



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:30 P.M., 20 November 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Offences against Children: Philippines

Sarah Champion: [\[114901\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps her Department is taking to secure victim impact statements for children in the Philippines who have suffered online sexual exploitation by UK-based offenders; and whether such statements been used in the (a) prosecution and (b) sentencing of UK-based offenders.

Michael Ellis:

The CPS works closely with the relevant investigatory agencies to secure evidence, which may include victim statements, if the victims are known or identifiable.

The CPS does not centrally record or hold the data on whether victim impact statements from children in the Philippines who have suffered online sexual exploitation by UK-based offenders have been used in the (a) prosecution and (b) sentencing of UK-based offenders. The information could only be obtained by completing manual case file reviews, which would be at a disproportionate cost.

■ Offences Against Children: Sentencing

Sarah Champion: [\[114900\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times the Unduly Lenient Sentencing scheme has been used as regards people convicted of offences related to the online sexual exploitation of children in each of the last five years; and on how many occasions that scheme has led to a longer sentence being imposed.

Michael Ellis:

Online child sexual exploitation may involve the commission of different criminal offences: it is not reflected in a single offence or set of offences but instead is reflected in the facts of an offence. The facts of the offences of those cases referred by the Law Officers to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme suggest that in 2015, 6 cases were referred in which 5 sentences were increased; in 2016, 9 referred and 7 increased; in 2017, 15 referred and 11 increased; in 2018, 4 referred but none increased; in 2019, 3 referred and 1 increased.

■ Sentencing

Sarah Champion: [\[114899\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many times the Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme has been used in each of the last five years.

Michael Ellis:

The Law Officers referred a sentence imposed on an offender to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme on 136 occasions in 2015, 190 in 2016, 173 in 2017, 140 in 2018 and 93 in 2019.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Stephen Morgan:**[\[115011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the new customs regulations with Belgium after the end of the transition period on vaccine imports from Pfizer after that company's relocation of its cold storage facility from Havant to Belgium.

Amanda Solloway:

For security reasons, the Government cannot divulge how the vaccine will travel across borders. A number of scenarios have been investigated and we have put in place robust contingency plans to ensure that vaccine freight will continue unimpeded.

Stephen Morgan:[\[115015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the outcome of the US presidential election on the commitments to the Paris Climate Accord of 2015.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

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

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

Stephen Morgan:[\[115016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of China's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

China's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 is welcome and significant as part of wider global efforts to limit climate change. We look forward to hearing more details on how the target will be translated into a long-term strategy and implemented in the short-term through China's 14th Five Year Plan and NDC. We will continue to work with China on areas of mutual interest as we approach COP26 and CBD COP15, the UN biodiversity conference, which China is hosting next year.

■ Aerospace Industry: Employment

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[114799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on the level of jobs in the aerospace sector of establishing a long-term supply chain investment fund to recapitalise suppliers that are unable to take on new debt.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is providing various support measures to safeguard jobs in the aerospace sector from the impact of Covid-19, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme. The British Business Bank has also created an online Finance Hub, which details sources of business finance that may be available, as well as useful guidance.

The aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being assisted with around £9 billion of funding made available through loans, research and development grants, loan guarantees, and support for exporters. The Government continues to support the long-term competitiveness of the UK's aerospace supply chain through the Aerospace Growth Partnership.

The Government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, and business representative organisations to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the aerospace sector.

■ Bereavement Leave

Sir George Howarth:

[\[114781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has discussed the implications of a statutory right to bereavement leave with (a) other Departments and (b) external organisations.

Paul Scully:

Officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) recently met with representatives from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD); Cruse Bereavement Care; Jack's Rainbow; Affinity Coaching Supervision; Bereavement UK; and the Advisory Conciliation Service (Acas) to discuss CIPD guidance for employers and the scope for introducing a new entitlement to Bereavement Leave and Pay for employee's who lose a close family member.

A follow up meeting with CIPD and officials from BEIS last week. This meeting was also attended by an official from the Department for Health and Social Care.

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

Selaine Saxby:

[\[114347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has held with the Department for Transport on the

deployment of the Government's proposed funding for the purchase of 4,000 zero-emissions buses.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The funding for 4000 zero emission buses formed part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's commitment to £5 billion of new funding announced in February to overhaul bus and cycle links for every region outside London.

The Government recognises the importance of bringing together co-ordinated policy action across all departments, to achieve net zero. Two cabinet committees have been established, chaired by the Prime Minister and my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. These Committees are driving forward the net zero transition and co-ordinating action across Government. At official level, there are also regular discussions between departments on issues relating to transport decarbonisation, as there are for decarbonisation in other sectors of the economy.

■ **Horizon Europe: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[114876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 20 October 2020 to Question 102796 on Horizon Europe: Finance, how his Department will calculate the funding gap in the event that the UK does not participate in EU research projects after the transition period.

Amanda Solloway:

Negotiations to associate to the EU R&D programmes, Horizon Europe and Euratom R&T, are ongoing. If we do not associate to Horizon Europe, we have committed to meet any funding shortfalls and put in place alternative schemes. In that case, any assessment of the funding gap would need to take account of the outcome of discussions on the EU budget and the Horizon Europe Programme regulations, which are still being finalised.

UK funding for EU programmes, or for alternatives would also be subject to allocations at the Spending Review.

■ **Medicine: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[114875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage research and clinical trials in non-covid related medical research.

Amanda Solloway:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 27th October 2020 to Question [106333](#).

■ New Businesses: Ethnic Groups

Chi Onwurah:

[\[114880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the British Business Bank report on entrepreneurship and diversity in the UK; and if he will publish the recommendations of that report.

Paul Scully:

We are grateful to the British Business Bank for launching the 'Alone together: Entrepreneurship and diversity in the UK' report. The report is published in full and we are working with the British Business Bank to understand how to better address the challenges faced by BAME and women-led businesses. Government always welcomes input to ensure our support benefits these communities.

A diverse and inclusive finance ecosystem is good for entrepreneurs, companies, investors, and the society as a whole. Therefore, all of the Government's business support schemes are open to eligible businesses from all regions and backgrounds, including BAME and female entrepreneurs. The Government will continue to monitor the implementation and take up of the schemes, working with investors, lenders, representative groups across the industry and the British Business Bank.

We are working with the private sector to deliver the eight initiatives of the Rose Review. Great progress has been made over the past year with NatWest and Be the Business jointly launching the Rose Review Female Entrepreneurs Mentoring Programme soon on 27 October.

More widely, the Government has set an ambition of 20,000 start-up loans being issued to Black and Minority Ethnic applicants by the end of this parliament. Of all the start-up loans issued up to September 2020, 16,159 loans (21% of lending) was issued to entrepreneurs from a BAME background and around 30,000 loans, worth over £239m, were issued to female entrepreneurs.

The Department's Ministerial team is also actively engaging with entrepreneurs from the BAME business community to better understand their concerns, including access to finance, and has undertaken 10 engagements since March 2020.

■ Occupational Health

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[114218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance his Department has published for employers helping to meet the support needs of bereaved employees.

Paul Scully:

The Government has published several sets of guidance to help employers support the need of bereaved employees.

In 2014, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills commissioned the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) to publish guidance on how to

manage bereavement in the workplace. The guidance was first published in 2014 and last updated in May 2018 (<https://archive.acas.org.uk/media/4114/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace---a-good-practice-guide/pdf/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace-a-good-practice-guide.pdf>).

Earlier this year, the Department introduced this year a new entitlement to Bereavement Leave and Pay for employees who lost a child. Guidance was published on GOV.UK in April 2020 to help employers managing this new policy (<https://www.gov.uk/employers-parental-bereavement-pay-leave>).

■ Remote Working: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[114134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of IT repair shops under November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the ability of people to work from home in line with Government guidelines; if he will make the safe re-opening of those businesses a priority; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Some retail shops are required to close, but all are able to provide Click and Collect services if they operate in a COVID-secure manner. The Cabinet Office guidance states that businesses that provide services (rather than goods) are not required to close, unless listed in section 2 of the guide:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england>.

As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, the regulations will expire on 2 December and we plan to move back to a tiered approach. The safe reopening of all workplaces has been a priority since the initial phase of the pandemic.

■ Renewable Energy

Alex Sobel:

[114308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the providing renewable power to the UK through subsea cables from Saharan energy projects.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

BEIS is happy to engage with any potential renewable energy project that supports the UK's goals of decarbonising the energy system at lowest cost. In terms of financial support, the award of CfDs (Contracts for Difference) to international renewable energy projects is not being considered at this stage, though BEIS remains open to receiving views on the merits of doing so for future allocation rounds.

Alex Sobel:

[114309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using international renewable energy projects to supply power directly to the UK.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Interconnectors between the UK and our near neighbours have proven beneficial to the UK in terms of providing indirect access to renewable energy sources abroad, as well as ensuring the most efficient use of our own renewable resources, helping to facilitate the lowest cost decarbonisation of energy systems across Europe.

The UK is supportive of any energy infrastructure project that it believes will prove beneficial to UK consumers. In terms of financial support, the award of CfDs (Contracts for Difference) to international renewable energy projects is not being considered at this stage, though BEIS remains open to receiving views on the merits of doing so for future allocation rounds.

■ Research and Universities: Equality

Chi Onwurah:

[114877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 106337 on Research and Universities: Equality, what positive steps UKRI has taken to increase diversity in the peer review processes and advisory groups.

Amanda Solloway:

As a steward of the research and innovation system, UKRI's ambition is to nurture and support its communities recognising and valuing everyone in it. Evidence, diversity data and insight underpin UKRI's approach to enable a dynamic, diverse and inclusive research and innovation system in the UK that is an integral part of society, giving everyone the opportunity to participate and to benefit.

UKRI are continuously working to improve our appointments process for advisory and peer review bodies to encourage a more diverse set of applicants and proactively include statements in adverts to increase representation for those that are under-represented on our councils and advisory boards. Additionally, within peer review UKRI aim to select as broad an expertise as possible, in terms of disciplinary background, career paths, ethnicity, diversity and inclusion, as well as host organisation.

UKRI undertake Equality Impact Assessments for our funding opportunities. UKRI have reviewed and made changes to their peer review processes in recent years to safeguard the process, including principles of fair peer review (<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/UKRI-07102020-PrinciplesofAssessmentandDecisionMaking.pdf>), and providing training to reduce the likelihood of bias in decision making.

UKRI continue to explore the use of new tools to broaden the pool of potential people to act as reviewers. The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) Inclusion Matters portfolio of 11 EDI projects includes work looking at the peer review process.

■ **Small Businesses: Internet**

Sajid Javid:

[\[114136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support and information his Department has made available for small businesses which are considering establishing an online presence for the first time.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government provides a wide range of support and information for small businesses. The main source of information is the GOV.UK website, with support also available via the Business Support Helpline on FREEPHONE 0800 998 1098 and via the network of 38 local Growth Hubs in England.

In order to provide specific support for businesses considering establishing an online presence, the Government launched The Skills Toolkit on 28 April 2020. The online learning platform includes over 70 courses in digital, numeracy and employability/readiness to help people build their skills, progress in work and boost job prospects. These courses include Fundamentals of Digital Marketing, How to Create Great Online Content and Digital Skills: Social Media (for business).

Furthermore, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is supporting the Digital Boost platform, which provides much-needed digital support for small businesses and charities in the UK that have been impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. The platform is building a community of skilled digital expert volunteers, who are providing one-to-one support to small businesses and charities free of charge to help them improve their digital capability, build sustainable incomes through digital channels, reach more customers online, and stay competitive during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

The National Cyber Security Centre also published guidance on 20 May to support businesses moving from physical to digital delivery. The guidance was created specifically to support businesses who are relying more heavily on IT services to run their business. The support package includes guidance on home working, video conferencing and spotting Covid-19-related email scams.

We also provide grant funding to Be the Business, a business-led independent charity which aims to raise productivity at the firm level, through technology adoption and by promoting best practice management and leadership. Be the Business provides a tech adoption toolkit to help SMEs decide what kind of technology might benefit them, how to choose tech that best meets their needs, and how to implement it effectively into the business.

■ Summertime**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[114108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of re-introducing Double Summer Time.

Paul Scully:

The Government believes that the current daylight-saving arrangements represent the optimal use of the available daylight across the UK. There is not currently sufficient evidence to support changing the current system of clock changes, and any decision to change the current system would need to be supported by a wide-ranging cost benefit analysis.

■ Universities: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[114878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's Notice on Sustaining University Research Expertise (SURE) package, updated on 6 November 2020, what formula will be used to calculate the potential losses in international student income.

Amanda Solloway:

The updated Notice published on 6th November on the Sustaining University Research Expertise Fund (SURE) set out further details on the Fund, including the formula for calculating allocations, conditions of funding and next steps. This included confirmation that these losses from international student fees is being calculated. Calculations would be made using forecast data as at 30 October 2020, provided through the recent interim financial data collection exercise undertaken by the Office for Students, and equivalent processes in Wales and Scotland, compared against academic year (AY) 2018-19 baseline data.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Helicopters****Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[115511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the helicopter variants in use by the UK's armed forces.

Jeremy Quin:

The following helicopter variants are currently in use by the UK's Armed Forces:

Apache Mk1

Chinook Mk6a

Chinook Mk6

Chinook Mk5

Gazelle Mk1
Juno HT1
Jupiter HT1
Merlin HM2
Merlin Mk3/3a/iMk3
Merlin Mk4/4a
Puma Mk2
Wildcat AH Mk1
Wildcat HMA Mk2

The Ministry of Defence also has access to a number of helicopter types provided through contracts with industry which support discrete requirements.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[115512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress he is making on upgrading the (a) Challenger and (b) Warrior; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Challenger 2 Life Extension Project is being taken to the Ministry of Defence's Investment Approvals Committee for a main investment decision before the end of the year. The Warrior Capability Sustainment Project is currently in the Demonstration Phase. The Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) for the WCSP Manufacture Phase was released to Lockheed Martin UK (LMUK) in June 2020 with continued dialogue between the parties. LMUK's formal response to the ITN is anticipated in December 2020. It would not be appropriate to comment further on this ongoing commercial activity.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband

Chi Onwurah:

[\[114871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what data his Department holds on the number of households located in broadband not spots.

Matt Warman:

According to the Ofcom Connected Nations Summer 2020 report, using data collected in May 2020, there are 77246 residential premises in the UK which do not have access to download speeds of 2Mbit/s.

■ Culture Recovery Fund**Tracy Brabin:**[\[115752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether organisations in receipt of Government grants under the Cultural Recovery Fund grants programme are able to access the (a) provisions for re-hiring staff and (b) all other elements of the coronavirus job retention scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenge:

Organisations in receipt of Culture Recovery grant funding are still able to access other Government support schemes, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. However recipients should not claim support for the same staff costs from multiple government schemes, and should rehire staff if it is right for them.

Where organisations have questions about the interaction between the culture recovery fund and the job retention scheme, they should speak to their relevant arms length body - Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England or the British Film Institute.

Nickie Aiken:[\[115811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) equity of the distribution of the grants awarded under the Culture Recovery Fund; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenge:

The Culture Recovery Fund has so far awarded grants to over 2000 cultural organisations, both big and small, with more funding to be awarded in the coming weeks.

This is public money, so rigorous criteria have rightly been applied to ensure we are supporting organisations that have national and local importance, and those that play a key role in the levelling up agenda. Criteria included applicants being able to show that they have a sustainable, viable plan and that this funding would help them to continue trading. The Arm's Length Bodies delivering the funding (Arts Council England, British Film Institute, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England) are confident they have applied them in all decision making.

In addition, the independent Culture Recovery Board, chaired by Sir Damon Buffini, was created to increase assurance over the delivery of the Culture Recovery Fund programme, and to bring a range of external expertise across culture, heritage, creative industries and museums sectors to support decision making. The board members' role is to offer regional, sectoral and commercial expertise and to bring rigour to decision-making.

The split of organisations who have already been allocated funding demonstrates a balanced picture across regions. The last round of funding was announced on 7 November and allocated over £33 million to 170 arts and heritage organisations, of which 70% was allocated outside London.

■ Sports: Children

Kevin Brennan:

[115498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps he has taken to improve the safeguarding of children and young people participating in sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are completely committed to doing all we can to ensure children and young people can participate in sport in safe and secure environments. DCMS works closely with Sport England and the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit to review and strengthen safeguarding provision wherever necessary.

All organisations in receipt of public funding from Sport England and UK Sport have been required to meet the standards set out in the Code for Sports Governance since April 2017. The Code contains specific obligations around safeguarding, including a requirement for national governing bodies to adhere to the Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport, which are issued by the Child Protection in Sport Unit. We have also taken steps to promote best practice in non-funded sports. The Safeguarding Code in Martial Arts was launched in March 2018 which sets consistent standards and provides parents with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about where to send their children for instruction.

We welcome the Ministry of Justice's commitment to change the law around 'positions of trust' in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. We will continue working closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that sports coaches are included as part of these legislative changes.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Tim Loughton:

[R] [114752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many adoptions have (a) been completed and (b) broken down in each year since 2010.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not hold information on the number of all children in England who are adopted.

The latest figures on the number of children in England who have been adopted from care are published in table H1 of the statistical release, entitled 'National tables: Children Looked after in England including adoptions 2018-19', which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>. Figures for the reporting year ending 31 March 2020 will be published later this year.

The department does not collect information on adoptions that were disrupted. National figures on numbers of children who started to be looked after, and who had

a previous permanence arrangement, including adoption orders, are available in table C1 of the above release. However, these figures were collected for the first time in 2014 and should be treated with caution. The information is based on self-declaration and, for several children, the previous permanence arrangement is not known.

Tim Loughton:

[R] [[114753](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the barriers to increasing the number of adoptions.

Vicky Ford:

The department assess and address barriers to increasing adoption numbers on a regular basis. One barrier has been in recruiting the right adopters for the children waiting. To address this, the government is investing £1 million in adopter recruitment during the 2020-21 financial year, with a focus on generating an increase in people of all backgrounds coming forward to adopt children who wait the longest. This includes funding the cross-sector national recruitment campaign, #YouCanAdopt. Launched in September 2020, a key aspect of this campaign is its inclusivity. It aims to break down perceived barriers to adoption, encouraging more adopters of diverse backgrounds to step forward.

The COVID-19 outbreak has introduced new challenges for adoption. Early in the outbreak, we introduced regulatory flexibilities to ensure adoption processes could continue despite the lockdown restrictions and some of these changes remain in place. For example, this includes the flexibility relating to health assessments for prospective adopters. This allows agencies to proceed to stage 2 of the assessment process without a health check, as long as those checks are completed before the end of that stage. Where new challenges have arisen with the announcement of a second lockdown, further regulatory changes have been introduced. This includes exemptions to allow adoption introductions to continue during the new lockdown, alleviating delays for children moving to their new loving homes.

The COVID-19 outbreak has also introduced barriers in progressing adoption cases through the courts. However, adoption is included in the list of priorities for the courts, which have been encouraged to make use of hybrid courts (a combination of virtual and physical hearings) to progress cases where possible. The department continues to work closely with the Ministry of Justice, the judiciary, The Association of Directors for Children's Services and Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service on these issues.

We know that some prospective adopters have concerns about what support will be available to them. The core Adoption Support Fund (ASF) has provided £177 million since 2015 to help pay for essential therapeutic services for over 62,000 adoptive and eligible special guardianship families. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Permanence published a report in July 2019, and our own independent evaluations of the Fund have concluded that the ASF was having a positive transformative effect on the lives of children and families.

■ Apprentices: Coventry North East

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[91983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the number of people undertaking paid apprenticeships in Coventry North East constituency as at 13 November 2020.

Gillian Keegan:

The department holds and publishes a range of data relating to apprenticeships, using the information collected through the Individualised Learner Record. For example, information on the number of learners starting apprenticeships by geographical area, including by parliamentary constituency, is published on GOV.UK. The table below provides apprenticeship starts for the Coventry North East Constituency in the 2018/19 academic year and in the first three quarters of the 2019/20 academic year, reported to date:

	2018/19	2019/20 (AUGUST TO APRIL, REPORTED TO DATE)
Apprenticeship Starts	1,010	680

Figures for the full, final 2019/20 academic year are due to be published in our next 'Apprenticeships and traineeships' statistics publication, on 26 November 2020 at 09:30.

Notes:

- 1) Volumes are rounded to the nearest ten.
- 2) The data source is the Individualised Learner Record and includes full, final year data for 2018/19 and reported to date figures for the first three quarters of the 2019/20 academic year.
- 3) In this table, numbers are a count of the number of starts. Learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once.
- 4) Figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 are based on the geographic boundaries as of April 2019.
- 5) Geographical breakdowns are based upon the home postcode of the learner.

This data is published here:

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

Which can be accessed in the FE data library on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>.

All learners starting apprenticeships are paid at least the minimum wage. Additional information on the rules and regulations of employing apprentices is available on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice>.

■ Apprentices: Recruitment

Robert Halfon: [\[114144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's guidance, Incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice, updated on 28 September 2020, what comparative assessment he has made of the effect of the incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice on the (a) number of apprentices hired and (b) timing of hiring decisions.

Robert Halfon: [\[114145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to assess the efficacy of the incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice against a baseline hiring rate.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow. To help employers offer new apprenticeships, they are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25 before 31 January 2021, in recognition of the particular impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on the employment prospects of this group, and £1,500 for new apprentices aged 25 and over. This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment we already provide for new 16-18-year-old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Employers have been able to register to claim the incentive since 1 September. We are monitoring the take-up of the new payments and will assess their impact on apprenticeship starts, including how employers have used the incentive payments to support job creation through apprenticeships.

As part of the in-year apprenticeship statistics release due to be published on 26 November, we will publish data on the number of apprentices for whom employers have submitted claims for incentive payments.

■ Care Leavers

Jon Trickett: [\[91946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide continued support to children leaving care upon turning 18 years of age.

Vicky Ford:

I am committed to doing all I can to support our young people leaving care and ensure that turning 18 years old isn't the 'cliff edge' it can be seen as.

Since 2014, local authorities have been under a duty to provide financial support to enable young people in foster care to remain living with their former foster family to age 21 in a Staying Put arrangement. The department is providing funding of over £33 million in the 2020/21 financial year to support implementation, an increase of approximately £10 million (40%) on the 2019/20 financial year.

Since 2018, we have funded 8 Staying Close pilots (£5.8 million over two years) to test an enhanced offer of support, with accommodation and well-being, for young people leaving residential care. In the 2020/21 financial year we are continuing the pilots and have announced our intention to begin national roll-out.

During National Care Leavers' Week in October 2020, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, and I contributed to sector-led events, including the 'Empathy Summit' staged by Spectra and the Care Leaver Covenant. We now have 155 organisations signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant, businesses, charities, public bodies, and 85 in the process of developing their offer of practical help. I urge others to follow suit and identify what opportunities they can offer to care leavers.

Policies across government impact on care leavers' lives, such as housing, employment and health. That is why my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has set up a cross-government ministerial care leavers board, to focus on issues facing care leavers.

In summer this year, I launched the latest intake to the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme, which this year has received over 700 applicants to work in a range of paid roles across government. We are now working, with the cross-government ministerial care leavers' board, to identify similar opportunities in other large public sector employers, such as the NHS, police and the fire service.

Since 2018/19, as part the government's rough sleeping strategy, we have provided nearly £6 million funding to 47 local authorities with the highest number of care leavers at risk of homelessness/rough sleeping. The funding allows them to employ specialist Personal Advisers to provide intensive support to small caseloads of care leavers most at risk.

During National Care Leavers Week 2020, this department and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published joint guidance to local authorities on establishing positive accommodation pathways for care leavers, including developing joint protocols between local authorities Children's and Housing Services.

■ Children: Social Mobility

Jon Trickett:

[\[91945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve social mobility for children from working class backgrounds.

Vicky Ford:

Social mobility is a top priority across the department. Every child should have the same opportunity to express their talents and make the most of their lives.

Evidence shows that what happens in children's earliest years, before they start school, can have a huge influence on later outcomes. That is why the department has committed over £60 million to programmes to improve early language and literacy. Over 1 million disadvantaged two-year olds have taken up an early education place

since the entitlement began in September 2013. Results show that the proportion of children achieving a 'good level of development' at age 5 is improving year on year. The percentage of children receiving free school meals (FSM) and achieving a good level of development was 57% in 2019, compared 36% in 2013.

A world-class education system that works for everyone is the surest way to spread opportunity across the country. That is why we are investing over £7 billion more in our schools by the 2022-23 financial year, compared to the 2019-20 financial year. This means schools around the country can continue to raise standards to give all children the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Schools continue to receive the pupil premium, worth £2.4 billion again this year, to enable them to arrange extra personalised support for disadvantaged pupils.

Our technical education reforms will also offer a real choice of high-quality training that has parity of esteem with traditional academic routes, so that all young people can follow the path that's right for them and benefit from more choice in their education journey. The new T Levels will offer young people a high-quality alternative to A Levels. We are providing extensive support for their implementation, particularly around building capacity for industry placements and capital funding for high quality facilities and equipment.

We are making progress on spreading opportunity, with disadvantaged 18-year-olds entering full time higher education at record rates. The latest data shows that there were 24,900 placed English 18-year-old applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds, constituting an entry rate of 23.1%. Both are the highest on record.

Opportunity Areas (OAs) are working to improve outcomes for children and young people in 12 areas with low social mobility. This is at the heart of our work to level up and learn what works best in areas with entrenched social mobility barriers, so that we can roll out successful approaches across the country.

We are investing £90 million in the 12 OAs to tackle barriers preventing children and young people from achieving their potential. The OAs have also benefitted from £22 million through the "Essential Life Skills" programme, focused on developing resilience, wellbeing, and employability.

■ Education: Care Leavers

Jon Trickett:

[\[91947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to provide young care leavers with educational opportunities.

Vicky Ford:

Providing care leavers with the support they need to access educational opportunities that will allow them to reach their potential is one of my main priorities. We have already:

- Launched 3 care leaver social impact bonds (£5 million over 4 years), which use 'payment by results' contracts to support care leavers into education, employment or training.
- In August 2018, introduced a £1,000 bursary for care leavers starting an apprenticeship. Local authorities are required to provide a £2,000 bursary for care leavers who go to university; and care leavers are a priority group for the 16-19 bursary (£1,200 a year) if they are studying in further education.
- In 2019, published the care leaver higher education (HE) principles guidance, which identify the areas where care leavers need extra support to access and succeed in HE, with examples of best practice from across the sector.
- In September, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, wrote to local authority virtual school heads encouraging them to arrange workshops for care leavers, using free resources designed to help young adults prepare for independent student living.
- Launched the care leaver covenant, which provides a way for organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to show their commitment to care leavers through providing concrete offers of support. There are now 155 organisations and around 60 HE institutions who have signed the care leaver covenant and published their 'offer' to care leavers.

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, my hon. Friend, the Minister of state for Universities, wrote to universities and other HE providers, to highlight the vulnerability of care leavers and estranged students, and asked them to prioritise these groups for additional support. In addition:

- Care leavers were a priority group for the 220,000 laptops that the department provided to local authorities, for disadvantaged children and young people, so they can access education and social care services remotely. This included care leavers who are studying at university.
- The government has worked closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Providers were able to use OfS Student Premium funding worth around £23 million per month for April to July this year and £256 million, for the academic year 2020/21 starting from August, towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans.

■ Further Education: Admissions

Jonathan Gullis:

[115037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of students enrolled at further education colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

Further education (FE) colleges are vital to the post-16 education sector and we are taking forward an exciting and ambitious reform programme to level up the FE sector, ensuring it becomes a powerhouse that supplies the skills employers need, and equips young people and adults with the skills they need to have productive and fulfilling careers.

Under Raising the Participation Age, all young people in England are required to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday and many will undertake that at FE colleges. Local authorities have duties to track young people in their area and support those not in education, employment or training (NEET) in finding a suitable way to participate, including through referring to FE provision.

FE colleges are key to the delivery of T Levels. T Levels represent the biggest reform of post-16 education since A levels were first introduced 70 years ago and will give 16-19 year olds a genuine, high quality alternative to the academic route.

As part of the new £2.5 million National Skills Fund to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future, we will be fully funding adults to gain their first Level 3 qualifications. We will target this Level 3 entitlement on areas with high economic value and the strongest alignment with government priorities, to ensure the best possible returns for individuals, employers and the nation. FE colleges will be key to delivery of this provision.

As part of my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's, Plan for Jobs announced in July, we are investing £101 million in a brand new offer to give 18 and 19 year old school and college leavers the opportunity to study high value Level 2 and 3 courses when there are no employment opportunities available to them.

We have reformed and improved careers advice in schools, which are now under a duty to allow providers of apprenticeships and technical education into schools to help pupils understand about the options available to them.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**Sir David Evennett:**[\[114782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the level of financial support provided to the early years sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We are continuing to fund childcare at the same level as before the COVID-19 outbreak, until the end of the calendar year, giving nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of how many children are attending. Early years settings will continue to benefit from a planned £3.6 billion funding in the 2020-21 financial year to deliver free early education and childcare places.

In addition to this, the government has provided a package of support for individuals and businesses which are directly benefitting providers of childcare. This includes

business rates relief and grants, the extended Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which will remain open until March 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.

Our survey of childcare and early years providers and COVID-19, published on 26 October, contains information on early years providers' use of the CJRS and how many childminders applied for and received government support:

- At the time of the survey (July 2020), 76% per cent of open group-based providers and 14% of open school-based providers responding reported having made use of the CJRS at any point.
- At the time of the survey, all childminders were asked whether they had applied for any financial support from the government due to loss of income, for example via the SEISS or the Small Business Grant Scheme. The majority of all childminders (86%) reported having applied for financial support from the government. Of these, 80% have received support and 6% had applied for but not (yet) received support.

Further information on the survey is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-covid-19-coronavirus>.

We continue to work closely with both local authorities and the early years sector organisations to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the sector. We continue to look at the costs associated with the outbreak and to secure the best and most appropriate support for the sector.

■ Residential Care Leadership Board

Tim Loughton:

[R] [114751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to replace the Residential Care Leadership Board; and for what reasons that Board was abolished.

Vicky Ford:

The Residential Care Leadership Board is no longer being convened because the board's remit of responding to recommendations made in Sir Martin Narey's 2016 Review of Residential Children's Care, has been successfully completed. The department is taking steps to ensure that we draw on sectoral expertise through a range of different forums to address current issues affecting the sector, not least in our response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government has committed to undertaking a bold, broad and independently led care review. This will launch as soon as possible and will support improvements in the children's social care system.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:****[114800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 107614, if he will allocate additional funding that is ring-fenced for primary and secondary schools to spend on counselling and therapeutic services for pupils.

Vicky Ford:

We know that the COVID-19 outbreak has had impact on children and young people's wellbeing and mental health. That is why we are working on a range of support packages to ensure support is provided for all those who need it, without diverting funding from elsewhere. It is important for schools and colleges to have the freedom to decide what support to offer pupils based on their particular needs and drawing on an evidence base of effective practice.

Our £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up package, with £650 million shared across schools over the 2020-21 academic year, is supporting education settings to put the right catch-up and pastoral support in place. The Education Endowment Foundation have published a COVID-19 support guide to support schools to direct this funding, which includes further information about interventions to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/national-tutoring-programme/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/>.

Ofsted's October 2020 COVID-19 report, based on its interim visits to schools, confirmed that a number of school leaders are considering using this funding to pay for interventions such as additional pastoral staff and counselling for pupils. It can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-series-briefing-on-schools-october-2020>.

Many schools already provide access to some counselling support. The government has produced guidance on how to put in place effective school-based counselling which schools can use where they decide further counselling support is appropriate for their pupils. The guidance can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497825/Counselling_in_schools.pdf.

The guidance sets out that counselling works best within a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, which considers issues such as promoting wellbeing, raising awareness of, and reducing stigma around, mental health issues and providing an effective pastoral system.

Additionally, we have invested £8 million in the Wellbeing for Education Return project, which will ensure schools are better informed and supported. This project has trained local experts to provide schools and colleges with advice and resources on supporting children and young people's mental health. This support will remain in place until March 2021, to help schools and colleges over the winter months.

■ Union Learning Fund

Stephen Morgan:

[\[115009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of removing Government funding for the Union Learning Fund on the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

Gillian Keegan:

It is unlikely that removing our funding will have any significant effect on the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. This is because Unionlearn support is focused on supporting people at Level 2 and below where the existing Adult entitlement provides fully funded Government support for adults without English and Maths at Level 2 or Digital Skills (Level 1). Out of the 200,000 people they help each year, only about 3,000 are undertaking learning at Level 3 or above.

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee is part of the significant £2.5 billion investment in the National Skills Fund. It will offer support to all adults lacking a Level 3 qualification, it will provide digital boot camps to support employers in filling vacancies and a Lifelong Loan Entitlement, which will provide individuals with an entitlement to 4 years of loan funding to use over their lifetime.

As such the Lifelong Learning Guarantee and the National Skills Fund has the capacity to take on any individuals who might have undertaken Level 3 learning with the support of the Union Learning Fund.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Brexit

Hilary Benn:

[\[115480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of farmers switching from lamb to beef production.

Victoria Prentis:

In 2019, there were 7,085 grazing livestock farms in lowland areas in England with some amount of beef and sheep on the holding. These businesses have the ability to change the mix of these enterprises within their business.

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[114769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary State of Health on the correlation between air quality indoors and outdoors in terms of public health.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with cabinet colleagues to discuss a range of issues, including air quality. Whilst there haven't been specific discussions regarding

the correlation between air quality indoors and outdoors in terms of public health, Defra is working with Public Health England and DHSC to develop a better understanding of this complex issue. For example, Defra's Air Quality Expert Group, with support from members of the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants, managed by PHE, will be producing a dedicated report on indoor air quality. This report will focus on fine particulate matter and volatile organic compounds as the pollutants which are most prevalent in indoor environments. In addition, Defra participated in a roundtable organised by the Chief Medical Officer and Government Chief Scientific Advisor on the issue of indoor air quality earlier this year.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Luke Pollard: [\[114326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effects of UK-REACH implementation on UK businesses.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has carried out an assessment of the effects of UK REACH for businesses. We will continue to support businesses through the transition through our range of transitional measures and seek to minimise cost and burden on industry as far as possible.

Luke Pollard: [\[114327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to issue further guidance to business on the changes to chemicals regulation after 31 December 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

Updated guidance on UK REACH was published on the Health and Safety Executive's website on 26 October 2020 and will be regularly reviewed. This complements the existing guidance on biocides, classification, labelling and packaging (CLP), prior informed consent (PIC) for export and import of hazardous chemicals and plant protection products (PPP). This will provide businesses with the information they need to enact their new obligations.

■ Chemicals: UK Trade with EU

Luke Pollard: [\[114325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the UK Competent Authority will continue to have access to the EU-REACH dossiers, including data on chemical substances, after the 31 of December 2020; and what steps he has taken to ensure the availability of relevant data to support companies wishing to trade in chemicals with EU member states in the event that the transition period ends without the UK reached an agreement on future relations with the EU.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK proposed a data-sharing mechanism as part of a chemicals annex for a UK-EU Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. We believe that this would be in the interest of UK and EU businesses but to date the EU has not engaged with us on this.

If the EU is not prepared to agree this, we will ensure that the Health and Safety Executive as the UK Agency will be able to carry out its regulatory functions under UK REACH. UK companies that have already registered a chemical with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will be “grandfathered” into the UK system with no break in their legal access to the market. Those registrants would then have 120 days to provide UK authorities with some initial information. They must then fully register by supplying complete dossiers within two, four or six years from 28 October 2021.

GB-based companies that trade in the EU will need to continue to ensure that they meet EU REACH requirements from 1 January 2021. ECHA has provided guidance on this which can be found [here](#). This guidance will need to be followed by GB businesses that trade in the EU regardless of the outcome of negotiations on a Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. We remain committed to supporting businesses following the end of the transition period.

■ Denmark: Coronavirus**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[114217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of recent covid-19 travel restrictions on the movement of goods from Denmark on (a) UK food supply chains and (b) pork supplies to the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain based on strong domestic production, and supply from a diverse range of sources. The Government has well established ways of working with the food industry to support their contingency planning in circumstances with the potential to cause disruption.

The restrictions on freight movement from Denmark do not represent a risk to overall food supply. We produce 66% of our supply requirements for pork in the UK (this figure includes the pork that we export). Supply from Denmark, which makes up 31% of our pork imports, is mainly transported by unaccompanied freight and is continuing to operate as usual.

■ Food: Labelling**Chi Onwurah:**[\[114884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 July 2020 to Question 76030 on food: labelling, when the consultation on labelling will be launched.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has committed to consult on what can be done through labelling to promote high standards and high welfare across the UK market at the end of the transition period. The consultation is currently being prepared. This will feed into the Government's wide-ranging review on food labelling to ensure information supports consumers' safe, healthy and sustainable food choices and also Great British food producers.

■ **Mink: Coronavirus****Daniel Zeichner:****[114213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions the Government is having with the (a) Danish and (b) other European Governments to (a) assess the risk posed to public health by the current outbreak of covid strains in mink farms and (b) ensure a rapid UK response to those risks.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is monitoring the situation carefully and working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Public Health England.

We have been having regular interactions with the Danish technical experts to understand the situation with the mink cases and the implications of the new variant virus strains.

Our Chief Veterinary Officer and officials have regular contact with our European neighbours who farm mink for fur.

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

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

■ **Pate De Foie Gras: Imports****Sir Mike Penning:****[114089]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 109225, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ban the import and sale of foie gras made by force-feeding after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

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

■ Tobacco: UK Trade with EU**Emily Thornberry:**[\[114090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of Rules of Origin requirements on (a) the UK tobacco industry and (b) finished tobacco products imported into the UK from the EU from 1 January 2021, to support negotiations on the UK-EU Free Trade Agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

In the event of a Free Trade Agreement with the EU, as with all Free Trade Agreements and all products, the Rules of Origin for finished tobacco products would be specific to that agreement. The exact rules will be discussed and decided through the negotiations, which, in this case, are still ongoing. The UK and EU have held substantial discussions on Rules of Origin and Defra has supported these conversations.

■ Veterinary Services: Low Incomes**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[114212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to increase access to veterinary care for animal owners on low incomes in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Victoria Prentis:

While recognising the challenges that animal owners on low incomes may be facing, particularly at this unprecedented time, the Department has no plans to increase access to veterinary care for owners. However, depending on where an owner lives, charities such as the RSPCA, People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA), Blue Cross as well as other local charities, may provide support for owners who may be struggling to pay their vets bills, subject to certain criteria being met.

■ Weedkillers: Food**Tim Loughton:**[\[114756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of compost contaminated by the weed killer aminopyralid on the safety of fruit and vegetables for consumption; and whether his Department has issued guidance on the effects of that weed killer.

Victoria Prentis:

Products containing aminopyralid are used to control weeds in cereals, oilseed rape and grassland. Before these products were authorised, risks to consumers were fully assessed by the UK regulator, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). HSE concluded that there were no concerns for consumers.

Aminopyralid does not break down rapidly in compost produced from treated plants or manure from animals that have grazed treated grassland. There is thus potential

for residues to affect susceptible plants and so requirements are in place to ensure that contaminated materials do not go for use by gardeners and others. These arrangements are kept under review to ensure that they remain effective.

■ **Wildlife: Trade**

Luke Pollard:

[\[114323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ban the import and export of (a) wild animals and (b) wild animal products to help prevent a future zoonotic pandemic.

Rebecca Pow:

We are clear that poorly managed and illegal wildlife trade (IWT) poses threats to animal health and welfare, diminishes our biodiversity, undermines governance, and can result in serious public health issues. However, well managed, sustainable trade can contribute to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods, and can help meet the nutritional needs of local and rural communities in developing nations.

The UK Government is fully committed to tackling the environmental drivers of pandemics, including by reversing global biodiversity loss, tackling both unsustainable and illegal wildlife trade, and pressing for significantly higher standards in live animal markets around the world. We are actively considering the many complex issues around the global trade in wildlife, including its relationship to Covid-19 and will support swift policy interventions where these are shown to be effective in mitigating future risk of zoonotic diseases.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Sri Lanka: Keenie Meenie Services**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[114808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the role of Keenie Meenie Services in alleged historical war crimes in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

The UK takes very seriously the allegations raised in relation to the employment of Keenie Meenie Services Ltd by the Government of Sri Lanka during the conflict in Sri Lanka.

The Metropolitan Police War Crimes Team have launched an investigation into war crimes alleged to have been committed by British mercenaries in Sri Lanka during the 1980s, in accordance with the Crown Prosecution Service's published guidelines for referrals of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are assisting the police in relation to this matter, including by sharing relevant documents. We are not able to provide further comment on the details of the investigation, as it is ongoing.

The UK Government will continue to press for truth, reconciliation, accountability and justice for all victims of the Sri Lankan civil war, including those allegedly affected by Keenie Meenie Services' activities.

■ Sri Lanka: Police Scotland

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[114809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Police Scotland are providing training to Sri Lankan police forces.

Nigel Adams:

Police Scotland and the legacy Scottish Police College have a longstanding involvement in the delivery of training, mentoring and capacity-building for the Sri Lanka Police Service (SLPS). This includes a range of programmes between 2010 and 2018 focused on a variety of training and reform requirements including community policing, development of the SLPS National Police Academy and work on issues related to gender and vulnerable groups. The programme's approach has been regularly revisited and adapted depending on context and requirements.

The current programme, which began in 2019 and is due to last until 2022, focuses on activities aimed at developing community policing, the role of women in the SLPS and improving the response to sexual and gender-based violence. Due to Covid-19, many of these activities are paused with the exception of work at the local level to support victims of sexual and gender-based violence and domestic violence.

■ Sri Lanka: War Crimes

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[114810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to support the Metropolitan Police War Crimes Unit's investigation into alleged historical war crimes committed by British citizens in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are assisting the Metropolitan Police War Crime's Unit in relation to this investigation, including by sharing relevant documents. We are not able to provide further comment on the details of the investigation, as it is ongoing.

Sam Tarry: [\[92024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reasons his Department was not aware of a collection of Defence Adviser reports for Sri Lanka from the 1970s to 1980s before 2020.

Nigel Adams:

The central archive team in the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was informed of these files in 2018 as part of long-running systematic project to identify, and to transfer into the FCDO central archive for review under the Public

Records Act, historical files held in UK departments and at overseas posts. These files have been held at the British High Commission in Colombo. They are in the process of being transferred into the FCDO central archive for subsequent review under the Act.

■ USA: Criminal Proceedings

Ben Lake: [\[92000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart regarding on-going legal cases in the US where prosecutors are seeking evidence from UK citizens.

Wendy Morton:

Ministers at the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office have regular engagement with their counterparts in the US, which cover a broad range of issues, some of which may include legal matters.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Ambulance Services

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[109578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October 2020 to Question 101054, on Ambulance Services, what assessment he has made of the effect of not collecting that data centrally on (a) patient care and (b) the survival rates of people who request an ambulance.

Edward Argar:

We have made no such assessment.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[104210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been advised to self-isolate via the NHS covid-19 app in Wakefield constituency since that app was launched.

Helen Whately:

We do not hold data on how many app users have been advised to self-isolate in Wakefield constituency since the app was launched.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[104211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have entered into the NHS covid-19 app that they are suffering from covid-19 symptoms in (a) Wakefield constituency, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) England.

Helen Whately:

We currently publish data on the number of app downloads.

Work is underway to establish what additional information can be published about app usage bearing in mind that app users are anonymous. We are considering the possibility of providing data related to how many people have reported symptoms via the app.

We will not be able to provide app-related data by constituency as the app only asks users to provide the first half of their postcode.

■ **Coronavirus: Schools**

Tracy Brabin:

[\[101297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a fast track covid-19 testing system for school (a) teachers and (b) staff.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 October 2020]: We are committed to supporting schools to stay open and as part of this, teachers with symptoms are being prioritised for tests. It is important that teachers who experience potential coronavirus symptoms quickly get clarity on whether they have the virus so those without it can safely return to their classes.

The Government have developed a dedicated route to enable schools to order additional tests kits online via a replenishment portal which can be accessed here. This dedicated route is used to replenish test kits and signpost staff to the online booking portal should any additional need for testing arise.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[100887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his latest estimate is of the number of people in England immune from covid-19 by reason of antibodies; and what the planned timescale is for making a covid-19 antibody test available for use by the general public.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 October 2020]: Antibody testing is a key part of the Government's testing programme and has a critical role to play in our response to the pandemic. We do not currently know how long an antibody response to the virus lasts, nor whether having antibodies means a person cannot transmit the virus to others. Our understanding of the virus will grow as new scientific evidence and studies emerge. There is currently limited scientific evidence to link the presence of antibodies to immunity.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[104053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason local authorities are not running covid-19 testing in local communities.

Helen Whately:

Local and mobile testing is locally coordinated by Local Resilience Forums and Recovery Coordinating Groups and decisions are centrally executed at their direction. Local testing sites are run under the control of Directors of Public Health who are best placed to direct testing capacity to local groups with the greatest needs. Regional test sites are centrally controlled and coordinated. We work with local authorities wherever possible on-site selection, particularly when a site needs to be relocated. However, we are actively exploring ways of enabling increased local control. The co-design approach between local and national teams has been key in achieving the pace at which these sites have been set up.

Mr Marcus Fysh:[\[109472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using frequent rapid antigen tests to help slow the transmission of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

We believe there are many potential merits of using frequent rapid antigen tests to help slow the transmission of COVID-19. The use of multiple new testing technologies could significantly improve our detection of positive cases, so that people can isolate themselves and prevent the spread of the disease. As part of the first deployment of whole city testing, residents and workers in Liverpool will for example be tested using a combination of existing swab tests, as well as new lateral flow tests which can rapidly turn around results within an hour without the need to be processed in a lab, as well as LAMP technology due to be deployed in Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for National Health Service staff.

We have also started a number of pilots across schools, universities and workplaces to assess the use of rapid lateral flow antigen tests. This is in addition to ongoing pilots in Liverpool, Southampton and Salford using the LAMP no-swab saliva test and LAMP asymptomatic testing for NHS staff.

Liz Twist:[\[91138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Public Health England on testing (a) capacity and (b) allocations in the regions of England.

Helen Whately:

We allocate more testing to higher prevalence areas in line with the Joint Biosecurity Centre's reporting. Allocation decisions are frequently and systematically reviewed to ensure we are using our testing where it can be most effective. We are working with Public Health England to manage the prioritisation process to ensure that we are able to provide appropriate testing for both outbreak management and surveillance purposes. We have exceeded our target of reaching 500,000 testing capacity by the end of October.

■ Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis

Jim Shannon: [\[114173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been diagnosed with (a) Crohn's disease and (b) ulcerative colitis in (i) the East Midlands, (ii) the West Midlands, (iii) London, (iv) the North East, (v) the North West, (vi) the South East, (vii) the South West and (viii) Yorkshire and the Humber.

Jim Shannon: [\[114174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time taken is for a patient to be diagnosed with (a) Crohn's disease and (b) ulcerative colitis in (i) the East Midlands, (ii) the West Midlands, (iii) London, (iv) the North East, (v) the North West, (vi) the South East, (vii) the South West and (viii) Yorkshire and the Humber.

Jim Shannon: [\[114175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many inflammatory bowel disease patients have relapsed within a year of being diagnosed in (a) East Midlands, (b) West Midlands, (c) London, (d) North East, (e) North West, (f) South East, (g) South West and (h) Yorkshire and the Humber.

Jim Shannon: [\[114190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in (a) the East Midlands, (b) the West Midlands, (c) London, (d) the North East, (e) the North West, (f) the South East, (g) the South West and (h) Yorkshire and the Humber have been diagnosed with either Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis in the 12 months.

Jim Shannon: [\[114191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information (a) NHS England and (b) his Department holds on the average time for a patient with either Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis to be diagnosed in (a) the East Midlands, (b) the West Midlands, (c) London, (d) the North East, (e) the North West, (f) the South East, (g) the South West, and (h) Yorkshire and the Humber in the last 12 months.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held in the format requested.

■ Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Rachel Reeves: [\[106979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to (a) inform and (b) engage Black and ethnic minority communities to ensure that those communities can access and engage covid-19 self-isolation support where applicable.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: When an individual is required by National Health Service Test and Trace to self-isolate, financial support is available, subject to

certain eligibility criteria, through the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. This scheme is administered through local authorities, enabling tailoring of messaging and communication to best support and engage local communities. The NHS Test and Trace service also helps signpost people who need support while self-isolating to local authority helplines and to the NHS Volunteers service.

At both the testing and contact tracing stages, there are also services in place to provide real time translation in a range of languages.

■ Incontinence: Health Services

Rosie Cooper: [\[114102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timeframe is for rolling out the Excellence in Continence Care Guidelines across the Integrated Care Systems and Primary Care Networks.

Rosie Cooper: [\[114801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) stakeholders his Department consulted on and (b) what plans his Department has to publish a revised version of the Excellence in Continence Care Guidelines.

Rosie Cooper: [\[114802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of levels of adherence to the guidance entitled Excellence in Continence Care: Practical guidance for commissioners, and leaders in health and social care, published in July 2018.

Edward Argar:

Excellence in Continence Care: Practical guidance for commissioners, and leaders in health and social care is available for all Integrated Care Systems and Primary Care Networks. No recent assessment has been made of adherence to this guidance.

There has been no recent review and there are no plans at this stage to publish a revised version of the Excellence in Continence Care guideline. The current guideline has already been rolled out to Integrated Care Systems and Primary Care Networks.

The National Bladder and Bowel Project was set up to improve continence care across the whole public health and care system following feedback from the July 2018 publication.

Rosie Cooper: [\[114103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to deliver ring-fenced funding of continence services under the NHS Long Term Plan; and what the timescale is for delivery of that funding.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[114106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether continence services which have been reduced as a result of the covid-19 outbreak are planned to be reinstated.

Edward Argar:

Trusts, working with general practitioner practices, have been asked to ensure that every patient whose planned care has been disrupted by COVID-19 receives clear communication about how they will be looked after, and who to contact if their clinical circumstances change.

The focus is on accelerating the return of non-COVID-19 health services to near-normal levels, including making full use of available capacity between now and winter, whilst also preparing for winter demand pressures. This will be done alongside continued vigilance against further COVID-19 spikes locally and possibly nationally.

The National Bladder and Bowel Health Project are currently supporting a study to establish the impact of COVID-19 on continence services. There are no plans for ringfenced funding for continence services.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[114104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to incorporate the recommendations from the Excellence in Continence Care Guidelines into the work of the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[114105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project plans to use the Excellence in Continence Care Guidelines to inform the development of clinical standards and pathways.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no plans to incorporate the recommendations from the Excellence in Continence Care Guidelines into the work of the National Bladder and Bowel Health Project (NBBP). The NBBP has a specific remit to look at clinical standards for bladder, bowel, paediatrics and stoma care pathways. It is anticipated that the NBBP will enhance the guidelines themselves as part of its remit to improve continence care across the whole public health and care system.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[\[114172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual per patient cost is to the NHS of inflammatory bowel disease.

Jim Shannon:

[\[114176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the annual per patient cost to the NHS of patients with inflammatory bowel disease who have relapsed.

Jim Shannon:

[114189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the annual per patient cost to the NHS of inflammatory bowel disease.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held.

HOME OFFICE

■ Migrant Workers: Visas

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[114329]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to offer free visas extensions to NHS health care workers whose visa permits expire after 1 October 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The Government recognises the vital contribution overseas NHS, health and social care workers have and continue to make in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier in the year we offered free visa extensions for health professionals whose visas were due to expire between 31 March 2020 and 1 October 2020. Today we have announced we will extend this offer from 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2021.

More details of this announcement can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-health-workers-to-benefit-from-visa-extensions>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Local Government: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Chi Onwurah:

[114886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance his Department has given to councils on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Luke Hall:

A significant amount of support has been made available for councils to act on climate change, from heat networks to cycle paths to flood defences. The role of local authorities is both strategic and specific to projects within their area, and they are best placed to decide what measures are best aligned with local opportunities and needs. We will continue to work with councils to enable them to build back greener and better locally, through an effective planning framework and devolution. The Department for Transport and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have provided much guidance and significant funding to enable councils to deliver local action that meets the high level of local ambition. For example, the £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme was launched last month to help public

sector bodies fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures. This is part of the Chancellor's 'Plan for Jobs 2020' commitment to support the UK's economic recovery from COVID-19, supporting up to 30,000 skilled jobs in the low carbon and energy efficiency sectors.

■ **Local Government: Investment**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[114817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has for Government oversight of local authority property investments.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[114818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has for Government oversight of local authority business investment companies.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[114819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has for Government oversight of local authority property investment companies.

Luke Hall:

Local authorities borrow and invest under the Prudential Framework which is designed to ensure that their capital plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable, while giving councils the freedom to set their own capital strategies. Government is responsible for ensuring the Framework remains effective in driving sound decision making, and collects appropriate data to monitor trends and identify risks. Local authorities remain accountable to their electorate for managing their own investment strategies and meeting their Best Value duty. They must comply with the Framework's statutory guidance, including the requirement to report performance against a set of metrics designed to demonstrate the objectives of the Framework are being met, and must publish an investment strategy.

Government is aware of recent trends where some local authorities are taking on high levels of debt to invest for commercial income, and takes the view that a minority of councils are exposing taxpayers to undue financial risk. Government is also aware of the financial risks that can arise from councils' investments in companies. We have already strengthened our investment guidance to support better consideration of risks in decision making, and are now considering carefully what further interventions are needed, taking into account the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee in their report of 13 July 2020. We already have underway a review to improve our available data and ensure we fully understand sector borrowing and investment activity, including current and emerging risks. We continue to actively monitor capital trends in the sector, as part of our normal processes, and we are collecting data from authorities to understand the impact of the current crisis on commercial income.

■ Parking: Private Sector

Rosie Cooper: [\[114098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to publish the Parking Code of Practice; and on what date it will become a statutory code.

Luke Hall:

We are working to improve the regulation of the private parking industry. This year we launched public consultations on our proposals for the new Parking Code of Practice and Enforcement Framework, designed to crack down on rogue car parking firms. The consultations closed on 12 October. We are now considering the feedback and will publish our response in due course.

Rosie Cooper: [\[114099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the Parking Code of Practice on privately managed land where parking is not permitted.

Luke Hall:

The Government is developing the Code of Practice through the British Standards Institution (BSI) in close consultation with key stakeholders, including landowners, consumer organisations, and the private parking industry, who are advising on its impact. Additionally, this year we launched public consultations on our proposals for the new Parking Code of Practice and Enforcement Framework, enabling all interested parties to comment directly on the potential effect of the Code. We are now considering the feedback and will publish our response in due course.

Rosie Cooper: [\[114100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department will take to ensure the Parking Code of Practice does not lead to additional breaches by motorists at (a) ambulance parking bays, (b) blue badge spaces and (c) patient car parking.

Luke Hall:

The Government is developing the Code of Practice through the British Standards Institution (BSI) in close consultation with key stakeholders, which includes NHS England and organisations who advise on the accessibility of car parks for disabled people. Additionally, this year we launched public consultations on our proposals for the new Parking Code of Practice and Enforcement Framework. These included a proposal for a higher parking charge level for those who abuse ambulance bays or blue badge spaces.

Rosie Cooper: [\[114101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the Parking Code of

Practice on (a) hospital car parks, (b) drop off spaces, (c) short stay car parks and (d) blue badge spaces.

Luke Hall:

The government is developing the Code of Practice through the British Standards Institution (BSI) in close consultation with key stakeholders, including NHS England and organisations who advise on the accessibility of car parks for disabled people. Additionally, this year we launched public consultations on our proposals for the new Parking Code of Practice and Enforcement Framework. These included a proposal for a higher parking charge level for those who abuse blue badge spaces.

■ **Regional Planning and Development**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[114343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish the devolution White Paper; and whether it will include details on the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper will set out Government's place-based regional economic strategy. We intend to publish it and set out further details on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in due course.

■ **Towns Fund**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[114820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure Town Deal board members publish registers of their financial interests.

Luke Hall:

In our Towns Fund further guidance, we state all Town Deal Board members should sign up to a code of conduct based on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).

The Lead Council is responsible for ensuring that all respective Town Deal Board members understand these principles and how they function in practice.

We also expect all members of the Town Deal Board to complete a declaration of interests.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[114821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure financial accountability and transparency on the use of funding allocated through the Towns Fund.

Luke Hall:

Every Town Investment Plan we receive is robustly assessed against a range of criteria, with value for money a central consideration.

Funding is distributed through local authorities who are the accountable body. Funding for projects will only be released when full, green book compliant, business cases have been approved.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[114822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that funds awarded through the towns fund are deposited with the accountable local authority as the responsible body.

Luke Hall:

Each town was asked to nominate a lead local authority for the Towns Fund. All payments are made through those lead local authorities, using Section 31.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Tobacco: Import Duties

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment the Government has made of the effect on (a) the average prices, (b) consumption, and (c) tax revenues deriving from the sale of duty-paid tobacco products in the UK of the imposition of the UK global tariff on imports of finished tobacco products from 1 January 2021.

Greg Hands:

We will publish more analysis in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) alongside the legislation, as is standard practice.

However, it is difficult to predict how quickly consumer prices will be impacted, particularly as there may still be some adjustment costs associated with no longer operating under EU rules and regulations.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will publish a final estimate of UK Global Tariff (UKGT) tariff revenue at the next fiscal event.

■ Tobacco: Smuggling

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the imposition of the UK global tariff on imports of finished tobacco products from 1 January 2021 on forecast levels of smuggling of tobacco products into the UK, including counterfeit products.

Greg Hands:

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) remains committed to promoting compliance and tackling avoidance and evasion. Guidance on how manufacturers and importers of tobacco products can avoid the facilitation of smuggling is available on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-477-tobacco->

products-duty-control-of-supply-chains/excise-notice-477-tobacco-products-duty-control-of-supply-chains-1.

Additionally, to ensure compliance with new customs procedures and controls at the border after transition period ends, on 12 July 2020, the government announced an investment package of £705m.

We will publish more analysis on the UK Global Tariff in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) alongside the legislation, as is standard practice.

■ Tobacco: UK Trade with EU

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of the imposition of the UK global tariff on imports of tobacco products from the EU from 1 January 2021, where a Free Trade Agreement includes Rules of Origin requirements that require more than 10 per cent originating leaf.

Greg Hands:

The UK Government intends to achieve a Free Trade Agreement with the EU by December 2020.

The UK Global Tariff (UKGT) is tailored to the UK economy and balances the interests of UK consumers and producers. It is a lower tariff regime than the EU's Common External Tariff. In designing the UKGT, we assessed all available evidence submitted during the public consultation in depth and considered a range of factors, such as the five principles set out in the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act 2018.

More analysis will be published in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) alongside the legislation, as is standard practice.

■ Trade Advisory Groups: Trade Unions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[114052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will allow Trade Unions to be a part of the Sectorial Trade Advisory Groups; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

As part of the Department's ongoing engagement, we have established the Trade Union Advisory Group (TUAG) to provide insight into views and priorities of trades unions on important issues across various sectors. The TUAG will meet on a regular basis to inform the development of a trade policy that works for workers in every corner of the country.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Gareth Thomas:

[\[114051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish Annex 1 of the recently agreed UK-Japan trade deal.

Greg Hands:

In the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement annexes are numbered according to the chapters they reference. As Chapter 1 does not require an annex, the agreement does not include an Annex 1.

Andrew Griffith:[\[114353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to help ensure that businesses in Sussex can benefit from the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Andrew Griffith:[\[114354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that (a) farmers and (b) food producers in Sussex can benefit from the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Andrew Griffith:[\[114355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that SMEs in Sussex can benefit from the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Greg Hands:

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) impact assessment shows that all parts of the United Kingdom could benefit from the CEPA. Output in the South East could increase by 0.07%, equivalent to £177 million in 2017 terms.

CEPA could benefit farmers and food producers in Sussex through lower tariffs than would have been the case without an agreement. It also allows more UK goods to access preferential tariffs than the EU-Japan Agreement, thanks to new rules of origin. New protections for more iconic South East products such as English sparkling wine or Kentish Ale goods may also be possible.

The CEPA contains a dedicated Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) chapter to ensure that SMEs are provided with the tools and resources necessary to seize the opportunities of exporting to Japan.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) works closely with all United Kingdom business and wider stakeholders to address their interests including through our Trade Advisory Groups. DIT's International Trade Advisors are already engaging with SMEs in the South East about benefits and opportunities of this agreement.

Trade Agreements: Kenya**Gareth Thomas:**[\[114055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish an impact assessment of the UK's recently agreed trade deal with Kenya.

Greg Hands:

As continuity agreements seek to replicate the effects of the existing of EU agreements, we do not publish impact assessments alongside these agreements.

The volume of trade impacted varies between different trading partners. Our Parliamentary Reports published alongside signed agreements contain detailed information about the volume of trade, composition of imports and exports, and wider economic impact for each agreement.

We will continue to voluntarily lay these Parliamentary Reports, with Explanatory Memoranda, alongside agreements.

Gareth Thomas: [\[114056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she had with representatives of trade unions as part of her Department's recent negotiations on the UK-Kenya trade deal; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade regularly engages with representatives of trade union organisations on trade with developing countries, including Kenya, as part of the Department's wider external engagement framework.

Gareth Thomas: [\[114057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of (a) the potential for the UK-Kenya trade deal to lead to different tariff arrangements in Kenya to other nations in the East Africa Community customs union and (b) the potential effect of that deal on regional integration and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in East Africa; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Kenya agreement is an exciting first step towards a UK-East African Community (EAC) agreement. All other EAC members will benefit from our preference scheme announced 10 November 2020, providing them with duty free access. There will be no change in the access that UK exporters have to the other EAC members after 1 January.

Providing Kenya with guaranteed long-term access will help to boost the whole region. The UK-Kenya agreement is not only open to all EAC Partner States to join at any time, but will also immediately allow Kenya to include inputs from other EAC states in its exports, supporting regional integration.

■ Trade and Agriculture Commission

Emily Thornberry: [\[114094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many regional webinars the Trade and Agriculture Commission has held to date; which areas those events covered; and how many and what proportion of guests attending those events were members of staff from (a) her Department (b) other Government Departments and (c) external consultants.

Greg Hands:

As of 11th November, the Trade and Agriculture Commission has held 8 virtual regional roadshows in:

- South West of England
- East of England
- London & the South East
- Northern Ireland
- Wales
- Scotland
- The Midlands
- The North of England

Alongside invited organisations, a small number of staff attended each event to help with facilitation and provide technical support as required by the Chair.

Representatives of DIT's regional offices and DEFRA attended some roadshows. No external consultants attended any of the roadshows.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to publish (a) minutes or (b) transcripts of (i) previous and (ii) future meetings of the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Greg Hands:

Summaries of the Trade and Agriculture Commission's meetings are published on GOV.UK.

■ Trade Union Advisory Group

Gareth Thomas:

[\[114053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Trade Union Advisory Group.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[114054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with members of the Trade Union Advisory Group on the terms of reference of the Trade Union Advisory Group.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Ministers discussed the Trade Union Advisory Group's remit during the first meeting on 16th October and will continue to discuss it with members bilaterally. A summary of the meeting on 16th October will be published in due course.

■ UN Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods

Mhairi Black:

[\[114241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to ratify the Convention on the International Sale of Goods 1980.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government has no current plans to ratify the Convention.

TRANSPORT■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Angela Crawley:**[\[114945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the aerospace sector since August 2020 on aerospace and aviation restart and recovery.

Robert Courts:

The Government is working closely with the UK's aerospace industry, including at sector level through the Aerospace Growth Partnership, to help retain jobs and return the sector to growth as soon as possible.

The Global Travel Taskforce has also undertaken extensive engagement with the transport industry, international partners, the tourism sector, business leaders, and the private testing sector and invited submissions from all of these partners on its work. The Taskforce has received contributions from a wide range of partners, including the aerospace industry, and is due to report its recommendations to the Prime Minister in November.

Martyn Day:[\[114966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the cost to an individual of (a) becoming a qualified commercial pilot and (b) maintaining those qualifications to continue flying.

Robert Courts:

The current average costs of initial commercial pilot training is approximately £120,000. The minimum costs to keep this licence valid is to complete a Licence Proficiency Check (LPC) annually at about £1500-£2000 for the hire of the simulator and an examiner.

Government has committed to partnering with industry, educators and organisations to make pilot training more financially accessible for those who wish to pursue a career within the sector.

■ **Aerospace Industry: Coronavirus****Jack Dromey:**[\[114812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the aerospace sector on its restart and recovery following the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

The Government is working closely with the UK's aerospace industry, including at sector level through the Aerospace Growth Partnership, to help retain jobs and return the sector to growth as soon as possible.

The Global Travel Taskforce has also undertaken extensive engagement with the transport industry, international partners, the tourism sector, business leaders, and the private testing sector and invited submissions from all of these partners on its work. The Taskforce has received contributions from a wide range of partners, including the aerospace industry, and is due to report its recommendations to the Prime Minister in November.

■ Coronavirus: Driving Instruction

Darren Jones:

[\[115776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will review public health guidance on driving instruction to permit practical lessons to continue for key workers during covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:

To help stop the spread of coronavirus and save lives it is vital that approved driving instructors respect the national restrictions in England, reduce day-to-day contact with others, and not carry out driver training. Pupils can still have private practice using their own car providing they and the supervising driver are from the same household and it is travel for work, education or for other legally permitted exemptions.

In line with the Government's national restrictions, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has suspended practical driver testing in England until Thursday 3 December 2020. Given the short period of time the new restrictions are in place, the DVSA will not be offering a critical worker priority service, but the agency will keep this under review.

■ Driving Licences and Driving Tests

Jim Shannon:

[\[91969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of (a) the numbers of people applying for a driving licence and (b) how many people have (i) passed and (ii) failed for each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

Driver licensing and testing are devolved in Northern Ireland and are the responsibility of the Driver and Vehicle Agency, part of the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure. The information provided is for licences issued and tests taken in Great Britain only.

The number of applications received by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency for a provisional GB driving licence for the last five years is:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FIRST APPLICATIONS FOR A PROVISIONAL DRIVING LICENCE RECEIVED
2015	1,138,274

YEAR	NUMBER OF FIRST APPLICATIONS FOR A PROVISIONAL DRIVING LICENCE RECEIVED
2016	1,111,904
2017	1,120,611
2018	1,032,193
2019	1,067,265

The number of GB car driving tests passed and failed in the last five years is:

YEAR	TESTS PASSED	TESTS FAILED
2015/2016	723,303	487,153
2016/2017	815,005	539,647
2017/2018	795,732	533,101
2018/2019	761,749	508,634
2019/2020	734,432	495,775

These figures relate to the number of tests taken. Individual drivers may sit more than one driving test.

■ Global Travel Taskforce

Angela Crawley: [\[114944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government's Global Travel Taskforce plans publish its findings on the effect and challenges posed by covid-19 to international travel.

Angela Crawley: [\[114946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to implement a covid-19 testing system (a) to enable international travel to and from the UK by the end of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown (b) that would remove the need for a 14-day quarantine for travellers returning from international destinations.

Angela Crawley: [\[114947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how long the Global Travel Taskforce is planned to be in operation.

Angela Crawley: [\[114948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which commercial aviation routes are planned to be prioritised when a covid-19 testing infrastructure is introduced by the Government.

Robert Courts:

The Government is actively working on the practicalities of using testing to release people from self-isolation earlier than 14 days. The Global Travel Taskforce is working at pace to consider how testing, technology and innovation can drive a recovery for international travel and tourism, without adding to infection risk or infringing on our overall NHS test capacity.

The taskforce will report to the Prime Minister no later than November, setting out recommendations for how the UK can support the recovery of international travel. I will update the House on its conclusions and outputs shortly.

■ Taiwan: International Civil Aviation Organisation**John Spellar:** [\[114060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to support Taiwan's membership of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Robert Courts:

The UK believes that the people of Taiwan have a valuable contribution to make on issues of global concern. We therefore support Taiwanese participation in International Organisations, where there is precedent for their involvement and where there is no pre-requisite of nationhood for participation. This includes meetings of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Jack Dromey:** [\[114813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to introduce a covid-19 testing system for people arriving in the UK to help facilitate international travel.

Jack Dromey: [\[114814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November to Question 111622, whether the recommendations of the Global Travel Taskforce will be made publicly available.

Jack Dromey: [\[114815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which commercial aviation routes will be prioritised when a testing infrastructure for international arrivals is introduced.

Robert Courts:

The Government is actively working on the practicalities of using testing to release people from self-isolation earlier than 14 days. The Global Travel Taskforce is working at pace to consider how testing, technology and innovation can drive a

recovery for international travel and tourism, without adding to infection risk or infringing on our overall NHS test capacity.

The taskforce will report to the Prime Minister no later than November, setting out recommendations for how the UK can support the recovery of international travel. I will update the House on its conclusions and outputs shortly.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[114224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of bi-lateral testing protocols with key trading partners to allow people who are travelling for work purposes to be exempt from covid-19 quarantine requirements.

Robert Courts:

The Government is actively working on the practicalities of using testing to release people from self-isolation earlier than 14 days. The Global Travel Taskforce is working at pace to consider how testing, technology and innovation can drive a recovery for international travel and tourism, without adding to infection risk or infringing on our overall NHS test capacity.

In its work, the GTT has sought views from the following stakeholders to inform its work:

- the transport industry, to discuss shared challenges, the value of the sector to the economy, and the future of international travel
- international partners, to discuss different approaches to health measures at the border, and what standards and practices are needed to maintain safe international travel
- the tourism sector and local business leaders, to consider the economic impact on domestic tourism, and how international travel can support economic recovery
- the private testing sector, to consider capacity constraints, pricing, and how quickly testing capacity can be rolled out
- academia and policy institutes to provide insight and innovative solutions to the challenges the sector is facing

TREASURY

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Angela Crawley:

[\[114949\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to support jobs in the aerospace sector supply chain by establishing a long-term supply chain investment fund to recapitalise suppliers who are unable to take on new debt.

Kemi Badenoch:

I am aware of the challenging conditions facing the aerospace sector. That is why we are supporting the aerospace sector and its aviation customers with over £9 billion support through the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, grants for research and development, loan guarantees and support for aerospace exports.

Alan Brown:[\[114953\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will create a net zero test for all infrastructure (a) policy and (b) spending decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has a robust process for assessing the impact of spending decisions on achieving our environmental goals.

Our world-leading Green Book guidance mandates the consideration of climate and environmental impacts in all spending decisions.

Using the Green Book all interventions are appraised against the Government's strategic and economic objectives, including the net zero greenhouse gas emissions target.

Alan Brown:[\[114955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June 2020 to Question 52168, when he plans to publish the national infrastructure strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

Infrastructure is central to the Government's economic strategy and is vital for driving the recovery from COVID-19. The Government will publish the National Infrastructure Strategy imminently.

Alan Brown:[\[114956\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the national infrastructure strategy aligns with net zero emissions targets; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The UK was the first major economy in the world to legislate its 2050 Net Zero commitment last year and transforming the UK's infrastructure will be vital to meeting this target. The National Infrastructure Strategy will set out the UK's long-term ambitions on economic infrastructure, including on decarbonisation.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Tom Tugendhat:**[\[114253\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support businesses not in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, who can stay open during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England, will receive to help cover for lost income as a result of fewer people leaving the home.

Kemi Badenoch:

Businesses that are not in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which can stay open but are nonetheless severely affected by the enhanced COVID-19 restrictions, will continue to have access to the Government's unprecedented package of support throughout the month of November.

This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which provides employees with 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The CJRS has been extended until the end of March and will give open businesses the flexibility to support employees for any amount of time and shift pattern. Further, self-employed individuals who are currently actively trading but are impacted by reduced demand due to coronavirus may also be eligible for the Self-employment income support scheme grant, covering November to January, which has increased to cover 80% of average profits, up to £7,500.

We have also provided Local Authorities with a further £1.1 billion across England via the Additional Restrictions Grant. Local Authorities have discretion on how to use this funding in their areas, but we encourage them to set up discretionary grant schemes to support these businesses.

■ Employment: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[114262\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his recent announcement that the Job Retention Bonus will be replaced by a retention incentive, when he plans to publish further information on that retention incentive.

Jesse Norman:

The objective of the Job Retention Bonus (JRB) was to incentivise employers to retain employees between November and the end of January through a £1,000 bonus paid to the employer. Having extended the CJRS to the end of March 2021, the objective of the JRB falls away. The Government will set out details of how a revised retention incentive will work in due course.

■ Infrastructure and Public Expenditure: Carbon Emissions**Mohammad Yasin:**[\[114279\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will create a net-zero emissions test for all infrastructure policy and spending decisions.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has a robust process for assessing the impact of spending decisions on achieving our environmental goals.

To ensure Government policy considers our environmental goals, we consult our world-leading Green Book, which mandates the consideration of climate and environmental impacts in spending.

Using the Green Book, which is under ongoing review, all interventions should be appraised against the Government's strategic objectives. This means how it interacts or conflicts with other policies, and how it is limited by constraints including legal commitments. Such as the Government's legal net zero carbon emissions target.

Building on this, an updated 2020 Green Book and the findings from its review will be published alongside the SR.

■ Infrastructure: Carbon Emissions

Mohammad Yasin:

[\[114278\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the Infrastructure Strategy; and what steps he is taking to ensure that infrastructure priorities in that strategy are aligned with the UK's net zero emissions target.

Kemi Badenoch:

Recognising the need to invest sustainably, we will set out our long-term economic infrastructure ambitions, including on decarbonisation and levelling up the nation in our upcoming National Infrastructure strategy which we expect to publish in the Autumn.

Ensuring infrastructure helps drive progress on Net Zero will be a key objective of the National Infrastructure Strategy, alongside levelling up across the country and driving growth across all parts of the UK.

The Strategy will set out the government's long-term ambitions for economic infrastructure. It will also be responding to the National Infrastructure Commission's 2018 assessment of the UK's infrastructure needs.

■ Job Support Scheme: Bus Services

Mary Glendon:

[\[114169\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons the coach sector is not eligible for support through the expanded job support scheme.

Steve Barclay:

The Chancellor postponed the Job Support Scheme and has announced the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March 2021. This scheme provides support for the whole of the UK and employers in the coach sector can access the scheme and claim the grant if they meet the CJRS criteria.

The Government will continue to work closely with representatives from the coach sector including the Confederation of Passenger Transport, and across government departments, to understand the ongoing risks and issues, including demand considerations and how these could be addressed.

■ Payroll Deduction Scheme: Coronavirus

Scott Mann:

[\[114264\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to provide fiscal support to payroll giving organisations who have experienced a reduction in their transactions as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that businesses across the economy face lower demand due to the impact of Covid-19.

The Government has announced unprecedented support for businesses during the pandemic, for which payroll giving organisations are eligible. Measures introduced by the government include VAT relief and loan guarantee schemes. The application deadline for the loan guarantee schemes – Bounce Back Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme – has been extended to the end of January 2021.

Payroll giving organisations can benefit from the recent extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March 2021. Furloughed employees will receive 80% of their current salary for hours not worked.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[114252\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support is available during the period of November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions for self-employed people who transferred from a Limited Company during the 2019-20 financial year and are ineligible for Self-Employment Income Support scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the original Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), namely that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will not have access to their self-assessment returns to be able to verify their eligibility, still remain. Unlike for employees, self-employed income is not reported monthly, but at the end of each tax year on the individual's Income Tax Self-Assessment return. This means that the most reliable and up-to-date record of self-employed income is from 2018-19 tax returns.

The SEISS Grant Extension continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for individuals and businesses. This package includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support and other business support grants. The Government has also temporarily increased the Universal Credit standard allowance for 2020-21 by £20 per week and relaxed the Minimum Income Floor meaning that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[114263\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will provide fiscal support for self-employed parents not eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme who cannot afford to pay for the childcare necessary to enable them to work.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed. Those ineligible for the SEISS Grant Extension may still be eligible for other elements of the financial support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, meaning that where self-employed claimants' earnings have significantly fallen, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings.

In addition to this they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ Tax Avoidance

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[114920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to ensure the settlement of Loan Charge cases by differentiating between (a) people who entered into tax avoidance schemes in full knowledge of their purpose and (b) people (i) who were entered into those schemes (A) without advice, (B) by their employers and (C) by an advisor and (ii) whose participation in those schemes was a condition of the provision of services.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[114921\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC holds information on the number of people subject to the Loan Charge who have stated that they received incorrect or no advice from advisors or promoters when they entered into those taxation schemes.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[114922\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take in facilitating Loan Charge settlements with HMRC to protect individuals who were misled or incorrectly advised by Loan Charge promoters or advisors on entering those taxation schemes.

Jesse Norman:

When working with taxpayers to reach a settlement, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) seek to clarify and confirm the relevant facts of each individual case with the taxpayer. To maintain a consistent approach, cases are settled in accordance with HMRC's Litigation and Settlement Strategy, which requires that HMRC only settle for an amount that is consistent with the law. While the Government has sympathy for anyone who believes they were misled into using disguised remuneration schemes, it is an individual's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of their tax return and to understand the consequences of their decisions.

The Government will continue to tackle this type of tax avoidance and on 19 March 2020, HMRC published their strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes. The strategy sets out HMRC's work to date and outlines how HMRC will continue to take robust actions against promoters of tax avoidance. The Promoter Strategy is available on GOV.UK.

The Government recognises the importance of taxpayers being able to get reliable tax advice which is competent, professional and trustworthy. In March 2020, the Government issued a call for evidence on raising standards in the tax advice market and has recently published a summary of responses and next steps. As a first step, the Government will consult on introducing a requirement for all tax advisers to hold professional indemnity insurance as a way of providing recourse, protecting taxpayers and raising standards in the tax advice market. The Government will also raise awareness of the HMRC standard for agents and review HMRC powers to enforce this standard.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[114924\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps HMRC is taking to pursue and issue penalties to promoters of (a) disguised remuneration and (b) other tax avoidance schemes through the (i) Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Scheme, (ii) Promoters of Tax Avoidance Scheme and (iii) Enablers Penalty.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[114925\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC staff have been appointed to pursue and issue penalties to promoters of disguised remuneration and other tax avoidance schemes under (a) Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Schemes, (b) Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes and (c) Penalties for Enablers of Defeated Tax Avoidance.

Jesse Norman:

In March 2020, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) published their strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes, including disguised remuneration schemes. The strategy sets out HMRC's work to date and outlines how HMRC will continue to take robust action against promoters of tax avoidance. The Promoter Strategy is available on GOV.UK.

HMRC are committed to challenging promoters, and will always pursue penalties in appropriate cases, under the Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Schemes (DOTAS), the Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes (POTAS) and the Enablers regimes. The Government announced on 12 November further proposals in the L-Day package to tackle promoters, which it will consult on in Spring.

In 2019-20 HMRC doubled the resources committed to tackling promoters and disrupting their business models by persuading taxpayers to get out of avoidance at an early stage. HMRC now have about 200 Full Time Equivalentents working in this area; the teams use all the powers available to HMRC to tackle promoters. HMRC do not have separately identified staff pursuing each penalty type in isolation.

■ Tax Avoidance: Greater Manchester**Rebecca Long Bailey:** [\[114923\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people are subject to the 2019 Loan Charge in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Salford and Eccles constituency.

Jesse Norman:

The Government estimates that about 50,000 individuals are affected by the 2019 Loan Charge. Information is not held at constituency, borough or regional level.

■ Tax Avoidance: Prosecutions**Rebecca Long Bailey:** [\[114919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the prosecution of the creators and promoters of disguised remuneration schemes relating to the Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Government and HMRC are determined to continue to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes.

While there is no specific offence relating to the promotion of tax avoidance schemes, there are criminal offences under which promoters who commit fraud can be prosecuted, such as the offence of cheating the public revenue. HMRC always consider whether there are grounds for conducting a criminal investigation against promoters, including those who promote disguised remuneration schemes.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[114998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time taken is for an application for personal independence payments to be processed after supporting evidence has been received in the latest period for which figures are available.

Justin Tomlinson:

Following initial registration of a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim, the majority of claimants are sent a "How your disability affects you" (PIP2) form. Claimants are required to return the PIP2 form along with any additional information to show how their health condition or disability affects them carrying out day-to-day activities.

The table below shows the median clearance time in weeks from return of the PIP2 form to initial decision for PIP. These figures include Normal Rules New Claims and Reassessments from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for all decisions made in July 2020 (the latest data available).

These figures reflect distortions due to COVID-19 measures including the development, testing and rollout of a new telephony assessment model to enable claims to be progressed robustly in the absence of face-to-face assessments.

Table 1: Median Clearance Times in weeks from return of PIP2 form to initial decision for PIP New Claims and Reassessments from DLA in July 2020.

	REASSESSMENT TYPE	
	New Claim	Reassessment
July 2020	19	21

Notes

Source: PIP ADS

- PIP data includes normal rules claimants only and is for both new claims and DLA reassessment claims.
- Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number of weeks.
- The status of claims as 'normal rules' and 'new claim/reassessment' is shown as at the point of clearance.
- The figures in the table are the median clearance time of claims which are cleared in the given time period.
- The median time is the middle value if you were to order all the times within the distribution from lowest value to highest value. The median is presented here instead of the mean because the mean can be unduly affected by outlying cases (e.g. cases where the person has been hard to reach due to being in prison, hospital, failed to attend the assessment on numerous occasions etc.)
- The 'PIP2 return to DWP decision' clearance time is measured as the median time between the date the PIP 2 form was sent out to the claimant and the date of the DWP decision to either award or disallow the claim. It does not include claims that were withdrawn by the claimant or claims that were disallowed by DWP pre-referral to the Assessment Providers (e.g. for failure to meet basic eligibility criteria or failure to return the Part 2 form within the time limit).
- Great Britain only.
- The median clearance time between return of PIP2 form and DWP decision is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.

■ Disadvantaged and Poverty: Gainsborough**Sir Edward Leigh:**[\[114776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the causes of poverty and deprivation in the South West ward of Gainsborough in Lincolnshire; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made.

The Government's long-term ambition is to level up across the country and continue to tackle poverty through our reformed welfare system that works with the labour market to encourage people to move back into and progress in work wherever possible. Our £30bn Plan for Jobs is the first step on the ladder to achieving this and will support economic recovery through new schemes including Kickstart and Job Entry Targeted Support.

The Government has also been taking various steps to help vulnerable people and those on low incomes, especially during the pandemic. This includes an additional £9.3bn boost to our safety net welfare system, and £63m fund for councils to help with targeted support for people and families in need. We have gone further this winter, recently introducing a new £170m Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support children, families and the most at risk over the coming months. The funding will be ring-fenced, with at least 80% earmarked to help with food and bills, and will cover the period to the end of March 2021. In Lincolnshire, we have allocated £45 million of additional COVID19 funding.

In May, the Government also provided £16m to charities to provide food for those struggling due to the immediate impacts of the pandemic. Earlier this month, a further £16m was announced to fund local charities through well-established networks and provide immediate support to front-line food aid charities who have a vital role to play in supporting people of all ages.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**Seema Malhotra:**[\[115677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many welfare claimants have a 9-month benefit cap grace period due to end in December 2020.

Seema Malhotra:[\[115678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new universal credit claimants have been affected by the benefit cap since 23 March 2020.

Seema Malhotra:[\[115679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of claimants who started a universal credit claim in March 2020 have been exempt from the benefit cap due to the 9-month grace period.

Seema Malhotra:

[115680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to amend the length of the benefit cap grace period.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: The benefit cap restores fairness between those receiving out-of-work benefits and taxpayers. Universal Credit claimants may benefit from a nine-month grace period where their benefit will not be capped if they have a sustained work record with monthly earnings of at least £604 for the past year. Households can still receive benefits up to the equivalent gross earnings of around £24,000, or around £28,000 in London.

i. As at August 2020, there were 160,300 Universal Credit households with a grace period due to end in December 2020. The grace period is applied irrespective of whether or not the household has sufficient benefit income to be in scope for the cap. This ensures that a claimant will benefit from the grace period exemption should any change of circumstances bring them into the scope of the cap during that period. This does not necessarily mean that all of these claimants will actually be capped in December when their grace period ends.

ii. As at May 2020, 19,100 new Universal Credit claimants whose claims started since 23 March 2020 inclusive had been affected by the benefit cap.

iii. Information relating to Universal Credit claimants who started a claim in March 2020 and have been exempt from the benefit cap due to the nine-month grace period is not readily available; to provide it would incur disproportionate costs. The Department is not required to calculate the level of benefit payment that takes a claimant above the benefit cap threshold while a claimant is in the nine-month grace period because the claimant is exempt from the benefit cap during this time.

There are currently no plans to change the benefit cap grace period. The benefit cap provides fairness for hard-working taxpaying households, whilst providing a reasonable safety net of support for the most vulnerable. Whilst this means that some claimants will have a limit on the total amount of benefits they can receive, there are a range of exemptions for when the cap should not be applied including exemptions for the most vulnerable claimants who are entitled to disability benefits and carer benefits