the number of children who are underweight in England. NCMP data for 2019/20 shows that the number of underweight children in England aged four to five years old is 3,771 out of 399,470 measured (0.9%) and the number of children aged 10-11 years old is 6,969 out of 491,138 measured (1.4%). This is stable compared with previous years and is below the 2% level expected in a healthy population. This data is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2019-20-school-year>

Underweight may reflect undernutrition in a child but may also reflect a small build. A child of any weight status (underweight, healthy weight, overweight or obese) may suffer from undernutrition if a diet is lacking the nutrients required for healthy growth.

Philip Davies:**[110099]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for undernutrition amongst children in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

The reasons for 'undernutrition', which is more generally referred to as malnutrition, are varied and complex. 'Undernutrition' amongst children can be both a cause and a consequence of ill health and may be linked to clinical, social and economic factors. It may develop as a result of limited access to food, a disorder or disease that results in a poor appetite, makes eating or absorbing food difficult or results in a greatly increased requirement for energy and nutrients.

■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus**Julian Knight:****[45270]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with NHT Trusts to widen access to covid-19 testing to birthing partners of expectant mothers to allow them more access to the birthing facility and more time with the mother and new baby.

Helen Whately:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare services have been working hard to support patients and their families and carers, while still ensuring that these services are safe. 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.

■ Measles

Colleen Fletcher:

[109407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of measles cases in England.

Jo Churchill:

A multi-agency implementation group was established to take forward the actions outlined in the United Kingdom Measles and Rubella elimination strategy, published in January 2019. The strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-and-rubella-elimination-uk-strategy>

NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Department and Public Health England (PHE) are working with a wide range of stakeholders to achieve and sustain high coverage (over 95%) with two doses of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine through the routine childhood immunisation programme for children under five years, and provide opportunities for MMR catch-up for children over five years, young people and adults who missed out on the vaccine when they were younger.

PHE provides information on the benefits and risks of the MMR vaccine to the public using targeted communications and through National Health Service branded leaflets, some of which are available in multiple languages. PHE is also running the Value of Vaccines campaign to help share messages and information on vaccination, which is available at the following link:

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/94-value-of-vaccines/overview>

NHS England and NHS Improvement is running an MMR catch-up programme for ten and 11-year olds through general practices.

■ Mental Health Services

Bill Esterson:

[113546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the change in the number of mental health support workers who provide one-to-one support to those with a mental health diagnosis; and whether he has plans to increase the number of those workers providing that support.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: We remain committed to growing the mental health workforce to achieve the ambitions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan.

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in primary care, local authorities or other providers.

There is no data available which identifies staff who provide one-to-one support. The following table shows the total number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff with a mental health occupation code who provide support to clinical staff in the trusts and CCGs as at September each year since 2017 along with the latest figure, June 2020.

	HCHS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO CLINICAL STAFF, FTE
September 2017	2,394
September 2018	2,516
September 2019	2,871
June 2020	3,256

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS workforce statistics – HCHS staff in National Health Service trusts and CCGs June 2020. Mental health workforce, FTE.

■ Mental Health Services: Young People

Nadia Whittome: [\[112141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve mental health support for young people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, an additional 345,000 children and young people in England will have access to support via National Health Service-funded mental health services and school-or college-based mental health support teams by 2023/24. The first 59 mental health support teams are becoming operational and 123 teams will be in place by early 2021 with the programme rolling out to at least 20-25% of the country by 2023.

We are also piloting a new four week waiting time for children and young people's mental health services in 12 areas and incentivising every school or college to identify and train a senior lead for mental health.

■ Mental Health: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Nadia Whittome: [\[112150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people are able to access diagnosis or treatment for Dissociative Identity Disorder.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Dissociative Identity Disorder is an uncommon diagnosis, partly because some psychiatrists are unsure it is a mental health condition in and of itself at all, and partly because dissociation is a symptom present in a number of conditions, including Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder, severe mental health problems such as psychosis, and 'personality disorder', where trauma has played a significant role.

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, new and integrated models of primary and community mental health care will give 370,000 adults and older adults with serious mental illnesses, including psychosis and 'personality disorder' where disassociation is a symptom, greater choice and control over their care and support them to live well in their communities by 2023/24.

■ **Mental Health: Medical Treatments**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[112149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of funding for assessment and treatment of dissociative disorders.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We remain committed to investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year into mental health services by 2023-24 through the NHS Long Term Plan. Under this plan, new and integrated models of primary and community mental health care will give 370,000 adults and older adults with serious mental illnesses, including psychosis and personality disorder where disassociation is a symptom, greater choice and control over their care and support them to live well in their communities by 2023/24.

This will include access to psychological therapies, improved physical health care, employment support, personalised and trauma-informed care, medicines management and support for self-harm and coexisting substance use. Local areas will be supported to redesign and reorganise core community mental health teams to move towards a new place-based, multidisciplinary service across health and social care aligned with primary care networks.

■ **NHS 111: Costs**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[105493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS 111 service cost the public purse in 2019-20; and what its budget is for 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **NHS Trusts: Coronavirus**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[60758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS Trusts in England are offering antibody testing to their staff.

Helen Whately:

National Health Service staff in all regions in England should have been offered the opportunity to take an antibody test should they have wished to have one.

■ NHS: Negligence**Jim Shannon:****[109357]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to track outcomes for people who suffer adverse drug reactions resulting from medication errors.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Outcomes for people who are involved in medication patient safety incidents can be reported to the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS). These reports are used to support improvements in patient safety by enabling the National Health Service to understand and learn from such incidents.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) accepts reports to its Yellow Card scheme where a patient has been harmed as a result of a medication error. When completing a Yellow Card, reporters are specifically asked to select an outcome for each side-effect being reported. Further information, such as outcome, can be requested from reporters if necessary.

Data from the NRLS is shared by NHS England and NHS Improvement with the MHRA for analysis on a weekly basis. Should any important safety issues be identified, regulatory action would be taken, including working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure appropriate dissemination of actions to prevent these harms occurring in the future.

■ NHS: Staff**Andrew Gwynne:****[110747]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of NHS staff who are line-managed by close family members.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ Obesity: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:****[110837]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) the Royal College of Nursing and (b) other medical professional bodies on helping to tackle levels of weight-gain during the covid-19 lockdown.

Jo Churchill:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has regular discussions with the Royal College of Nursing and other medical professional bodies on improving the health and wellbeing of the nation.

■ Occupational Health

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[114219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with specialist bereavement organisations on the formal and informal support that bereaved employees need in the workplace.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: We are taking a cross-Government approach to address bereavement support and help ensure that families and friends of those deceased get the support they need – particularly during this difficult time. We are engaging with specialist bereavement organisations to assess how we can support them in doing their important work, which includes providing support to bereaved employees.

■ Operating Theatres: Fire Prevention

Jim Shannon:

[\[110827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will instruct NHS Improvement to guide the Centre for Perioperative Care in considering preventative guidelines on surgical fires as part of the National Safety Standards for Invasive Procedures Redevelopment workstream.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The national patient safety team at NHS England and NHS Improvement have been involved with the Expert Working Group to consider the prevention of surgical fires and will continue to support the development of guidance to prevent these types of incidents from occurring.

The Centre for Perioperative Care have taken on the responsibility for ensuring that the National Safety Standards for Invasive Procedures continue to be fit for purpose. NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to support their progress on this.

■ Public Health: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle:

[\[110842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources his Department is providing to public health teams in local authorities to help tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

National restrictions apply in England from 5 November until 2 December. The Government has already committed £6.4 billion directly to councils since the start of the pandemic and we are now providing additional funding support as we move from local to national restrictions. The new funding consists of the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund across England, Additional Restrictions Grant support, business grants for closed businesses, backdated cash grants for businesses in local alert level 2 and 3 areas and additional funding for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

Individual allocations for each of these additional funding streams will be confirmed by the relevant departments.

■ Radiotherapy

Grahame Morris:

[113061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Public Health England's most recent Radiotherapy Dataset, how many cancer patients have had their radiotherapy treatment (a) delayed, (b) modified or (c) cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and how many patients are in the cancer treatment backlog.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Radiotherapy Dataset does not collect data on delayed or cancelled radiotherapy treatments relating to COVID-19 or have a count of patients who may be in a cancer treatment backlog.

From the data for the week commencing 25 May 2020 the proportion of breast radiotherapy being delivered as part of a shorter course was 65% (346 episodes). This compares to less than 1% (less than two episodes on average) for each week up to the week commencing 16 March 2020, just prior to the national lockdown. Data analysing changes in treatment dose and duration are not available for any other cancer tumour types.

Data on the number of patients in the cancer treatment backlog is not available.

■ Self-harm

Liz Twist:

[109567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to work with NHS England to ensure that psychosocial assessments are undertaken for everyone who discloses self-harm (a) to their GP and (b) in any other clinical setting.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's clinical guideline 'Self-harm in over 8s: long-term management (CG133)' covers the initial management of self-harm and the provision of longer-term support for children and young people aged eight years and older and adults. It includes guidance on referring patients in primary and community care and in other specialist mental health settings for an assessment if presenting with a history of self-harm and a risk of repetition.

In the NHS Long Term Plan, we committed to establishing new models of integrated primary and community mental health care for adults and older adults with severe mental illnesses, with a new community-based offer explicitly including – among other elements – improved self-harm support. New models are currently being tested in 12 early implementer sites, and all areas are developing plans to expand and transform services from 2021/22.

■ Suicide: NHS**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[112096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many suicides of frontline NHS staff have been recorded since January 2020 to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: This information is not currently held in the format requested.

HOME OFFICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Fay Jones:**[\[115024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support local police forces in tackling speeding in rural areas.

Kit Malthouse:

Excess speed is still a major cause of death and serious injury on our roads. Anyone who breaks the speed limit should expect to face proper sanction.

Enforcement of speeding offences and the deployment of resources in rural areas, is an operational matter for local chief officers of police, taking into account the specific local problems and demands with which they are faced.

■ Adeleke Olanrewaju Okunade**Kate Hollern:**[\[91975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to investigate the immigration case of Adeleke Olanrewaju Okunade who successfully appealed in May 2020 against the refusal of his settlement visa application and who has not yet received that visa.

Kevin Foster:

It is not appropriate to comment on individual cases.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Scotland**Bambos Charalambous:**[\[114283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the effect of minimum unit pricing for alcohol on the alcoholic drinks industry in Scotland on levels of crime in that country.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government continues to monitor the impact of minimum unit alcohol pricing in Scotland as it emerges. Minimum unit pricing has been in place in Scotland for less than three years.

Public Health Scotland is in the process of commissioning a study to assess the impact of minimum unit pricing on areas of crime, public safety and public nuisance.

■ **Asylum and Immigration: Coronavirus**

Catherine West:

[91992]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of making (a) asylum and (b) other migration application processes available online during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has worked at pace to ensure the application processes for our routes are Covid safe. Where we can, we have digitised the application process, but in some areas this is not possible.

Asylum in the UK should continue to be sought at the first available opportunity; on arrival, at a port of entry. Those who have failed to claim on arrival, or whose circumstances have changed since arrival, can lodge a claim at an in-country location – this is usually by appointment at the Asylum Intake Unit (AIU) in Croydon. The AIU has continued operate throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, however in line with Government Covid 19 guidance and restrictions, additional regional locations have been temporarily introduced to ensure asylum seekers are able to safely register their claims. In addition, the asylum screening and registration process has been temporarily abridged to minimise in person contact and limit travel required and remains under ongoing review.

Asylum claims registered at these temporary regional locations are processed in accordance with policy, fulfilling the UK's statutory obligations in relation to registering asylum claims in a Covid safe environment. The asylum registration process requires the enrolment of biometrics (photographs and fingerprints) to complete vital immigration and security checks against Home Office systems. This process requires attendance in person and so cannot be turned into an online process.

In relation to in-country further leave applications, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and government and public health restrictions put in place, the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UKVCAS), which allows customers within the UK to enrol their biometrics, was suspended from the end of March to 1st June 2020.

As the UKVCAS service reopened, in parallel UKVI began reusing existing fingerprint biometrics for some customers which meant that instead of attending a service point in person to re-enrol, UKVI could reuse the fingerprints already recorded against a previous application. Once a customer has submitted their biometrics to UKVI, either through a physical appointment or verifying their identity in order that their existing biometrics can be reused, we are able to make a decision.

Finally, due to the digital nature of the EU Settlement Scheme, it has remained open throughout the pandemic for customers able to apply on line using the EU Exit: ID Document Check app".

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■ Asylum: Applications

Kate Osamor:

[113610]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 109520, what the monthly application processing capacity is at each additional location introduced to register asylum claims.

Chris Philp:

There are no processing capacity limits on the additional temporary locations introduced to register asylum claims.

The Home Office aims to ensure all locations are sufficiently resourced to provide timely appointments to register asylum claims. Capacity is based upon demand and workforce availability at these temporary locations which enables them to cope with fluctuations in levels of asylum intake.

Asylum claims registered at these temporary regional locations are processed in accordance with policy, fulfilling the UK's statutory obligations in relation to registering asylum claims in a Covid safe environment.

■ Biometrics

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[110204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's biometric programme; what (a) overspend and (b) underspend that programme generated in the latest period for which figures are available; what plans she has to help ensure public confidence in the development of biometrics; and what assessment she has made of the effect of the performance of the biometric programme on the operation of police services.

Kit Malthouse:

The biometric systems within the scope of the HOB Programme, IDENT1 (storing the Police fingerprint collection) and the National DNA database, are used on a daily basis by Police Forces and are fundamental to their operations.

HOB is delivering new capabilities that the Police are using to support their operations, and these have been well received. This includes Strategic Mobile capability, the ability for Police Forces to share DNA and fingerprint data with EU Member States under the Prüm Decisions, and HOB will very soon be delivering a replacement DNA Database which will be an important development for Policing and the Criminal Justice community.

In July the Home Office Biometrics (HOB) Programme completed its annual refresh of the Programme Business Case, which was approved by the Home Office Portfolio Investment Committee and subsequently submitted to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. With regards to the HOB budget, an underspend of £1m was declared for financial year 2019/20.

HOB continues to involve Policing in all areas of the programme and provides regular updates on progress through a variety of forums and with the oversight and regulatory bodies for biometrics (for example the Biometrics Commissioner and Forensics Science Regulator). The programme also provides advice to the Permanent Secretary and Ministers with regular updates on the programme.

■ Demonstrations: Coronavirus

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[91956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the removal of the protest exemption from The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 makes all protests attended by more than two people illegal during

the November 2020 lockdown restrictions; what steps her Department is taking to protect the fundamental right to protest; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The right to peaceful protest is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. However, in these unprecedented circumstances, any gathering risks spreading the disease, leading to more deaths, so it is vital we all play our part in controlling the virus.

People must follow the rules on meeting with others, which apply to all gatherings and therefore protests too. Any larger gatherings, save for very limited exemptions such as funerals, are unlawful. The current measures are time limited and are due to come to an end on 2 December.

As they have done throughout the pandemic, the police and local authorities will engage, explain and encourage people to follow the rules before moving on to enforce the law.

■ **Domestic Abuse: Victims**

Sarah Champion:

[\[111529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2020 to Question 86063 on Domestic Abuse: Victims, when the Government plan to publish their findings into changes in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 relating to pre-charge bail conditions.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government consultation on the pre charge bail system closed on 29 May, receiving over 1,000 responses. Officials are continuing to engage with key stakeholders from across the criminal justice sector on reforms to the pre-charge bail process and the Government remains committed to improving the effectiveness of this system. We are planning to publish our response to the consultation in early 2021.

Pre-charge bail, including the use of conditions to protect domestic abuse and other victims, continues to be available where it is necessary and proportionate.

■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[111598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to tackle county lines drug dealing in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities.

That is why we are investing £25m to boost efforts to tackle these ruthless gangs. Our overall package launched in October last year includes: expanding the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre; increased disruption on the rail networks by the British Transport Police County Lines Taskforce; police intensification in three key

exporting areas (the Metropolitan Police, Merseyside, West Midlands); investment in new technology; and increased support for victims. Our funding has supported joint operations across England and Wales, including with Thames Valley Police.

Our investment is already delivering results. Following the £5m we invested in 2019-2020, the Metropolitan Police, Merseyside, West Midlands and British Transport Police closed nearly 140 deal lines, seized cash and drugs with a total value of over £3 million, and made over 100 weapons seizures between November 2019 and March 2020.

In addition, between 2019 and 2021 we are investing £2.32m in the Thames Valley region to develop a multi-agency Violence Reduction Unit which combines expertise from police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and others to identify the causes of serious violent crimes, including county lines, and deliver a multi-agency response.

We have also invested £3.2m over 2019 and 2021 in Thames Valley to 'surge' the operational police response to serious violent crimes, which is supporting vital work to identify and disrupt county lines.

■ Forensic Science: Metropolitan Police

Damian Collins:

[\[114834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason her Department asked Sir John May in 1991 to investigate the Metropolitan Police Science Laboratory; whether that work included an examination of the evidence presented by John McCafferty during the prosecution of Paul Cleeland for the murder of Terry Clarke in 1972; and if she will publish the results of those investigations.

Kit Malthouse:

A review of any Home Office file holdings on this subject is currently being undertaken. It would not be appropriate to comment further while legal proceedings are ongoing.

■ Government Departments: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor:

[\[113612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2020 to Question 110196 on Government Departments: Staff, what Non-casework resource was reassigned from the Windrush Compensation Scheme to the Covid Helpline.

Kate Osamor:

[\[113613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush Compensation Scheme applicants have died since January 2019; and of those how many had received final decisions on their applications.

Priti Patel:

Non-casework staff that supported the Covid Helpline included team members with specific call centre expertise and experienced call handlers. The former supported the team for a short period to set up the Helpline, including call centre systems, management data production and development of tools for call handlers. These team members were not reassigned to the Covid Helpline. Experienced Call handlers were reassigned to the team and supported the training and mentoring of new team members and receipt of customer calls.

The redeployment had minimal impact on performance as team members had been upskilled to undertake a variety of duties across the team so that work could be prioritised. Intake on claims and calls was lower than forecast which enabled the support to be agreed. The support was reviewed in line with intake and team members were returned to the team in a staged process to ensure that both areas had the resource that they required.

We are aware of nine unfortunate cases to date where the claimant has passed away since January 2019, of which one claim received a final decision.

■ Immigration Controls**Karen Bradley:****[R] [110816]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to establish the electronic travel authorisation scheme; and whether that scheme will be operational by 1 January 2021.

Kevin Foster:

We intend to introduce legislation to establish the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme next year. Until this legislation is passed the scheme cannot be introduced.

This scheme will be developed for delivery as part of the wider multi-year programme of change to the UK's Points-Based Border and Immigration system.

■ Immigration: Applications**Kate Osamor:****[113611]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of Indefinite Leave to Remain applications were processed within the six month service standard in each month since January 2020.

Kevin Foster:

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>

■ Knives: Crime

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[91981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of knife crime in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

There were 3157 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by West Midlands Police in year ending June 2020, an 11 per cent increase compared with the previous year, and a 54 per cent increase since 2015/16. Across England, there has been a 2 per cent decrease compared with the previous year, and a 57 per cent increase since 2015/16. These increases are thought to be partly a genuine increase and partly due to improvements in the police recording of these offences. Data for Coventry is not available from the Home Office.

We are taking determined action to tackle knife crime across the West Midlands and the rest of the country. This is why police funding is increasing by more than £1 billion this year. The amount of funding available to the policing system for 2020/21 will increase by more than £1.1 billion, totalling £15.2 billion. We have provided over £12.5m over two years to West Midlands to support their operational police response to serious violence, funding additional patrols in hotspot areas and the night-time economy.

We have tightened the law on knives through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, which also introduced Knife Crime Prevention Orders. We have also recently completed a public consultation on the introduction of new Serious Violence Reduction Orders. While it is vital that the police have the resources and powers they need to tackle knife crime and serious violence, this is not a matter for the police alone. It is important that we also invest in prevention and early intervention to stop young people being drawn into violence in the first place. This is why we are investing over £200 million into early intervention projects to stop young people from committing violent crime in the first place. And it is why we are also investing £70 million in setting up 18 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) across England and Wales to establish and implement a long term, multi-agency approach seeking to tackle the drivers of violent crime to prevent it from happening in the first place. Over the past 2 years, we have provided over £6.7m to the West Midlands VRU.

■ Law Enforcement Data Service

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[110205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much additional funding will be allocated in the next Spending Review to the National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP); what the overspend is on the programme to date; how many deadlines the programme has missed to date; what plans she has to ensure confidence

in the delivery of the NLEDP; and what assessment she has made of the effect of that programme on the effectiveness of policing.

Kit Malthouse:

The National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP) is replacing the Police National Computer (PNC) and Police National Database (PND) with the Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS).

The department has submitted a bid to HMT as part of the Spending Review which is ongoing.

The programme overspend is currently £45M. This excludes costs associated with risk and optimism bias.

The programme had expected to transition all users of PNC to LEDS by December 2021 and decommission PNC by June 2022. The programme is now targeting the transition of PNC users to LEDS by June 2023 and the decommission of PNC by December 2023.

The programme had expected to transition all users of PND to LEDS by June 2023 and decommission PND by December 2023. The programme is now targeting the transition of PND users to LEDS by September 2024 and the decommission of PND by March 2025.

The programme is exploring options for how the replacement of PNC and PND could potentially be delivered sooner.

The confidence in the delivery of LEDS is increasing with the implementation of a LEDS pilot service to 7 Police Forces allowing them to access Driving Licence Images at the roadside by Police issued mobile devices. The programme is planning for a wider roll-out of this capability from April 2021 onwards.

NLEDP has well documented benefits into how LEDS can support policing through efficiency and effectiveness savings. For example, since the LEDS pilot service went live it saves up to 66% of police time when performing a roadside identity check. The programme has also invested significant effort into reviewing the use of data, not just technology. The programme has completed a Data Protection Impact Assessment, consulted upon a new Parliamentary Code for LEDS data and established an independent group of privacy bodies to critique our work on data.

The programme has undergone extensive assurance, both internally within the department and externally throughout Cabinet Office and HMT. The programme has also recently appointed an External Review Team, with full support from senior Police Chiefs, which will review the full scope, remit and approach of the programme. Outcomes from this review will be agreed and taken forward with full co-operation of Home Office, Police Chiefs and Police IT Leads. This review will conclude in April 2021 with full involvement of Cabinet Office and Treasury.

The Department remains committed to completing the delivery of NLEDP, realising the benefits of LEDS and delivering police effectiveness and efficiency savings. These include cashable reduction in running costs and a wide range of broader

benefits such as reducing the time to identify a person of interest, public time savings, improved searches and reduced training overheads.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Afzal Khan: [\[92015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter of 31 July 2020 from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton on appointments at Sopra Steria run UK visa centres.

Kevin Foster:

The Hon. Member confirmed he would accept a local response from an official on this matter instead of a formal Ministerial response from the Home Secretary.

UK Visas and Immigration responded on 17 November 2020

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[114984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has received on Farrukh Sair and his application for indefinite leave to remain; and what estimate she has made of the number of NHS workers who have been refused indefinite leave to remain in the last five years.

Kevin Foster:

It is not appropriate for me to comment on individual cases.

The Home Office has no published data to answer this question. The information is not readily available nor held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Paul Cleeland**

Damian Collins: [\[114151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason (a) Sir John May investigated the conviction of Paul Cleeland for the murder of Terry Clarke in Stevenage in 1972 as part of his work for her Department on potential miscarriages of justice and failings in the use of forensic science to gather and present evidence in criminal cases and (b) Paul Cleeland was not informed of that investigation (i) when his case was considered by the Court of Appeal in 2002 and (ii) at any other time; and what the findings were of Sir John May's investigation in that case.

Kit Malthouse:

A review of any Home Office file holdings on this subject is currently being undertaken. It would not be appropriate to comment further while legal proceedings are ongoing.

■ Refugees: Social Security Benefits

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[113676]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how her Department decided on the amount of £39.60 per week as standard asylum support payments.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office reviews the level of the support allowances each year to ensure that they meet the essential living needs of asylum seekers and their dependants who would otherwise be destitute.

A report published in March 2018 sets out the methodology for assessing the appropriate level of the allowances used in the annual review and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-on-review-of-cash-allowance-paid-to-asylum-seekers>.

The standard allowance was raised to £39.60 per week from £37.75 per week with effect from 15 June, an increase of around 5%. This increase was significantly higher than the general rate of inflation, which Office for National Statistics data shows was only 0.5% in the 12 months period to May.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence

Marion Fellows:

[114941]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) average and (b) median response time to (i) ordinary and (ii) urgent email correspondence was for her Department's UK Visa and Immigration MP casework service in each month of the last three years.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has a target of responding to MPs written correspondence within 20 working days. UKVI has, during the current year, dealt with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. UKVI ensures urgent cases raised by Hon. Members are prioritised and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

UKVI does not measure the average or median time for responding to ordinary or e-mail correspondence from Hon. Members, however, the latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard is held at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-august-2020>

■ Visas: Married People

Daniel Zeichner:

[114912]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the restrictions on marriage services may have on those individuals who required a spousal visa during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; this includes those who are currently in the UK as a fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner.

A person with six months' leave as a fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner whose wedding or civil ceremony has been delayed due to coronavirus may request additional time to stay, also known as exceptional assurance, and extend their leave until their wedding or civil partnership takes place.

Otherwise, applicants can apply to extend their stay for a further six months to allow their ceremony to take place. The current family Immigration Rules allow a fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner to apply for an extension of leave if there is good reason for their wedding or civil partnership not taking place during the initial six-month period of leave to enter. Cancellation of a wedding due to COVID-19 will be considered a good reason under this policy. Further information is set out for customers on GOV.UK and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents#if-youre-applying-to-enter-the-uk-or-remain-on-the-basis-of-family-or-private-life>

■ Visas: Ministers of Religion**Dr Lisa Cameron:****[114240]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with faith leaders on the effect of changes to tier 2 and tier 5 visas on ministers of religion and religious workers.

Kevin Foster:

This Government recognises the unique value members of religious institutions overseas bring to our communities in the UK. This is reflected in the two dedicated immigration arrangements which exist for Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers.

Faith leaders have a dedicated point of contact within the Department, with whom they regularly engage, and I have met with representatives of different faiths on a number of occasions to discuss these topics.

■ Youth Services**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[111599]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase youth intervention services in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Kit Malthouse:

It is vitally important that we prevent young people from being drawn into violent crime, exploitation and abuse. The Government recognises that high quality youth services can transform the lives of young people.

The Government has invested £70m over two years (19/20 – 20/21) in establishing Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the 18 police force areas most affected by serious violence. VRUs bring together police, local government, health and education professionals, community leaders and other key partners to identify the drivers of serious violence and agree a multi-agency response to them. In addition to leading and coordinating local responses, VRUs are also delivering interventions to support those most at risk of involvement in serious violence. In year 1 of their operation, VRUs applied £23.1m to enable delivery of 175 different interventions, which reached over 100,000 young people.

We have awarded Thames Valley PCC, which includes Slough, £2.32m to develop its multi-agency Violence Reduction Unit. We have also invested £3.2m in Thames Valley to 'surge' the operational police response to serious violent crimes, which is supporting vital work to identify and disrupt exploitative county lines operations.

The Government has invested £200 million in a 10-year Youth Endowment (YEF) Fund to tackle the drivers behind serious youth violence. An extra £5million has been awarded to the YEF in 2020 to develop a National Centre of Excellence, which will share knowledge and expertise with those working with vulnerable children and young people at risk of involvement in serious youth violence.

In July 2020, the YEF offered a total of £6.5m to 129 organisations across England and Wales as part of its COVID-19 grant round. The funding will help charities, social enterprises, local authorities and youth organisations to re-connect with young people at-risk of being drawn into violent crime and tackle any problems to emerge because of COVID-19.

We are significantly increasing investment in specialist support for county lines victims this year. With investment of £860k the St Giles Trust will be delivering one-to-one support in London, Merseyside and the West Midlands.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Hilary Benn:

[\[91948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to extend the application deadline for the Building Safety Fund beyond December 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The timelines for the Building Safety Fund, set out in the prospectus, are intended to incentivise building owners to demonstrate pace of progression with their remediation plans for unsafe buildings. We will keep timelines under review as we continue through the application process. In addition to remediation funding, we are also providing technical and pre-tender support for applicants.

Hilary Benn:

[91949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will introduce a new risk matrix for the Building Safety Fund that does not rely on height as a qualifying feature but prioritises funding based on the risk to life.

Christopher Pincher:

In developing the Building Safety Fund, the Government considered the view of experts, including Dame Judith Hackitt, who support setting the Fund's height eligibility criterion at buildings 18 metres and above. This reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height. There will be a small degree of flexibility to allow the fund to cover buildings that have been built just under the 18 metres threshold.

■ **Flats: Greenwich and Woolwich**

Matthew Pennycook:

[91990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the number of blocks of flats in the Greenwich and Woolwich constituency that did not meet the required building regulations at the time of their completion; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Information on high rise residential buildings with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding systems unlikely to meet Building Regulations can be found in the monthly Building Safety Programme data release, available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data. Data is not published at parliamentary constituency level but local authority level data is available in Web Table 3.

For high rise residential buildings with non-ACM cladding systems, local authorities and housing associations are undergoing a data collection exercise as part of an ongoing programme to build a more complete picture of high-rise residential buildings and the variety of external wall systems in use.

■ **Flats: Insulation**

Peter Kyle:

[91989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what reports he has received on mortgage providers routinely requesting EWS1 forms for flats in buildings under 18 metres in height; and if the Government will publish guidance on when an EWS1 form (a) is and (b) is not required.

Christopher Pincher:

To support the valuation process for high-rise residential buildings with cladding, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) designed the EWS1 process. RICS have issued guidance on its use. The Department is aware that mortgage lenders have requested EWS1 forms for a greater range of buildings than the process was designed for.

The EWS1 process is not a Government or regulatory requirement and the Department does not support a blanket approach to EWS1. The Department is working with mortgage lenders to support a more pragmatic approach in their valuation of homes within multi occupancy, multi storey residential buildings and encouraging lenders to accept a broader range of evidence to assure themselves of a building's safety.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle:

[\[113561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Everyone In scheme is continuing to provide accommodation for people who have found themselves homeless in the last two months.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Everyone In campaign is ongoing. Throughout the pandemic, we have worked closely with local authorities and the sector to offer vulnerable people safe accommodation and support and by September we had successfully supported over 29,000 people, with 10,000 still in emergency accommodation and over 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support.

Announced on 5 November, the Protect Programme is the next step in the ongoing targeted support protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19, backed by £15 million to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. Through this, we have asked all councils to update their rough sleeping plans and to carry out a rapid assessment of need for everyone they accommodate. This programme will help areas that need additional support most throughout winter. This builds on the £10 million Cold Weather Fund, open to all local authorities, meaning all local areas are eligible for support this winter.

■ Homelessness: Young People

Neil Coyle:

[\[113562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to tackle changes in the level of youth homelessness; and how he plans to ensure the availability of age appropriate accommodation (a) in winter 2020 and (b) each of the next three years.

Kelly Tolhurst:

This year alone, the Government is spending over £700 million in total to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Protect Programme builds on other recently announced measures to keep rough sleepers safe this winter.

We allocated £91.5 million to 274 councils in September to fund their individual rough sleeping plans and £150 million to local partners to deliver longer-term move-on accommodation for vulnerable people. We also provided a £10 million Cold Weather

Fund for councils to provide rough sleepers with safe accommodation over the coming months.

We have put in place bespoke support for local authorities through our Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST), which includes dedicated youth homelessness advisor roles that have a commitment to work with local authorities to proactively promote positive joint working across housing authorities and children's services, offering training, advice and support to all local authorities.

■ Housing Infrastructure Fund

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[113597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the redesign of the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We have developed a range of funding initiatives to help tackle the housing crisis and deliver new housing. Those schemes include the Housing Infrastructure Fund, which has allocated around £4 billion to support the delivery of new and improved infrastructure which will unlock up to 320,000 homes.

However, to achieve our ambitions we need to go further. That is why we announced in the Queen's speech and as part of Budget 2020, that we will launch a new £10 billion Single Housing Infrastructure Fund (SHIF) to provide the roads, schools and GP surgeries needed to support new homes by funding the provision of strategic infrastructure and assembling land for development.

As we made clear at Budget, we will make further statements at the Spending Review.

■ Housing: Insulation

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[91991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what commitments have been made to fund the remediation of unsafe (a) aluminium composite material (ACM) and (b) non-ACM external wall systems at no cost to leaseholders by (i) Ballymore, (ii) Barratt, (iii) Bellway, (iv) Berkeley, (v) Bovis, (vi) Countryside, (vii) Crest Nicholson, (viii) Galliard, (ix) Persimmon, (x) Redrow, (xi) Taylor Wimpey and (xii) Durkan for those developments in which each retains a legal interest; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Protection for leaseholders from the costs of remediation is available from a number of sources, including Government funding, warranties and building owners and developers. The remediation of over half of privately owned high-rise residential buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding will be paid for by building owners and developers, or through warranty or insurance claims - without passing the cost to residents and leaseholders. Details of this can be found in Figure

6 of the Building Safety Programme: Monthly Data Release at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/934661/Building_Safety_Data_Release_October_2020.pdf . We expect building owners and developers to step up in a similar way for other kinds of unsafe cladding.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[91979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding his Department allocated to Coventry in each of the last 10 years.

Luke Hall:

Details of funding allocations provided to Coventry City Council for the past ten years, including through the annual local government finance settlement, can be found on the gov.uk website.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/854428/Core_Spending_Power_Supporting_Information_2020_to_2021.xlsx

■ **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[113497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to what extent were religious leaders involved in the Government's discussions on the closure of places of worship during the second covid-19 lockdown in England.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Places of Worship Taskforce met on 2 November following the Prime Minister's announcement on the new national restrictions that came into effect on 5 November. This gave us the opportunity to share information with our faith groups, as well as hearing their concerns.

The Government has worked closely with the Taskforce and representatives from our major faiths throughout the pandemic.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[91998]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many fossil fuel projects UK Export Finance has planned for 2021; and where these projects will be located.

Graham Stuart:

At the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January we announced an end to HMG support for thermal coal mining and coal power plant overseas, and we continue to

keep our approach to other fossil fuel investments and financing overseas under review.

UK Export Finance (UKEF) is obliged to consider all requests for its support. These requests can be made, and subsequently withdrawn, at any time.

When considering a request for support, UKEF conducts extensive due diligence, including environmental, social, and human rights due diligence and consideration of climate change, to understand the risk it is being asked to take. There are various reasons why an application to UKEF might not result in support being provided, or, if support is offered, why delays in providing that support might arise. All these factors make determining when UKEF support may, or even will be provided difficult and imprecise.

UKEF is currently considering requests for support for 7 projects involving fossil fuels (none of which are coal-related, in line with government policy) which may be supported in 2021. UKEF has also received a further 10 applications for trade finance cover in the sector. It is possible that not all these transactions will be concluded in 2021, or indeed in subsequent years.

Those projects are in the following countries:

ALGERIA	1
Azerbaijan	2
Brazil	2
Canada	1
China	2
Egypt	1
Iraq	1
Italy	1
Malaysia	2
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
Turkmenistan	1
UK	1

JUSTICE**■ Legal Aid Scheme****Mr David Lammy:**[\[91937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) domestic violence case applicants and (b) sexual violence case applicants have applied for exceptional case funding in the last five years; and how many of those applicants have been successful.

Alex Chalk:

Representation to obtain a protective injunction, or in family law matters where there is a history of violence, is available within the existing scope of the legal aid scheme, subject to eligibility criteria.

Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) exists to provide for cases which would not ordinarily be covered by the legal aid scheme. To qualify for ECF, applicants must meet the ECF criteria as set out in LASPO and described in the Lord Chancellor's funding guidance. They must also be financially eligible for legal aid and their case must meet the merits criteria to qualify.

Any data on applications for ECF in cases of this type could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Cirencester**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**[\[113487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when Cirencester Magistrates' Court was sold; and for what price.

Chris Philp:

The former Cirencester Magistrates' Court building was sold on 7 September 2017 for £450,000.

■ Ministry of Justice: Holiday Leave**Paula Barker:**[\[113683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the compliance of his Department's rules on annual leave carry-over with the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice does not centrally record the carry-over of annual leave. This is managed by the local business area.

Whilst we do not hold central data the Department has worked closely with Civil Service Employee Policy to ensure clear guidance to staff on the extended carry-over of annual leave provided for under the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. Whilst employees have been encouraged to continue to take leave since the start of the pandemic where they are able to do so to maintain their

wellbeing, the 2-year extension of carry-over limits is available to all staff impacted by Covid-19 who have been unable to use their annual leave by the normal deadline.

This guidance has been disseminated through Departmental communications channels, dedicated Covid-19 intranet pages, and cascaded to business areas through HR Business Partners. For any complex Covid-related queries or concerns, including those relating to carry-over of annual leave, a dedicated team is available to provide advice and support.

■ Personal Injury: Compensation

Andy Slaughter: [\[113517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2020 to Question 106239 on Civil Proceedings, if he will publish details of the new accessible bespoke court process which will be used to settle disputes in cases made through the Official Injury Claims portal.

Chris Philp:

The Government will publish details of its new accessible bespoke court process alongside the new Civil Procedure Rules and Pre-action Protocol in due course.

Andy Slaughter: [\[113518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to section 3(11) of the Civil Liability Act 2018, what consultation has taken place with the Lord Chief Justice about the proposed tariff for compensation for whiplash injuries; and if he will publish the details of that consultation.

Alex Chalk:

A consultation is currently underway with the Lord Chief Justice as required by section 3 paragraph (11) of the Civil Liability Act 2018. We will carefully consider the response received and will publish details of the tariff of damages.

Andy Slaughter: [\[113519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish a final proposed tariff for compensation for whiplash injuries.

Alex Chalk:

The Whiplash Injury Regulations 2021 will include the tariff for compensation for whiplash injuries and will be published in due course.

■ Youth Custody: Coronavirus

Andy Slaughter: [\[113520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of staff absences by establishment throughout the youth secure estate as a result of the covid-19 outbreak for each month since 1 April 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

Published data on staff absent due to Covid-19 was first published in August on gov.uk for the period up to 31 July 2020. These figures can be found under the Covid annex, via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-june-2020>

Number of staff absent due to COVID-19 from April 2020

ESTABLISHMENTS	30.04.2020	29.05.2020	30.06.2020	31.07.2020
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Adel Beck	6	13	12	12
Aldine House	~	0	0	0
Aycliffe	4	6	~	~
Barton Moss	24	22	23	23
Clayfields House	0	4	4	5
Cookham Wood	47	28	30	29
Feltham A	12	4	~	~
Hillside	4	4	5	4
Lincolnshire	~	~	0	~
Oakhill (STC)	8	10	11	8
Parc (YOI)	5	6	4	4
Rainsbrook (STC)	~	4	0	~
Vinney Green	11	8	6	4
Werrington	5	~	19	12
Wetherby	38	36	59	53
Total	171	149	178	160

(1) Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Much of the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic has been done at pace, with recording practices evolving as we understand more about the requirements and conditions we are facing. In order to present the timeliest information, the data presented has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics.

(2) Numbers of 3 or less have been suppressed and so have totals where the suppressed number could be calculated.

(3) The types of COVID absences recorded are Sickness Absence, Self Isolation or Quarantine on Official Health Advice, Caring Responsibilities and Other reasons.

Closed settings such as prisons pose particular challenges in managing outbreaks, but we have had to introduce a number of necessary restrictions, guided by public health advice to limit the spread of COVID-19 in establishments and to protect both staff and residents, with necessary adaptations to manage infection.

We will be introducing a testing regime for staff and those in our care across all establishments in England and Wales to help identify and isolate cases early and control the spread of coronavirus. Routine staff testing will also be rolled out from November for both directly employed and non-directly employed staff who work with service users on a weekly basis.

Andy Slaughter:

[113521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of hours of time out-of-cell per child by establishment throughout the youth secure estate for each day since 1 April 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

Data on 'time out of room' is not collected centrally across the whole of the youth secure estate, as Secure Training Centres and Secure Children's Homes operate standardised regimes where children and young people are 'unlocked' throughout the course of an establishment's daily regime.

The Youth Custody Service collects 'time out of room' information from under 18 Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) for management information purposes.

Improvements to data collection processes were made in August this year to ensure data robustness and to enable comparability between the YOIs. There are no current plans to publish YOI 'time out of room' figures as a specific dataset.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Hydrogen: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[114887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to support the Northern Ireland hydrogen economy.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government is committed to developing hydrogen as a strategic decarbonised energy carrier for the UK. Low carbon hydrogen presents an opportunity for Northern Ireland, and the UK as a whole, to deliver against our clean growth goals – meeting our decarbonisation needs while capturing commercial opportunities. This is especially important as we support our economy to recover from Covid-19.

To realise the opportunities from hydrogen we are undertaking a range of activities:

- investing up to £121m in hydrogen innovation across the value chain;
- developing business models to support the deployment of, and investment in, low carbon hydrogen production; and
- a £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund to stimulate capital investment.

The UK Government will be setting out further plans to support hydrogen across the UK in a comprehensive hydrogen strategy, intended to be published in early 2021.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I have had discussions with Ministerial colleagues about the potential for Northern Ireland to play an important part in a hydrogen economy and I am looking seriously at how the Government can best support this.

Officials from the Northern Ireland Executive, as well as Ryse/Wrightbus based in Northern Ireland, are engaged on the strategy through the Hydrogen Advisory Council – a joint government/industry partnership to inform strategy development and formalise engagement with industry.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeline is for the publication of the aviation recovery plan.

Robert Courts:

The uncertainty created by COVID has meant that the government's priority for aviation at this time is to ensure that people will be able to travel again as soon as is safely possible. That is why the government, through the Global Travel Taskforce, continues to work at pace to introduce test to release, as well as considering other measures to support the travel sector – including developing a global framework to make travelling easier, and boosting consumer confidence in air travel. Once complete, the government will then put forward its strategic framework for the medium and long-term recovery of the aviation sector.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[113570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with the aviation sector on the effect of the second national covid-19 lockdown on that sector.

Robert Courts:

The second national COVID-19 lockdown has not changed the way we engage regularly with the sector. We continue an open dialogue as we work towards our shared ambition of getting aviation up and running again in a safe and secure way.

We do not provide comments on the commercial or financial matters of private firms, and therefore it would be inappropriate to share individual discussions.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Munira Wilson:**[\[113648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of new electric vehicle and higher powered charge points provide pay as you go payment facilities.

Munira Wilson:[\[113649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on the Government's 2019 commitment for every newly installed rapid and higher charging points for electric vehicles to provide pay as you go payment facilities.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government welcomes the progress that has been made to date in providing contactless payment at rapid and high-powered chargers. However, over half of these devices do not provide pay-as-you-go facility. In May, the Transport Secretary announced that the Government will consult on measures to improve the consumer experience when using public chargepoints. This includes exploring measures such as requiring rapid chargepoints to offer contactless payment, improving chargepoint reliability and transparency on pricing and giving drivers better access to information about the chargepoints available for their journey.

Munira Wilson:[\[113650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether new 7kW to 22kW charging points for electric vehicles are including within the Government's commitment to ensure all newly installed rapid and higher charging points provide pay as you go payment facilities.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government welcomes the progress that has been made to date at providing contactless payment at rapid and high-powered chargers. Rapid and high-powered chargepoints (50 kW+) are vital to facilitate longer journeys, which is why it is important that electric vehicle drivers can use the simplest payment method to obtain the fastest charge to continue their journey.

In May the Transport Secretary announced that the Government will consult on measures to improve the consumer experience when using public chargepoints. This includes exploring measures such as requiring rapid chargepoints to offer contactless payment, improving chargepoint reliability and transparency on pricing and giving drivers better access to information about the chargepoints available for their journey.

Munira Wilson:

[\[113651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many charging network providers for electric vehicles charge annual or monthly fees for people to use public chargers.

Munira Wilson:

[\[113652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of annual or monthly fees for using public charging points on their uptake.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not keep a record of the charging mechanisms of different charging network providers. No assessment has been made of the effect of annual or monthly fees for using public charging points on their uptake.

Under the Alternative Fuels and Infrastructure Regulations 2017 all public chargepoints are required to provide ad hoc access. This means that all public chargepoints can be accessed without electric vehicle drivers needing to enter into a contract or register with a charging network.

In May the Transport Secretary announced that the Government will consult on measures to improve the consumer experience when using public chargepoints. This includes measures such as requiring rapid chargepoints to offer contactless payment, improving chargepoint reliability and transparency on pricing and giving drivers better access to information about the chargepoints available for their journey.

Munira Wilson:

[\[113653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on standardising electric vehicle charging portals.

Rachel Maclean:

The Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulations 2017, which came into effect in the UK in October 2017, set out harmonised technical standards for vehicle recharging in the UK. All publicly accessible chargepoints that can be used for standard or fast alternative current (AC) charging (3.7kW-22kW) and that have either been deployed or renewed since 17 November 2017 must, at a minimum, offer a 'Type 2' recharging connector. For rapid charging devices, publicly accessible chargepoints must, at a minimum, offer a 'Type 2' recharging connector if using AC, or the 'Combo 2' combined charging system (CCS) if using direct current (DC). These are minimum requirements, therefore the chargepoint may also offer recharging connectors using other technical standards, providing that they also offer recharging connectors that meet the standards above.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[91955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which local authorities in England have not been allocated funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure; and what provisions will be made to support those authorities in developing electric vehicle charging infrastructure in future.

Rachel Maclean:

So far, the Government has funded over 90 English local authorities to provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure, with funding amounting to over £95 million. A full list of authorities that have received funding was attached in the answer to PQ 317236. The Department also publishes EV public charging device statistics quarterly, where a breakdown by region can be seen. These statistics are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/electric-vehicle-charging-device-statistics-october-2020>

This funding includes the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), which has supported over 50 local authorities in England to fund chargepoints for residents who do not have off-street parking. Funding for the ORCS was doubled to £20 million in May, and will make charging at home and overnight easier for those without an off-street parking space. We encourage local authorities to apply to the scheme to provide chargers for their residents, particularly those yet to receive funding. The Government has also supplied funding to authorities through the Go Ultra Low Cities Scheme and the Ultra Low Emission Taxi Infrastructure Scheme.

The Department has engaged in programmes of work to enable and support authorities to deliver charging infrastructure. This includes funding the Local Government Support Programme, delivered by the Energy Saving Trust, which is available to help authorities develop low carbon transport strategies. This summer and autumn we have held a series of webinars from the Go Ultra Low Cities, to build capability and share best practice amongst local authority officers, building on some successful local authority roadshows in 2019. We are also producing a comprehensive technical guide for local authorities, which they will be able to refer to when developing and delivering electric vehicle infrastructure.

■ Public Transport: Concessions**Ms Karen Buck:****[113477]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government funds (a) travel concessions and (b) other benefits to (i) rail and (ii) bus travellers in England outside London.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There are a number of national rail concessions in the form of railcards. Under Section 28(3) of the Railways Act 1993, train operating companies are required to participate in certain approved discount card schemes for young and student travellers, disabled passengers and those over 60.

In addition, recent introductions include the 16-17 Saver and 26-30 'millennial' railcard to help young people, and in October we launched a new Veterans Railcard to help former servicemen and women.

Funding for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) for bus travel is provided to local authorities through the Ministry of Housing, Communities

and Local Government's (MHCLG's) revenue support grant. This funding is not ringfenced, which enables local authorities to make spending decisions that more closely match local needs and circumstances.

■ **Railways: Fares**

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[91967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to Answer of 7 September 2020 to Questions 83804, 83805 and 83806, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of fares reforms for (a) long-distance leisure and (b) ad-hoc business travel passengers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is actively considering how we can modernise our fares and ticketing offer, to develop more convenient and better value options for everyone.

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

■ **River Thames: Boats**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[113506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Competition and Markets Authority on the potential market access and operating advantage of Uber Thames Clippers in regard to the level of central London pier landing fees paid by those clippers compared to other scheduled Thames passenger boat operators.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London, including passenger boat services on the River Thames, is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London.

■ **Southern: Coronavirus**

Ms Karen Buck:

[\[113475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the emergency funding provided to the national railways, whether he has asked Southern Railway to deliver an assessment of the effect of demand on sustainability, including modelling of medium-term service level requirements against possible demand scenarios after covid-19 travel restrictions are lifted.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Rail operators continue to assess local demand regularly to deliver the services passengers need. We continue to work closely with Govia Thameslink Railway (the operator of Southern services) as they develop future timetable proposals to make sure we strike the right balance between running the maximum levels of service that can be resourced reliably to meet demand and protecting taxpayers' best interests.

Ms Karen Buck:

[113476]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to emergency funding provided to the national railways, what cumulative efficiency savings he has asked Southern Railway to achieve by the end of 2020-21.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has contracted Govia Thameslink Railway to act as a Good and Efficient Operator, as defined in the Emergency Measures Agreement and subsequently the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreement and will assess their performance against this requirement.

■ Train Operating Companies

Ms Karen Buck:

[113486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made changes to the governance arrangements for train operating companies as a result of the decision made by the Office for National Statistics to re-classify such companies as being within the public sector.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) decision was made in response to a very significant change in the commercial terms of Train Operating Companies (TOCs). In adapting to managing contract with TOCs under these new arrangements my department continues to keep its governance arrangements under close review, and we will communicate any changes (including any arising specifically from the ONS decision) to operators as needed.

■ Train Operating Companies: Finance

Ms Karen Buck:

[113483]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of financial support provided to train operating companies (a) individually and (b) in total during the period from (i) 31 March to 29 September 2020 and (ii) 30 September 2020 to date.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Approximately £4.2bn has been paid in operational support to all 14 Train Operating Companies, including the 2 in public ownership, up to the end of rail period 6 (from 1 March to 20 September).

Details of past payments made by the Department to individual franchised passenger rail operators under the Emergency Measures Agreements up until late June can be found on the government's website at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-march-to-june-2020>.

We plan to update these figures regularly and expect to publish figures up to 20 September in the coming weeks once the final payment adjustment processes are concluded

Ms Karen Buck:

[113484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish his Department's estimate of the total covid-19-related financial support to be provided to train operating companies, by each company in receipt of that funding, from 30 September 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The cost to the public purse is highly dependent on the course of the pandemic and also how many people are using the railway and generating revenue, which is highly uncertain at this point.

Details of past payments made by the Department to individual franchised passenger rail operators under the Emergency Measures Agreements up until late June can be found on the government's website at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-march-to-june-2020>.

We plan to update these figures regularly and expect to publish figures up to late September in the coming weeks once the final payment adjustment processes are concluded.

Ms Karen Buck:

[113485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish details of the performance terms and conditions applied to train operating companies in receipt of covid-19-related funding to replace lost fare income.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) decision was made in response to a very significant change in the commercial terms of Train Operating Companies (TOCs). In adapting to managing contract with TOCs under these new arrangements my department continues to keep its governance arrangements under close review, and we will communicate any changes (including any arising specifically from the ONS decision) to operators as needed.

All Emergency Measures Agreement (EMAs) have been published in redacted form on the public register of rail franchises on the gov.uk website. The Department is continuing to follow its processes in order to finalise the publication of the ERMA's. Given that a number of third party stakeholders are being consulted on proposed redactions, we cannot provide a definitive timescale for the redacted versions of the ERMA's however we continue to work towards publishing them as soon as reasonably practicable and the Department's redactions have been completed.

■ Transport for London: Uber Boat

Andrew Rosindell:

[113503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the operating relationship between Transport for London and Uber Thames Clippers with regard to the potential competitive advantages compared with other scheduled Thames passenger boat operators.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London, including passenger boat services on the River Thames, is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[113504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that Transport for London is (a) transparent and (b) accountable in its (i) operating relationship and (ii) financial support for Uber Thames Clippers in the award of (A) operating contracts, (B) funding, and (C) the decision not to impose equivalent central London pier landing fees on those clippers.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London, including passenger boat services on the River Thames, is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Sarah Champion:**[\[91974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113113, whether a parent visiting under-age children overseas is a legally permitted reason for overseas travel under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020.

Robert Courts:

You can travel internationally if travelling for a reason which would permit you to leave your home under the national lockdown rules.

Exception 9 under the new national restrictions, as defined in the regulations: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1200/part/2/made> outlines the legally permitted reasons for an individual to be exempt from the new national restrictions with regards to children.

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

■ Travel: Unemployment**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[113675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps he has taken to prevent job losses in the travel industry.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport is actively monitoring the impact on jobs in the aviation sector from Covid-19 at the national and regional level, with support from other government Departments.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been available to businesses affected by COVID-19 to pay wages. On 5 November the Chancellor announced that workers across the United Kingdom will benefit from increased support with a five-month

extension of the furlough scheme into Spring 2021. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) will now run until the end of March with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked.

■ **Uber Boat: Passengers**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[113505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will ask Transport for London to publish information on how many (a) river commuter passengers were carried by Uber Thames Clippers in 2019 and (b) tourist passengers were carried in 2019.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London, including passenger boat services on the River Thames, is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London.

TREASURY

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Drew Hendry:

[\[91986\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 October 2020 to Question 102112, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of monies voluntarily returned as part of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme since 13 October 2020.

Jesse Norman:

As of 3 November 2020, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) grants to the value of £382m have been recorded as returned. This figure consists of £198m in payments being repaid and £184m in adjustments to existing claims.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Matt Western:

[\[114995\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT for charging electric vehicles on street to the rate for charging electric vehicles at home.

Jesse Norman:

Electricity supplied to homes for all purposes benefits from a reduced rate of 5 per cent of VAT. While all taxes are kept under review, there are no plans to reduce the rate of VAT for charging of electric vehicles when away from home.

■ **Gift Aid**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[113563\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will temporarily increase the rate of Gift Aid from 20 per cent to 25 per cent for two years, similar to the Gift Aid Transitional Relief Scheme of 2008.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is fully committed to supporting charities through the Gift Aid regime. This relief is tied to the basic rate of tax paid by donors, currently at 20%, so can only be changed if the personal basic tax rate changes.

The Government recognises that the sector is experiencing significant pressures and has made available an unprecedented package of economic support, including a £750 million package specifically for charities.

■ Redundancy: Coronavirus**Lucy Powell:**[\[114897\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of employees that would have been eligible for the coronavirus job retention scheme that have been made redundant as a result of their employer being unable to meet the cost of Class 1 National Insurance contributions for those employees, since the removal of the grant to cover that cost on 1 August 2020.

Jesse Norman:

Of the employees who left the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) furlough scheme between April and July, 90% were still on their original payroll in August, suggesting they remained working for their original employer.

HMRC do not collect information on the reasons why employers choose to make employees redundant, and so it is not possible to estimate how many employees have been made redundant as a result of their employer being unable to meet the cost of Class 1 National Insurance contributions for those employees. For the average claim, employer National Insurance and pension contributions account for 5% of total employment costs.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Mortgages**Ian Mearns:**[\[91961\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department have provided any guidance to mortgage lenders on the potential merits of including SEISS payments as income for the purposes of assessing affordability of a mortgage applicant.

John Glen:

HM Treasury is in regular conversations with mortgage lenders about market conditions. However, the decision of a lender to offer products to customers is a commercial one, in which the government does not seek to interfere.

In 2014 the FCA introduced regulations under the Mortgage Market Review which required lenders to conduct a rigorous affordability assessment for new borrowers, obtaining evidence of income and expenditure. Lenders have significant flexibility in determining how to assess the affordability and circumstances of individual customers.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Up-rating

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on maintaining the triple lock on the state pension.

Steve Barclay:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has regular discussions with the Secretary of State on a range of issues. In response to the unprecedented economic circumstances arising from the Covid 19 pandemic, the Government has taken action by introducing a Bill in Parliament to ensure we can increase State Pension and Pension Credit rates next year. Without this legislation, it would not have been possible to increase the State Pension in 2021/22.

As with all aspects of Government policy, any decisions on future changes to the Triple Lock will be taken as part of the annual Budget process in the context of the wider public finances.

WALES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Fay Jones:

[\[115026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps his Department is taking to help establish a Global Centre of Rail Excellence in Wales.

Simon Hart:

My Department is working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Transport to consider proposals for the development of a Global Centre of Rail Excellence and I have discussed the proposition with the Minister for Economy and Transport in the Welsh Government.

Stephen Crabb:

[\[908740\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the prospects for the Welsh economy.

David T C Davies:

In line with many other economies around the world, the coronavirus is having a negative impact on the Welsh economy. However, the UK Government is committed to creating opportunities for investment and growth to ensure our recovery is as swift as possible. Our City and Growth deals, with around £800 million worth of investment, as well as our Freeports initiative will help ensure we emerge from this pandemic with a strong and vibrant economy.

Michael Fabricant:

[\[908744\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on (a) tourism and (b) other inward investment from England after the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

David T C Davies:

The hon Member will be aware that these areas are devolved and we believe in respecting the devolution settlement.

I can reassure him that the Secretary of State for Wales and myself remain unceasing in our enthusiasm for promoting the wonderful array of attractions in Wales and the opportunities available for investors at home and abroad.

David Simmonds:[\[908746\]](#)

What discussions he has had with stakeholders in Wales on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Simon Hart:

In the past week alone, I have discussed the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with all 22 local authorities in Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Ministers.

These discussions have focused on how we can use this fund to deliver sustainable jobs and growth in Wales.

Matt Western:[\[908747\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on support for Welsh businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

I have regular discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on support for Welsh businesses. Wales is benefitting directly from UK Government support to enable businesses and employees to get through Covid. This support already amounts to over two billion pounds for businesses across Wales.

Dr Luke Evans:[\[908748\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that the A5 is included in Government plans to improve transport connectivity between Wales and England.

David T C Davies:

Sir Peter Hendy has been asked by the Government to consider how best to improve connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom, as part of the Union Connectivity Review. I recently met with him, urging him to include cross-border roads like the A5 in his considerations.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Disability: Railways

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[115006\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question 106463 on Disability: Railways, what the outcome was of the recent discussions between her Department and the Department for Transport on accessibility.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government wants to ensure step free access for as many passengers as possible. We are committed to bringing forward vital sector-wide reforms, including to deliver improved accessibility, and commissioned Keith Williams to carry out the first root and branch review of the rail industry in a generation.

The Review was in its final stages at the outbreak of COVID-19. The Government views the purpose of the reforms as important as ever, but further work needs to be done now to reflect the impact of COVID-19 on the sector and we continue to examine a range of options to reform the railways.

We will publish a White Paper with details on our plans for rail reform in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Biocidal Products: Regulation

Jim Shannon:

[\[114178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Health and Safety Executive will remain the competent authority for inspection and enforcement of biocide regulations after the transition period.

Mims Davies:

The competent authority role in relation to biocides approvals and authorisations formally rests with the Secretary of State and Ministers in the Devolved Administrations where appropriate. These functions are delegated by agreement to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and these arrangements will continue to apply for Great Britain after the transition period.

HSE Northern Ireland (HSENI) will be the competent authority for Northern Ireland. HSE's and HSENI's role in inspection and enforcement will remain unchanged.

■ Holiday Leave: Coronavirus

Paula Barker:

[\[113684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the compliance of the Health and Safety Executive's rules on annual leave carry-over with the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The Working Time Regulations 1998 (WTR) prevents the carryover of untaken annual leave from one leave year to the next. The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) policy does not. Specifically, HSE's policy:

- Makes provision for an automatic carry-over of 10 days annual leave from one leave year into the next.
- Allows flexibilities to carry over more than the maximum 10 days in some circumstances, with senior manager agreement.

As a result, HSE has not needed to change its policy in response to the exception to the WTR which was introduced in March 2020, which allows allow carry-over of leave in response to the impacts of coronavirus.

Pension Wise**Christian Wakeford:**[\[113689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what take-up targets she has set for Pension Wise guidance usage when non-advised savers access defined contribution pension benefits in relation to sections 18 and 19 of the Financial Guidance and Claims Act 2018.

Guy Opperman:

We will continue to monitor the use of advice and guidance when accessing pension savings.

We want to increase awareness of Pension Wise guidance, by presenting taking guidance as a natural part of the customer journey, and making it easier to book an appointment - following sections 18 and 19 of the Financial Guidance and Claims Act. Based on the results of the Stronger Nudge trials, we expect this would lead to an increase in the take up of Pension Wise guidance.

Pensions: Advisory Services**Christian Wakeford:**[\[113690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to commence the impartial pensions guidance rules provided for in sections 18 and 19 of the Financial Guidance and Claims Act 2018.

Guy Opperman:

We intend to commence the guidance rules soon.

Personal Independence Payment: Coventry North East**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[91980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of former claimants of disability living allowance who have been unsuccessful in their claim for personal independence payment have been waiting over (a) six months and (b) one year for their appeal to be heard in Coventry North East constituency.

Justin Tomlinson:

Information on the waiting time to a first tribunal hearing is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Justice publish statistics on the mean age of a case at disposal by tribunal venue. This is the average number of weeks from receipt in Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to the final outcome within the period for all Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appeals. It will include cases cleared at hearing and cases cleared without a hearing which include strike outs, superseded and withdrawals prior to a hearing. An appeal may not necessarily be cleared at its first hearing.

These statistics are available in the Tribunal Statistics CSV files, Tribunal Statistics Quarterly, January to March 2020 publication, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2020>

■ State Retirement Pensions**Charlotte Nichols:****[113665]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to increase the amount added to state pensions when a claimant turns 80 years of age from £0.25, in line with inflation back dated to 1971.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to increase the age addition amount. There is a range of other measures and benefits that are available to pensioners over age 80. These include Pension Credit which can top up a pensioner's income to a minimum of £173.75 a week for single pensioners and £265.20 for couples and provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with rent, council tax reduction schemes, heating costs and, for those aged 75 or over, a free television licence. Households with people aged 80 and over also receive a Winter Fuel Payment of £300 instead of the standard £200 for households with pensioners below that age. Additionally, since April 2010, the full yearly amount of the basic State Pension has risen by around £1900 in cash terms.

■ Unemployment: Wakefield**Imran Ahmad Khan:****[113685]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the rate of unemployment was in the Wakefield constituency (a) on 12 December 2019, (b) in March 2020 and (c) on 10 November 2020.

Mims Davies:

All estimates of unemployment are publicly available on the NOMIS website (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>).

All estimates of Alternative Claimant Count are publicly available on the StatXplore website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/alternative-claimant-count-statistics-january-2013-to-may-2020>)

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma): **[[HCWS586](#)]**

The Prime Minister has today set out a Ten Point Plan to drive a Green Industrial Revolution in the UK - an innovative and ambitious programme of job creation that will support levelling up, and up to 250,000 jobs across the UK.

As we rebuild, we must build back better, greener, and faster. Our Ten Point Plan sets out ambitious policies and significant new public investment to allow the UK to forge ahead with eradicating its contribution to climate change by 2050. It presents a vision for the UK that is greener, more prosperous and at the forefront of industries for the future. Covering clean energy, buildings, transport, nature and innovative technologies, the plan will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to create and support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs in the UK, and unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

In doing so, we will position the UK to take advantage of export opportunities in new, global emerging markets in low carbon technologies and services, providing jobs and reinvigorating our industrial heartlands, including in the North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, the Midlands, Scotland and Wales.

The plan builds on the UK's strengths and covers the following 10 areas:

1. Offshore wind : Generating more power with offshore wind by 2030 than households in the UK are currently using, quadrupling how much we produce to 40GW by 2030, supporting up to 60,000 jobs. We have also committed to invest £160 million into modern, integrated portside offshore wind infrastructure, providing high quality employment in coastal regions.
2. Hydrogen : Working with industry, aiming to generate 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030 for industry, transport, power and homes. This will be supported by investment of up to £500 million for low carbon hydrogen production across the decade, with £240 million committed to 2024/5. We will also support trialling homes using hydrogen for heating and cooking, starting with a Hydrogen Neighbourhood in 2023, moving to a Hydrogen Village by 2025, with an aim for a Hydrogen Town – equivalent to tens of thousands of homes – before the end of the decade.
3. Nuclear: Advancing nuclear as a clean energy source through large scale nuclear and developing the next generation of small and advanced reactors. We have committed £525 million to help develop large and smaller-scale nuclear plants, and research and develop new advanced modular reactors, all of which could support 10,000 jobs.

4. Electric vehicles : Backing our world-leading car manufacturing bases including in the West Midlands, the North East and Wales to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles, and transforming our national infrastructure to better support electric vehicles. Following extensive consultation with car manufacturers and sellers, the Government confirms that the UK will end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, ten years earlier than planned. However, we will allow the sale of hybrid cars that can drive a significant distance without emitting carbon until 2035. To support this acceleration, the Government has announced: £1.3 billion to accelerate the rollout of chargepoints for electric vehicles in homes, streets and on motorways across England; £582 million in grants for those buying zero or ultra-low emission vehicles to make them cheaper to buy and incentivise more people to make the transition; and nearly £500 million to be spent in the next four years for the development and mass-scale production of electric vehicle batteries, as part of our commitment to provide up to £1 billion, boosting international investment into our strong manufacturing bases including in the Midlands and North East.
5. Public transport, cycling and walking : Making cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel and investing in zero-emission public transport of the future. We will start this transformation with £250m for local measures to increase cycling and walking this year, as part of our commitment to invest £2bn in cycling and walking over this Parliament.
6. Jet Zero and greener maritime : Supporting difficult-to-decarbonise industries to become greener through research projects for zero-emission planes and ships. We will run a £15m competition to support the production of Sustainable Aviation Fuels in the UK and invest £20m into the Clean Maritime Demonstration Programme to test new fuels in shipping.
7. Homes and public buildings : Making £1 billion available next year to make new and existing homes and public buildings more efficient, supporting 50,000 jobs by 2030, alongside a target to install 600,000 heat pumps every year by 2028.
8. Carbon capture : Becoming a world-leader in technology to capture and store harmful emissions away from the atmosphere, with a target to remove 10MT of carbon dioxide a year by 2030, equivalent to all emissions of the industrial Humber today. We have announced an extra £200 million of new funding to create two carbon capture clusters by the mid-2020s, with another two set to be created by 2030. The total investment of up to £1 billion will help to support 50,000 jobs, potentially in areas such as the Humber, North East, North West, Scotland and Wales.
9. Nature : Protecting and restoring our natural environment, planting 30,000 hectares of trees every year by 2025, whilst creating and retaining thousands of jobs. This will include starting the process to designate more National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, create more green jobs with £40 million for a second round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and £5.2 billion for a six year programme of flood and coastal defences.

10. Innovation and finance : Developing the cutting-edge technologies needed to reach these new energy ambitions and make the City of London the global centre of green finance. To accelerate the commercialisation of innovative low-carbon technologies, systems and processes we will launch the £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio. The portfolio will focus on ten priority areas that correspond with the Ten Point Plan.

This Ten Point Plan ensures that our recovery from COVID-19 will generate jobs and bolster the economy, whilst continuing to drive down emissions. It sends a clear signal to industries across the British economy to invest in the UK's cleaner, greener future.

The Plan marks the beginning of the UK's path to net zero, and we will continue to build on it. Over the next year we will continue to bring forward ambitious proposals across the economy to cut emissions and secure long-term growth for the whole country, with the Energy White Paper, and a Net Zero Strategy, in the run up to the international COP26 climate summit in Glasgow next year. The summit will bring together world leaders, climate experts, business leaders and citizens to agree ambitious action to tackle climate change.

Ahead of the summit, this Ten Point Plan demonstrates the UK's significant and continuing commitment to tackling greenhouse gas emissions and sets the foundation to drive a Green Industrial Revolution in the UK.

JUSTICE

■ Government response to 2020 consultation on improving The Victims' Code and The Revised Code Of Practice For Victims Of Crime (Victims' Code)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Alex Chalk):

[\[HCWS585\]](#)

This Government is committed to strengthening victims' rights and ensuring that comprehensive support is available at the right time. One of my key priorities is that victims clearly understand and receive the rights provided by the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code). This has never been more important than it is now, when we are facing the huge challenges that Coronavirus has brought. The criminal justice system and the sector have been tested, but we have continued to respond robustly to the needs of victims.

In fulfilling a commitment made in the cross-government Victims' Strategy, I am today laying a revised Victims' Code, as well as publishing the government response to the consultation: 'Improving the Victims' Code' which closed on 28 May 2020. To ensure that there is enough time for criminal justice agencies to implement the new Code, I will tomorrow be laying a Statutory Instrument that will bring it into force on **1 April 2021**.

We received over 500 responses to our two consultations on the Code, which we have carefully considered. I would therefore like to place on record my sincere gratitude to those who took the time to respond and for providing their personal experience,

knowledge and candour about what works well and what doesn't. These views have informed the key changes we have made to the Code.

For the first time, the Code has been structured so that victims are its primary audience. With its focus on twelve clearly defined overarching rights, we aim to ensure that victims will both understand and be aware of the level of service they can expect to receive from criminal justice agencies. Simplifying the Code is a vital step in our efforts to rebuild victims' confidence and trust in the criminal justice system and their engagement with it, knowing that they will receive the right support at the right time.

We know that victims find having to engage with different contacts frustrating, potentially exacerbating the trauma they may be experiencing. We have made the frequency and method of communication a more victim led process and have amended the Code to make it clear to service providers that they must try to minimise the number of different people victims have contact with. Where possible, they should offer a single point of contact for information.

We have also included information about the ability to access support; without the need to report incidents to the police; at any time during the investigation and prosecution; if the case is stopped or at the end of the case. While the Code retains existing eligibility categories for access to enhanced support and information, we have made clearer that service providers have the discretion to offer these enhanced rights to victims who fall outside the scope of the existing categories.

We have introduced an 'opt-out' framework for the Victim Contact Scheme, for victims of a sexual or violent offence, where the offender is sentenced to a term of imprisonment for twelve months or more. All eligible victims will now be automatically referred to scheme which gives vital updates on offenders as they serve their sentence, including their potential release from prison. We have also listened closely to victims of unrestricted mentally disordered offenders, who told us of their difficulties in trying to get information about an offender's management and potential release from hospital. To help alleviate their trauma, they will receive a new right to be assigned a Victim Liaison Officer, rather than having to contact hospitals directly. This means these victims will be treated, in the same way that victims of restricted offenders are, ensuring consistency in the level of information and the way it is provided to them.

For the first time, we have also specifically referenced the support available to victims of Foreign National Offenders and included information on the role of Coroners, as well as for families bereaved by murder or manslaughter abroad.

Recognising that for many victims the impact of the crime may not be immediately apparent, we have redrafted the Code to provide agencies with more discretion on when a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) is offered, and revised information so that victims better understand the process and are fully aware of the wider implications of making a VPS. Victims will also be able to request a copy of their VPS for them to refer to in future.

By the time the new Code comes into force next Spring, we will have embedded the necessary operational adjustments with criminal justice agencies, supported with victim focussed practitioner guidance, to provide clarity on roles and accountabilities. We will

continue to work closely with Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Criminal Justice Partnerships to improve compliance with the Code and also produce a child friendly version of the Code to help children better understand their rights and the support available to them.

As Victims Minister, I believe that the revised Victims' Code both demonstrates our continued commitment to supporting victims of crime at a time when they may need it most as well as give them a louder, clearer voice in the criminal justice system process. The Code will also form the basis of our forthcoming consultation on a Victims' Law.