



Daily Report

Wednesday, 25 November 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 November 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 25 November 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| ANSWERS | 6 | DEFENCE | 15 |
| BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY | 6 | ■ Armed Forces: Charities | 15 |
| ■ AstraZeneca: Coronavirus | 6 | ■ Ministry of Defence: Electric Vehicles | 15 |
| ■ AstraZeneca: Oxford University | 6 | ■ Royal Marines: Military Bases | 15 |
| ■ Bereavement Leave | 6 | ■ Type 32 Frigates | 15 |
| ■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme | 7 | DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT | 16 |
| ■ Business: Coronavirus | 7 | ■ Broadband | 16 |
| ■ Carbon Emissions: Consumer Goods | 8 | ■ Football: Coronavirus | 16 |
| ■ Carbon Emissions: Exports and Imports | 8 | EDUCATION | 17 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination | 9 | ■ Autism: Children | 17 |
| ■ Environment Protection: Northern Ireland | 10 | ■ Children: Social Mobility | 17 |
| ■ Green Deal Scheme: Misrepresentation | 11 | ■ Disabled Students' Allowances | 18 |
| ■ New Businesses: Females | 12 | ■ Education: Coronavirus | 18 |
| ■ Tidal Power | 12 | ■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus | 19 |
| ■ Wholesale Trade: Food | 13 | ■ Financial Services: Primary Education | 20 |
| CABINET OFFICE | 13 | ■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus | 21 |
| ■ Cabinet Office: Audit | 13 | ■ Home Education | 21 |
| ■ Elections: Proof of Identity | 13 | ■ Home Education: Coronavirus | 22 |
| ■ Electoral Register: Disability | 14 | ■ Music: Coronavirus | 22 |
| ■ Ports: Infrastructure | 14 | ■ Overseas Students: Coronavirus | 23 |

| | |
|--|----|
| ■ Pre-school Education | 23 |
| ■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus | 24 |
| ■ Pre-school Education: Government Assistance | 25 |
| ■ Remote Education: Bristol West | 26 |
| ■ Schools: Coronavirus | 27 |
| ■ Special Educational Needs: Remote Education | 28 |
| ■ Sports: Coronavirus | 29 |
| ■ Students: Coronavirus | 30 |
| ■ Students: Loans | 31 |
| ■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus | 32 |
| ■ Universities: Building Regulations and Fire Prevention | 33 |
| ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS | 34 |
| ■ Agriculture | 34 |
| ■ Air Pollution: Curriculum | 34 |
| ■ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks: Nature Conservation | 35 |
| ■ Barbecues | 35 |
| ■ Chemicals: Regulation | 36 |
| ■ Dogs: Imports | 36 |
| ■ Electric Vehicles: Official Cars | 37 |
| ■ Inland Waterways: Access | 38 |
| ■ Marine Environment: Conservation | 38 |
| ■ Nature Conservation: Land | 39 |
| ■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks | 40 |
| ■ Water Supply | 40 |

| | |
|--|----|
| FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE | 41 |
| ■ Assadolah Assadi | 41 |
| ■ Breast Ironing | 41 |
| ■ Embassies: Coronavirus | 42 |
| ■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict | 42 |
| ■ Iran: Trials | 43 |
| ■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe | 43 |
| ■ Overseas Aid | 44 |
| ■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus | 44 |
| ■ World Health Assembly: Taiwan | 45 |
| HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE | 45 |
| ■ Abortion | 45 |
| ■ Abortion: Drugs | 45 |
| ■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption | 46 |
| ■ Autism: Children | 46 |
| ■ Aviation: Coronavirus | 47 |
| ■ Brain Injuries and Death: Babies | 47 |
| ■ Brain: Tumours | 48 |
| ■ Breast Cancer: Clinical Trials | 48 |
| ■ Cancer: Nurses | 49 |
| ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus | 49 |
| ■ Care Homes: Inspections | 49 |
| ■ Contact Tracing | 50 |
| ■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software | 50 |
| ■ Contact Tracing: Tower Hamlets | 51 |
| ■ Contraceptives | 51 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Bedford | 52 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Collective Worship | 53 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing | 53 |

| | | | |
|---|----|---|----|
| ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control | 55 | ■ GP Surgeries | 75 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups | 56 | ■ Gynaecology and Maternity Services: Standards | 75 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Greater London | 57 | ■ Health Professions: Mental Health | 76 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Gyms and Leisure | 58 | ■ Health Professions: West Midlands | 76 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Health Services | 58 | ■ Health: Swimming Pools | 77 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Kent | 58 | ■ Healthy Start Scheme | 77 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Laboratories | 59 | ■ HIV Infection: Drugs | 77 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne | 60 | ■ Influenza: Vaccination | 78 |
| ■ Coronavirus: North West | 60 | ■ Laboratories: Coronavirus | 78 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing | 60 | ■ Local Government: Coronavirus | 78 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Quarantine | 60 | ■ Maternity Services: Disadvantaged and Ethnic Groups | 79 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Redbridge | 61 | ■ Medical Records: Children | 79 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Screening | 62 | ■ Medicine: Education | 79 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Shadwell | 68 | ■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People | 80 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Students | 68 | ■ Mental Health Services: Finance | 81 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Suffolk | 69 | ■ Mental Health Services: Mothers | 82 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Sutton Coldfield | 69 | ■ Mental Health Services: Quarantine | 82 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination | 69 | ■ Mental Health Services: Young People | 82 |
| ■ Coronavirus: Wakefield | 71 | ■ Mental Health: Research | 83 |
| ■ Dental Health | 71 | ■ Miscarriage: Mental Health Services | 83 |
| ■ Dental Health: Children | 71 | ■ NHS: Migrant Workers | 84 |
| ■ Dental Services: Protective Clothing | 72 | ■ Nutrition: Medical Equipment | 84 |
| ■ Dental Services: Ventilation | 72 | ■ Obesity: Health Services | 84 |
| ■ Eating Disorders: Children and Young People | 72 | ■ Pharmacy | 85 |
| ■ Exercise Cygnus: Private Companies | 73 | | |
| ■ General Practitioners | 73 | | |
| ■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus | 74 | | |
| ■ General Practitioners: Internet | 75 | | |

| | | | |
|--|----|--|-----|
| ■ Podiatry: Staff | 85 | ■ Housing: Insulation | 98 |
| ■ Prescription Drugs: Safety | 86 | ■ Motorhomes | 101 |
| ■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus | 86 | ■ Night Shelters: Coronavirus | 101 |
| ■ Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies: Coronavirus | 86 | ■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus | 102 |
| ■ Social Services: Inspections | 87 | INTERNATIONAL TRADE | 103 |
| ■ Speech and Language Therapy: Waiting Lists | 87 | ■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments | 103 |
| ■ Strokes: Health Services | 88 | ■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees | 103 |
| ■ Suicide: Pupils and Students | 88 | ■ Overseas Trade: Coronavirus | 104 |
| ■ Test and Trace Support Payment | 89 | ■ Trade and Agriculture Commission: Membership | 104 |
| ■ UK Lighthouse Labs Network | 89 | ■ UK Trade with EU | 105 |
| HOME OFFICE | 90 | JUSTICE | 105 |
| ■ Company Liquidations | 90 | ■ Care Proceedings | 105 |
| ■ Fines: Coronavirus | 90 | ■ Offenders: Death | 106 |
| ■ Home Office: Electric Vehicles | 91 | ■ Trials: Crown Court | 107 |
| ■ Immigrants: Finance | 91 | ■ Young Offenders | 108 |
| ■ Immigrants: Private Rented Housing | 93 | NORTHERN IRELAND | 108 |
| ■ Immigration Rules: Religion | 94 | ■ Community Relations: Northern Ireland | 108 |
| ■ Immigration: Appeals | 94 | TRANSPORT | 109 |
| ■ Refugees: Coronavirus | 94 | ■ Aviation: Repayments | 109 |
| ■ Refugees: National Insurance | 95 | ■ Biofuels | 109 |
| ■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review | 95 | ■ Bridges: Hinckley | 110 |
| ■ Yarls Wood Immigration Removal Centre | 96 | ■ Bus Services | 110 |
| HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT | 96 | ■ Bus Services: Coronavirus | 111 |
| ■ Buildings: Safety | 96 | ■ Driving: Coronavirus | 111 |
| ■ Business: Coronavirus | 97 | ■ Electric Vehicles | 112 |
| ■ Evictions and Repossession Orders: Coronavirus | 97 | ■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries | 113 |
| ■ Homelessness | 98 | ■ Electric Vehicles: Greater Manchester | 113 |
| | | ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Air Pollution | 114 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|--|------------|
| ■ Merchant Shipping: Security | 115 | ■ Employment: Coronavirus | 128 |
| ■ Ports: Air Pollution | 115 | ■ Employment: Disability | 128 |
| ■ Railways: North of England | 116 | ■ Social Security Benefits | 129 |
| ■ Shipping | 116 | ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus | 130 |
| ■ Travel: Costs | 116 | ■ Social Security Benefits: Disability | 130 |
| TREASURY | 117 | ■ Universal Credit | 131 |
| ■ Airports: Non-domestic Rates | 117 | ■ Universal Credit: Severe Disability Premium | 132 |
| ■ Beer: Non-domestic Rates | 118 | ■ Work Capability Assessment: Equality | 132 |
| ■ Business: Coronavirus | 118 | WRITTEN STATEMENTS | 134 |
| ■ Cars: Northern Ireland | 120 | BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY | 134 |
| ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme | 120 | ■ Contingencies Fund Advance | 134 |
| ■ Exports: VAT | 121 | CABINET OFFICE | 134 |
| ■ International Military Services: Iran | 122 | ■ UK-wide Christmas arrangements | 134 |
| ■ NFU Mutual: Coronavirus | 122 | TREASURY | 136 |
| ■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus | 123 | ■ Contingencies Fund Advance | 136 |
| ■ Parents: Coronavirus | 123 | ■ Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance Update | 136 |
| ■ Personal Care Services: VAT | 124 | ■ The Government and UK Statistics Authority's response to their joint consultation on the reform to Retail Prices Index methodology | 137 |
| ■ Travel: Coronavirus | 125 | WORK AND PENSIONS | 137 |
| ■ UK Trade with EU: Rules of Origin | 125 | ■ Social Security Benefit and Pension Up-rating 2021/22 | 137 |
| ■ VAT: Coronavirus | 126 | | |
| ■ Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus | 126 | | |
| WOMEN AND EQUALITIES | 127 | | |
| ■ Civil Servants: Political Impartiality | 127 | | |
| WORK AND PENSIONS | 127 | | |
| ■ Children: Poverty | 127 | | |

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ AstraZeneca: Coronavirus

Navendu Mishra:

[\[116679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether AstraZeneca has unilateral power to declare an end to their pandemic no profit pricing commitment.

Amanda Solloway:

The timings or nature of any commitments regarding vaccine pricing are for the parties involved.

The World Health Organisation declared a coronavirus pandemic on 11 March 2020 and we would expect it in due course to declare a move to a post-pandemic period as it has done previously for the H1N1 pandemic in 2010.

■ AstraZeneca: Oxford University

Navendu Mishra:

[\[116678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to funding from the public purse to support the development of the covid-19 vaccine by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, if the Government will publish the terms of the agreement between the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca.

Amanda Solloway:

We are not able to disclose details of this agreement because of the commercially confidential nature of the contracts between the Government and vaccine manufacturers while commercial negotiations are ongoing.

■ Bereavement Leave

Caroline Lucas:

[\[116447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward legislative proposals in the forthcoming Employment Bill to establish bereavement leave as a universal statutory employment right for workers who have experienced the death of a close relative; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

We recognise that the death of a close family member, friend, or colleague can be deeply upsetting. The Government believes that individuals are best placed to understand their own specific needs and we encourage their employers to respond in an appropriate and sensitive way.

In April this year we introduced a new statutory entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay for parents who lose a child under the age of 18. Whilst this

entitlement is not available to employees who suffer a bereavement in other circumstances, all employees have a 'day 1' right to take unpaid time off work for an emergency involving a dependant.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Patrick Grady: [\[118538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the number of businesses prevented from accessing the Bounce Back Loan Scheme due to being declined for feeder accounts by banks after a credit check.

Paul Scully:

The Department does not hold this information. Decisions on lending are a matter for the British Business Bank and accredited lenders.

Patrick Grady: [\[118539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prevent lenders blocking businesses from accessing the Bounce Back Loan Scheme by requiring them to set up feeder accounts which are subject to credit checks that do not apply to the loan itself.

Paul Scully:

The Bounce Back Loan scheme (BBLS) rules do not mandate that the applicant must have a business relationship with the lender in order to receive a BBLS loan.

Certain lenders may require that you enter into a business relationship with them before you can apply and, within their standard policies and terms and conditions of business, some lenders may not permit an existing customer to operate their business via a personal account.

While all lending decisions remain solely at the discretion of the lender, the Government have always made clear to lenders that they should open to new customers as soon as it is operationally possible for them to do so.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris: [\[116574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that Government funding for local authorities to allocate to businesses affected by the covid-19 lockdown is being distributed so that closed businesses are able to access that funding as soon as possible.

Paul Scully:

The Government is working closely with local authorities in England to get funding out to businesses as quickly as possible. Local authority guidance was published on 3rd November and grant offer letters were sent to local authorities on 6th November. Payments to local authorities were made from 13th November.

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed) is applicable in England only. The Devolved Administrations are responsible for the administration of support schemes in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

■ Carbon Emissions: Consumer Goods

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[115636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether emissions from goods produced abroad that are consumed within the UK will be included in the UK's net zero carbon emissions target.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Measuring emissions associated with the production of goods and services consumed by the UK provides valuable insights, particularly in relation to policy on resource efficiency, and helpfully supplements the measurement of emissions generated within the UK's borders. However, we do not plan to move to a system primarily based on consumption emissions as there is no internationally agreed approach to measuring these emissions. Estimates of imported emissions are associated with greater levels of uncertainty than estimates of UK-based territorial emissions.

The UK is at the forefront of measuring consumption emissions and developing policies to reduce them. Emissions on a consumption basis (including embedded in imports) fell by 21 per cent between 2007 and 2017. In addition, we believe that high standards of climate protection should be at the heart of global production and trade, and are committed to upholding our environmental standards and supporting global decarbonisation accordingly.

We constantly keep our policies under review. For example, the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy for England sets out its ambition to move from a make, take, use, throw linear economic model to a more circular economy which will reduce our carbon footprint from imported emissions through increasing repair, reuse, remanufacture and other waste prevention activities.

The Environment Bill includes measures that will help consumers to make purchasing decisions that support the market for more sustainable products. It contains powers to introduce clear product labelling, which will enable consumers to identify products that are more durable, repairable and recyclable and will inform them on how to dispose of used products.

■ Carbon Emissions: Exports and Imports

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[115634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to include carbon emissions from imports and exports in UK carbon budgets.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Measuring emissions associated with the production of goods and services consumed by the UK provides valuable insights, particularly in relation to policy on

resource efficiency, and helpfully supplements the measurement of emissions generated within the UK's borders. However, we do not plan to move to a system primarily based on consumption emissions as there is no internationally agreed approach to measuring these emissions. Estimates of imported emissions are associated with greater levels of uncertainty than estimates of UK-based territorial emissions.

The UK is at the forefront of measuring consumption emissions and developing policies to reduce them. Emissions on a consumption basis (including embedded in imports) fell by 21 per cent between 2007 and 2017. In addition, we believe that high standards of climate protection should be at the heart of global production and trade, and are committed to upholding our environmental standards and supporting global decarbonisation accordingly.

We constantly keep our policies under review. For example, the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy for England sets out its ambition to move from a make, take, use, throw linear economic model to a more circular economy which will reduce our carbon footprint from imported emissions through increasing repair, reuse, remanufacture and other waste prevention activities.

The Environment Bill includes measures that will help consumers to make purchasing decisions that support the market for more sustainable products. It contains powers to introduce clear product labelling, which will enable consumers to identify products that are more durable, repairable and recyclable and will inform them on how to dispose of used products.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Navendu Mishra:

[116677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government has taken to ensure (a) that any covid-19 vaccines are sold not for profit and (b) equitable access to those vaccines throughout the world.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK's bilateral deals with pharmaceutical companies for Covid-19 vaccines include funding for research and development, investment in manufacturing and vaccine trials. This investment supports the global scale up of vaccine production and therefore the quantity of vaccines available for low and middle-income countries. The UK is a strong supporter of the multilateral Covid-19 Global Vaccine Access Facility (COVAX) initiative as a means to both get vaccines for the UK population and ensure equitable global access. The UK announced that it will contribute up to £500 million for the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment, which will give lower and middle-income countries equitable access to vaccines that are developed.

Navendu Mishra:

[116680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what risk assessment his Department has carried out on their bilateral deals with pharmaceutical companies for covid-19 vaccine candidates.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK's bilateral deals with pharmaceutical companies for Covid-19 vaccines include funding for research and development, investment in manufacturing and vaccine trials. This investment supports the global scale up of vaccine production and therefore the quantity of vaccines available for healthcare workers and vulnerable groups globally. The UK is a strong supporter of the multilateral Covid-19 Global Vaccine Access Facility (COVAX) initiative as a means to both get vaccines for the UK population and ensure equitable global access. The UK announced that it will contribute up to £500 million for the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment, which will give lower and middle-income countries equitable access to vaccines that are developed.

Claire Hanna:[\[118608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of the covid-19 vaccines that are under development the Government has ordered in addition to the Pfizer vaccine; and what estimate his Department has made of how many of each type of those vaccines the devolved nations will receive.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK Government has secured early access to 355 million vaccines doses through agreements with seven separate vaccine developers, which have been purchased for the whole of the UK. This includes agreements with:

- BioNTech/Pfizer for 40 million doses;
- Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses;
- GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses;
- Novavax for 60 million doses;
- Janssen for 30 million doses;
- Valneva for 60 million doses;
- Moderna for 5 million doses.

■ Environment Protection: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:**[\[118606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much Government funding arising from his plans for a green industrial revolution is planned to be allocated to Northern Ireland.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Our Ten Point Plan is our blueprint for a green industrial revolution. It combines ambitious policies with significant new public investment to deliver a vision for the UK that is greener, more prosperous and at the forefront of industries for the future. Spanning clean energy, buildings, transport, nature and innovative technologies, the Plan will mobilise £12 billion of Government investment and will support up to 250,000 green jobs across the UK.

Our investments in the transition will create good, green jobs in all four nations of the United Kingdom and catalyse private investment, helping to level up across the UK. Many of the initiatives and much of the funding announced will apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For example, the Government's commitment to support the introduction of at least 4,000 zero emission buses could be a significant boost to bus manufacturers in Northern Ireland, supporting green jobs across the UK.

The Government is also investing in other UK wide initiatives such as the Net Zero Innovation Programme, which will spend at least £1bn over the next 4 years to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative low-carbon technologies, systems and business models in power, buildings and industry. This programme will have a strong regional impact due to the localised and distributed nature of energy production and infrastructure, and will build on the existing regional investment made during the current programme.

■ **Green Deal Scheme: Misrepresentation**

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[116562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total value is of Green Deal loans sold by Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd (a) excluding and (b) including fees and interest.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[116563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on what date he or his predecessor delegated the initial review of mis-selling allegations against HELMS to the Financial Ombudsman Service under section 32 of the Energy Act 2011.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[116564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many recommendations the Financial Ombudsman Service has made to him in relation to HELMS complaints in its role delegated under section 32 of the Energy Act 2011 to carry out the initial review of mis-selling allegations against a green deal provider.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[116565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many recommendations of loan cancellation the Financial Ombudsman Service has made in relation to HELMS complaints in its role delegated under section 32 of the Energy Act 2011 to carry out the initial review of mis-selling allegations against a green deal provider.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The then Secretary of State Greg Clark delegated initial reviews of complaints about mis-selling to the Financial Ombudsman Service under section 32 of the Energy Act 2011 on 24th October 2018, and as such the Department does not hold data on the total value of Green Deal Loans, whether taken out with Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS) or any other Green Deal Provider.

The Financial Ombudsman Service's consideration of complaints is part of the wider review process. Responsibility for deciding whether a breach has occurred and, if so, whether a sanction should be imposed rests with the Secretary of State, in line with the requirements of the Framework Regulations.

Under this delegation the Financial Ombudsman Service has made recommendations regarding 143 complaints about HELMS. Recommendations may cover whether to cancel or reduce loans, or cover other matters, such as whether to conclude that there have been breaches of the Green Deal Framework regulations. For 69 of these complaints, the Financial Ombudsman Service recommended cancellation.

■ **New Businesses: Females**

Andrew Jones: [\[909395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support women starting and growing businesses.

Paul Scully:

All Government's business support schemes are open to eligible businesses including female entrepreneurs.

The Start-Up Loans programme has provided more than 31,000 loans, worth over £245m, to female entrepreneurs as of October 2020.

Additionally, we continue to work with the private sector to deliver the eight initiatives of the Rose Review. Great progress has been made over the past year with joint NatWest and Be the Business launching the 'Rose Review Female Entrepreneurs Mentoring Programme' on 27 October.

■ **Tidal Power**

Alan Brown: [\[116572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 113594 on Tidal Power, with how many of the 22 developers of that technology his Department has had meetings.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

BEIS officials have recently had meetings with three wave and tidal stream developers and have received responses from a large number of developers and supply chain companies to the recently closed Call for Evidence on marine energy.

Alan Brown: [\[116573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 113594 on tidal stream technologies, how many of the 22 developers of that technology has received funding from his Department.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

To date, nine tidal stream developers have received funding from BEIS under the Renewables Obligation scheme. In addition to that, one tidal stream developer has received funding through BEIS's Energy Innovation Programme.

■ Wholesale Trade: Food**Ian Lavery:**[\[116484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what direct financial support or grants the Government plans to make available for food and drink wholesalers as a result of those wholesalers not qualifying for support as they are not categorised as retail.

Paul Scully:

Food and drink wholesalers are able to benefit from additional financial support recently announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, including the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March 2021, extension of the existing loan schemes and Future Fund to the end of January 2021, with an ability to top-up bounce back loans, and increased support through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension.

Additionally, £1.1bn is being given to Local Authorities, distributed on the basis of £20 per head, for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Cabinet Office: Audit****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[116594\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to his Answer of 3 November 2020 to Question 108274 on Cabinet Office: Audit and with reference to the joint ventures listed on page 26 of the Cabinet Office 2019-20 annual report, if he could set out (a) who audits the accounts and (b) whether the accounts are laid before Parliament of (i) Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), (ii) Axelos, (iii) Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL), (iv) Integrated Debt Services (Indesser) and (v) Crown Hosting Data Centres.

Julia Lopez:

Auditors are named in each company's annual accounts, copies of which are available from the Companies House website.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[118494\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to introduce voter ID as a requirement in elections; what the planned timescale is for implementing that requirement; and if he will make a statement.

Chloe Smith:

Voter ID is part of a body of work this Government is delivering to strengthen the integrity of our electoral system and give the public confidence that our elections are modern, fair and secure.

We will bring forward legislation enabling the implementation of voter ID and wider electoral integrity measures when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Electoral Register: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft: [117303]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department holds data on the number of disabled people who are registered to vote.

Vicky Foxcroft: [117304]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on the number of disabled people that have been elected to public office in the UK in each of the last five years.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested is not held.

■ Ports: Infrastructure

Hywel Williams: [117186]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to achieve the delivery of new port infrastructure projects for (a) Hull, (b) Immingham and (c) Plymouth by 1 July 2021.

Hywel Williams: [117187]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has conducted an assessment of the readiness of UK ports and their associated infrastructure in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a trade deal.

Hywel Williams: [117188]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the Port of Holyhead's state of readiness for the UK's changed trading status in (a) January and (b) July 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government is working closely with ports to ensure they have the required infrastructure ready for the end of the transition period. Details of the recipients of the Port Infrastructure Fund will be announced in due course.

I refer the hon. Member to the published Border Operating Model, available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and the [statement](#) made by my Rt Hon friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 23 September.

For January 2021, HMRC is putting in place temporary arrangements to support Common Transit Convention movements through Holyhead. For July 2021, there needs to be a multi-functional site dealing with transit, customs and SPS checks to serve Holyhead. Details will be announced in due course.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Charities

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[119192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 116426 on Armed Forces: Charities, if he will correct his answer to that Question.

Johnny Mercer:

The correct response to the hon. Member's Question (116426) was submitted on 24 November 2020.

■ Ministry of Defence: Electric Vehicles

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[118564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the vehicles used by his Department on Government business are electric vehicles.

Jeremy Quin:

There is a rollout of electric vehicles currently underway across Defence in response to the Government's Road to Zero strategy. By January 2021 our non-military vehicle fleet will include 405 Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs). Further tranches will take place in order to meet the target of 100% ULEV vehicles by 2030.

■ Royal Marines: Military Bases

Luke Pollard:

[\[118582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce new basing arrangements for the Royal Marines after the planned closure of Stonehouse Barracks in Plymouth in 2028.

Jeremy Quin:

Future location options for the units currently based within Royal Marine Barracks Stonehouse are undergoing assessment. The outcome of this assessment work will inform the decision on new Royal Marine basing arrangements, expected to be in the second half of 2021.

■ Type 32 Frigates

Luke Pollard:

[\[118580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans the Type 32 frigates he plans to order to be based in (a) Devonport or (b) Portsmouth.

James Heappey:

The basing options will be considered at the appropriate stage of the procurement programme.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Broadband****Chi Onwurah:**[\[114868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 October 2020 to Question 103502, what the Government's year-on-year target is for gigabit rollout in hard-to-reach areas to achieve the 2025 target.

Matt Warman:

The government set out in its National Infrastructure Strategy that it is working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit capable coverage by 2025, but will seek to accelerate roll-out further to get as close to 100% as possible. The government will continue to implement an ambitious programme of work to remove barriers to broadband deployment, and maximise coverage in the hardest to reach areas of the country through our £5 billion UK Gigabit Programme.

We have made rapid progress to date with the support of the industry. Over 1 in 3 (34%) premises can now access gigabit-capable broadband, and we expect that gigabit broadband coverage will reach at least 50% during 2021.

The Spending Review 2020 provided further details on our planned year on year capital spend for 2021-22 to 2024-25, which totals £1.2 billion as part of the £5 billion UK Gigabit Programme. DCMS is continuing to work closely with industry to develop this programme and our year on year rollout plans for these areas.

■ **Football: Coronavirus****Julie Elliott:**[\[118528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what comparative assessment he has made of the effect of the autumn 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions on (a) women's and (b) men's elite football development; and what comparative assessment he has made of the effect of that lockdown on the ability of (i) women and (ii) men at professional football clubs under the age of 18 to continue playing.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has worked closely with the football authorities throughout the pandemic. The strict COVID protocols that both men's and women's elite football could enforce, has enabled them to continue training and playing matches during the period of national restrictions.

Subject to football's application of the current regulations, youth talent football may continue where the individuals are aged 15 and above and on a development pathway, or where delivered in a genuine educational setting. The fact that some

girls' academies could not operate alongside comparable boys academies has highlighted, once again, the need to set these academies on an equal footing, with regards to funding and resources, in the future.

I met with Baroness Campbell from the Football Association on 18 November where we discussed this issue. On 26 November I will be meeting CEO of Women in Football, Jane Purdon, to find out what more can be done to help the women's game.

EDUCATION

■ Autism: Children

Navendu Mishra:

[116687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children diagnosed with Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome have (a) been excluded from school and (b) received additional support whilst in school in each of the last three years.

Vicky Ford:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Statistics on exclusions are available in the National Statistics release 'Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England' here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england>.

Statistics on the number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including SEN support and Education, Health and Care plans are available in the National Statistics release 'Special educational needs in England' here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

Both publications include statistics by type of SEN, but Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome is not one of the categories specified.

■ Children: Social Mobility

Conor McGinn:

[118034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the Social Mobility Commission's strategy is for improving social mobility for white working class boys.

Vicky Ford:

The Social Mobility Commission is an Arm's Length Body, whose statutory responsibility is to monitor social mobility in the United Kingdom and promote social mobility in England. They carry out this responsibility by appraising action on social mobility via their annual monitoring report laid in Parliament, making recommendations to the government and conducting other evidence-based research reports they publish throughout the year. The Social Mobility Commission also carry out important work with frontline delivery partners to help drive change, and put

evidence on best practice into action alongside employers, local regional leaders, social mobility charities, and reaching out to young people through digital channels.

The Social Mobility Commission's work has a key focus on understanding the drivers of poor outcomes for individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, as part of an overarching strategy to understand the drivers of poor social mobility through high-quality research.

The Social Mobility Commission also recently contributed to the Education Select Committee inquiry on 'Left Behind White Pupils from Disadvantaged Backgrounds'.

Their written evidence can be found here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/12557/default>.

■ Disabled Students' Allowances

Emma Hardy:

[116633]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that the application for disabled students' allowance (a) recognises the challenges of the applicant's disability and (b) is (i) straightforward to complete and (ii) processed in a timely manner.

Michelle Donelan:

The Student Loans Company offers a telephone service, to help students who are unable to complete either an online or paper application, for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs).

Parts of the online DSAs application are pre-populated from a student's main Student Finance application. The online application therefore requires the student only to add information concerning their disability. Paper DSAs applications are not pre-populated, are more detailed, and will consequently take slightly longer to complete.

Initial applications are currently taking around 19 working days to be reviewed, but the Student Loans Company is working to process all DSA applications within a reasonable timeframe. Updates on processing times are published regularly at:

<https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog/>.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[116449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on the prioritisation of teachers and university staff for vaccination against covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Margaret Greenwood:

[118015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that teachers are among those prioritised for a covid-19 vaccine when one becomes available.

Nick Gibb:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine(s) the UK should use and provide advice on who should be offered them.

The JCVI's current advice is that, once available, the vaccine for COVID-19 should be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80, and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk.

The JCVI have not, as of yet, made any further recommendations on what professions should be prioritised in vaccine roll out.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus**John McDonnell:****[117169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of information available on the rates of infection and transmission of covid-19 in educational settings.

Nick Gibb:

The Department regularly reviews advice from Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), Public Health England, the Office for National Statistics and other sources to ensure our policies are guided by the most up to date scientific evidence. SAGE have committed to publishing minutes and papers following meetings on a regular basis and we will continue to work closely with them, keeping the guidance under review as we continue to monitor the situation over the winter. The Department will adjust and adapt our approach as necessary if more evidence becomes available.

The Department collects daily data on the open status of schools, the number of schools that have indicated they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment, the number of pupils absent because they have suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, and the number of pupils asked to isolate due to contact with a potential case.

The data from this collection is published at a national level as part of the official statistics series. The publication can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Public Health England also collects data on infection, incidence, and COVID-19 cases overall and publishes weekly data on COVID-19 incidents by institution, including educational settings. This can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936672/Weekly_COVID-](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936672/Weekly_COVID-19_and_Influenza_Surveillance_Graphs_w47.pdf)

[19 and Influenza Surveillance Graphs w47.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936672/Weekly_COVID-19_and_Influenza_Surveillance_Graphs_w47.pdf). It shows COVID-19 clusters or outbreaks by educational setting, including colleges and universities. Age-range data is also available from the Office for National Statistics here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditio>

[nsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveysurvey/20november2020](https://www.gov.uk/government/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveysurvey/20november2020).

This shows age-range positive test rates, including for academic school Year 12 to age 24.

The Department is continuing to review what we publish in our weekly dataset, alongside the quality of data we collect.

■ Financial Services: Primary Education

Dr Lisa Cameron: [116538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing financial education at a primary school level.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [116539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to promote conversations about financial education in primary schools to build financial capability in future generations.

Nick Gibb:

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study>.

The Department has also introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides young people with the knowledge and financial skills to make important financial decisions. The Government has published statutory programmes of study for mathematics and citizenship that outline what pupils should learn about financial education from Key Stages 1 to 4:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study>.

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

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

Schools should have resumed teaching an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term. This means that all pupils will be taught a wide range of subjects so they can maintain their choices for further study and

employment. Our latest guidance on teaching to support children is set out here:

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

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

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Janet Daby:

[116648]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children who were previously receiving free school meals but are now being taught from home as a result of the covid-19 outbreak do not go hungry.

Vicky Ford:

As schools and their kitchens are now open, they should provide healthy, nutritious meal options for all children who are in school, and meals should be available free of charge to all infant pupils and pupils who meet the benefits-related free school meals eligibility criteria.

If children are eligible for benefit-related free school meals, but are self-isolating, we expect catering providers to be in a strong position to support any eligible pupils through food parcels, be those daily or weekly. We have put guidance in place for schools on how they can support children in these circumstances. This is complemented by advice from the schools food trade organisation, Lead Association for Catering in Education, and Public Health England, on what a good food parcel should comprise. Our latest guidance for schools is set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

■ Home Education

Navendu Mishra:

[116683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an estimate of the number of parents registering to home school their children.

Nick Gibb:

Parents are not under a duty to register if they are home educating their children and therefore there is not a robust basis on which the Department can reliably collect statistics on home education.

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

■ Home Education: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon:

[116462]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support 16-19 year-olds with digital access to learning to ensure they can continue their education in the event that they are not in school.

Nick Gibb:

Young people aged 16 to 19 without suitable laptops and tablets for education may be eligible for support through the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Providers make decisions as to who receives bursary funding, based on their own criteria. More information on support for 16 to 19 year olds can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students>.

Where further education colleges are supplementing their on-site education with online education, the Department's guidance asks colleges and other further education institutions to preserve provision on-site for all students who need it. This includes students without access to devices or connectivity at home.

■ Music: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[118556]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing private music lessons to take place in teachers' homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

As outlined in the guidance for education and childcare settings on new national restrictions from 5 November, out-of-school activities such as private tuition may continue to operate during the period of national restrictions. However, providers of these activities who are operating out of their own homes or private studios, should ensure they are only being accessed for face-to-face provision by parents if their primary purpose is registered childcare, or where they are providing other activities for children, where it is reasonably necessary to enable parents to work or search for work, or to undertake training or education; or for the purposes of respite care. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020#ooss>.

Out-of-school activities that are primarily used by home educating parents as part of their arrangements for their child to receive a suitable full-time education, which could include private tutors, may also continue to operate for face-to-face provision for the duration of the national restrictions.

Tutors that continue to operate face-to-face provision during this period should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in the protective measures for holiday clubs and after-school clubs and other out-of-school clubs for children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak guidance, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for->

[holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak).

Providers operating out of other people's homes should also implement the guidance on working safely in other people's homes, available here:

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

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

■ Overseas Students: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse:

[116616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of students who have not been eligible for student finance because their Indefinite Leave to Remain applications have been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

It is not possible to estimate the number of students who were not eligible for student finance on the first day of the first academic year of their course because their Indefinite Leave to Remain application was delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

The requirement for a student to hold settled status on the first day of the first academic year of their course is a condition that is defined in the Education (Student Support) Regulations. Where certain events occur after the first day of the first academic year of the course (for example, the student is recognised as a refugee) the student may qualify for student support for that year and any subsequent years depending on when the event occurred. Indefinite leave to remain is not, by itself, an event. Most students acquiring indefinite leave to remain part way through a course (for reasons other than Permanent Residence, under the EUSS or as a victim of domestic violence) will not become eligible for full support as a settled person under the Student Support Regulations.

In assessing eligibility for student finance, the Student Loans Company will rely on information from the Home Office on all immigration matters, including in relation to the grant of settlement.

■ Pre-school Education

Tulip Siddiq:

[116604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the financial effect on early years providers of basing early entitlements for the spring term 2021 on current occupancy.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to the answer I gave on 5 October 2020, to Question [97657](#).

Further details of our plans for funding in the 2021 spring term will be announced as soon as possible.

Tulip Siddiq:**[116605]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities are complying with Government guidance to pass on early entitlement funding to childcare providers based on pre-covid occupancy levels.

Vicky Ford:

Local authorities have a legal duty to ensure there are sufficient childcare places in their area.

Our guidance makes clear how we expect local authorities to fund early years entitlement places during the COVID-19 outbreak. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-coronavirus-covid-19>. Local authorities should only take a different approach from that set out in guidance if they have good reasons for doing so and should communicate this clearly to their providers.

Through our regular contacts, it is apparent that the vast majority of local authorities have been compliant with our funding guidance throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

Where concerns about funding arrangements have been raised through our regular contacts with early years sector stakeholders, officials have engaged with the relevant authorities in order to clarify and reinforce the government's expectations regarding funding, as set out in our guidance.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**Tulip Siddiq:****[116606]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Government guidance that local authorities should continue to fund early years settings who are being forced to close for public health reasons during the autumn term 2020, what the definition is of public health reasons; and whether a setting that is partially closed is eligible for that funding.

Vicky Ford:

As the government's guidance on the use of free early education entitlements during the COVID-19 outbreak sets out, local authorities should continue to fund providers which have been advised to close, or left with no option but to close, due to public health reasons. This guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The provision around 'public health reasons' is intended to ensure that providers impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak continue to be funded if they are not able to operate as normal. This might be because they have had a positive test or tests for COVID-19 within their setting, or because a critical mass of children for whom they care need to self-isolate, and it is not financially viable for them to open.

Settings that are partially open but not able to operate as normal owing to public health reasons fall within the scope of eligibility. Local authorities should not fund providers which are closed without public health reasons.

■ Pre-school Education: Government Assistance

Tulip Siddiq:

[118555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of children using (a) the 15 hour free early years entitlement for (i) the most disadvantaged two year olds and (ii) parents of three and four year olds and (b) the 30 hour early years entitlement for working parents of three and four year olds in each of the four most recent weeks for which data is available.

Vicky Ford:

The government is planning to spend more than £3.6 billion on early education entitlements in 2020-21. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, take up of the entitlements was positive with near universal take up of the 15 hours for all 3 and 4 year olds (91% of 3 year olds and 94% of 4 year olds (including reception)) in January 2020.

The department collects data about take up of the entitlements on an annual basis through the Early Years Census. These annual reports are published here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-provision-children-under-5>. The next census is due to take place in January 2021.

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the department introduced weekly data collection from local authorities to record the number of pre-school aged children attending childcare. This data is published on a weekly basis and the reports are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. In order to minimise the administrative burden on local government during the COVID-19 outbreak, this weekly data collection does not distinguish attendance by age of child or between children taking up entitlements and children whose parents have paid for a childcare place.

It was estimated that 801,000 children were attending early years childcare settings on 12 November 2020, around 61% of the number of children who usually attend childcare in term time. On a typical day in the autumn term attendance is expected to be around 887,000, due to different and part-time patterns of childcare during the week. It is therefore estimated that the 801,000 children currently attending early years settings is approximately 90% of the usual daily level.

■ Remote Education: Bristol West

Thangam Debbonaire: [116554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) devices and (b) 4G wireless routers had been allocated to schools in Bristol West to support education requirements as at 24 October 2020.

Thangam Debbonaire: [116555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of school pupils (a) self-isolating in Bristol and (b) self-isolating elsewhere who need a device and 4G wireless router as of 17 November 2020.

Thangam Debbonaire: [116556]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how schools can contact his Department urgently to request additional laptops or other connectivity devices to assist children who cannot attend school as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; what the waiting time is for delivery of those devices; and what the eligibility requirements are for schools to request additional devices.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has invested over £195 million to support remote education and access to online social care. This includes delivering over 220,000 laptops and tablets during the summer term for disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have access to a digital device. The Department is adding to this support by making over 340,000 additional laptops and tablets available this term to support disadvantaged children that might experience disruption to their education. Since September 2020, over 100,000 of these have been delivered to schools. This represents an injection of over half a million laptops and tablets by the end of the year.

Summer term delivery data, which includes Bristol Council, can be found here:

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

Current delivery data, as of 22 October 2020, can be found here:

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

A summary of attendance in education settings during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The Get Help With Technology scheme is intended to enable schools to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 who do not have access to a laptop or tablet privately or through school. Support is provided when schools report disruption to face-to-face education. Schools can order laptops and tablets for disadvantaged

children across all year groups who are shielding as a result of official or medical advice, for all year groups who attend hospital schools, and for those completing their Key Stage 4 at a further education college. Subject to availability, we expect to deliver orders within 48 hours of the ordering being received.

The Department allocated a number of devices to each school. To arrive at this allocation, the Department has used data on the number of pupils eligible for free school meals in each school. The Department expects that pupils' device needs will be met to some extent by existing school laptops and tablets.

The Department estimated the number of disadvantaged pupils without access to an internet connection using data on pupils eligible for free school meals in each school, taking into consideration estimations by Ofcom and reflecting that some pupils would already have access to a private internet connection.

In the context of significant demand, we have updated our allocation process to more accurately align orders with the number of students typically self-isolating, ensuring as many children as possible benefit from receiving a device this term.

Schools, local authorities, and academy trusts can request additional devices if their allocation from the Department does not meet their needs. These requests can be submitted to: covid.technology@education.gov.uk.

Laptops and tablets are owned by the local authority, academy trust, or school who can lend unused laptops and tablets to children and young people who need them most, and who may experience disruption to face-to-face education due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Sir David Evennett:

[116406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to announce the start date of the claims window for schools to make a claim from his Department for the exceptional costs that they incurred from March 2020 to July 2020 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The first claims window for the COVID-19 schools fund closed on 21 July. Schools have received payments of over £100 million for all claims within the published scope of the fund.

There will be a further opportunity later in the year for schools to claim for exceptional costs that fell between March and July, in the same approved categories as for the first window. Schools will be able to use this second window to claim for any costs in the approved categories, for which they did not claim during the first window. The Department will confirm the date of the second claims window shortly.

Schools have also continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. This will ensure that they are able to continue to pay their staff and meet their other regular financial commitments.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[116559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of pupils missing school as a result of staff absence for covid-19 related reasons.

Nick Gibb:

Schools remain open during the period of the new national restrictions. Where schools implement the system of controls outlined in the published schools guidance, in line with their own workplace risk assessment, Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) confirm that these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

As a result, on current evidence, PHE and DHSC advise that schools are not currently considered high risk settings when compared to other workplace environments.

It is therefore appropriate for teachers and other school staff to attend the workplace. Accordingly, we expect that staff – apart from the clinically extremely vulnerable who should work from home during the period of national restrictions – will attend school.

The Department for Education's guidance for schools on full opening sets out the options available for schools seeking to manage staffing capacity as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance is available here:

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

In addition to using supply teachers and other temporary or peripatetic teachers, schools can also consider using existing staff more flexibly, including support staff and Initial Teacher Training trainees, or volunteers, as would usually be the case.

■ Special Educational Needs: Remote Education

Tulip Siddiq:

[116600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) support and (b) funding is available for local authorities to support parents, relevant therapists and educators for the effective delivery of vulnerable children's education, health and care plans in the home.

Vicky Ford:

It remains very important for children and young people to attend their education setting, to support their education and wellbeing. There are, however, a small number of children and young people who are clinically extremely vulnerable who are advised to stay at home, except for specific purposes. There will also be some children and young people who are self-isolating and, therefore, not able to attend their education setting.

Where attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation on the COVID-19 outbreak, settings have a duty to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children. We have worked with schools to co-design the remote education service for schools, further education providers and teachers. In addition,

the Oak National Academy provides free video lessons across a broad range of subjects, including specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The department has invested over £195 million to support remote education and access to online social care, with over 340,000 laptops and tablets being made available this term to support disadvantaged children. This supplements over 220,000 laptops and tablets and over 50,000 4G wireless routers already delivered during the summer term.

Those providing care or support to meet a child or young person's everyday needs can also continue to visit them in their home, ensuring they follow social distancing guidance where close or personal contact is not required. This includes for the delivery of therapies that would normally be provided in an education setting. NHS England's medical directorate are the professional lead for therapists and the department continues to work closely with them and Public Health England to ensure that the needs of children with SEND are appropriately prioritised.

Where a child who is clinically extremely vulnerable has an Education, Health and Care Plan, parents, education settings, health professionals and local authorities should work together to agree the best arrangement for that individual child and their family to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need. The department engages regularly with local authority SEND leads to provide support and challenge, including around undertaking their statutory duties where there are specific concerns that children are not in their usual setting.

Local authorities have been allocated a further £4.6 billion to help their communities tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 outbreak service pressures in their local area, including support to children's services.

We will also be investing £730 million into high needs during the 2021/22 financial year, which represents a 10% increase, coming on top of the additional £780 million invested during the 2020/21 financial year. This means the high needs block will have grown by over £1.5 billion, or nearly a quarter, in just two years. This additional investment is taking the overall budget to over £8 billion during the next financial year and will go directly to local authorities to support children and young people with the most complex SEND.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Thangam Debonnaire:

[116560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to clarify Government guidance on higher education team sport during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Michelle Donelan:

Arrangements for sporting activities in higher education (HE) during the period of national restrictions are set out in this guidance document:

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

Where sporting activities are part of an educational course, students can continue those activities and providers will need to ensure that these take place in a COVID-secure way. Similarly, programmes for elite athletes in HE may also continue. Unless team sporting activities are part of educational courses or elite performance programmes, they would not be possible.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[116439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is he taking to help ensure the safe return and arrival of (a) students and (b) international students to university in January 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

Following the end of term break, our priority for January will be the welfare of students, staff, and the communities around higher education (HE) providers. We are looking to utilise mass testing to make the return to HE as safe as possible and will provide further guidance in due course, considering future developments and the relevant scientific advice.

To keep transmission of COVID-19 in the UK as low as possible, with regards to students arriving from outside the UK, all international arrivals will be required to complete a passenger locator form on arrival, and passengers travelling from a country not on the exemption list will need to self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days. The government will review these measures regularly to ensure they are in line with the latest scientific evidence and remain effective and necessary.

We are working with the HE sector to ensure that students are welcomed to the UK and are supported on arrival by their chosen university. Further guidance on these measures is available here: www.gov.uk/uk-border-control.

Universities UK have published guidance for the sector to help providers support students fully and properly throughout this period. We would encourage them to have regard for this guidance when planning for the arrival of international students. This can be found at: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2020/self-isolation-guidance.pdf.

Caroline Lucas:

[116448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to (a) enable and (b) encourage university students who go home for the Christmas 2020 holiday to get a covid-19 test before they return to university for the following term; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

Following the end of term break, our top priority for January will be the welfare of students, staff and the communities around higher education providers. We are

looking to utilise mass testing to make the return to higher education as safe as possible, and will provide further guidance in due course, considering future developments and the relevant scientific advice.

Caroline Lucas:

[116450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to (a) consult with (i) representatives of universities and (ii) local Directors of Public Health before the 2020 Christmas holidays on what basic principles should be applied for the covid-safe return of students to universities in January 2020 and (b) ensure that plans for that return of students includes the time required for those bodies to put the relevant measures in place to reflect those principles; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

Following the end of term break, the department's priority for January will be the welfare of students as well as staff and the communities around higher education (HE) providers. We are looking to utilise mass testing to make the return to HE as safe as possible, and will provide further guidance in due course as we recognise the importance of clarity for students, staff and parents.

The department regularly engages with representatives from the HE sector – at both official and ministerial level – including on matters relating to the COVID-19 response. We also liaise with health experts such as local Directors of Public Health and will continue to do so on future planning.

Daisy Cooper:

[116664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance entitled Student movement and plans for the end of autumn 2020 term, published on 13 November 2020, whether students are required to self-isolate on return to their term-time address after the Christmas 2020 holiday.

Michelle Donelan:

Following the end of term break, our top priority for January will be the welfare of students, staff and the communities around higher education (HE) providers. Department for Education officials are working with Department of Health and Social Care regarding January testing plans and will provide further guidance in due course, considering future developments and the relevant scientific advice.

If students are symptomatic or have tested positive, they should follow the standard government guidance, including self-isolating immediately and booking a test through the .GOV.UK website, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

■ Students: Loans

Stella Creasy:

[117244]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 November 2020 to Question 91878 on Students: Loans, what recent assessment he has made of the equity of charging interest on Plan 1 student loans during maternity leave.

Michelle Donelan:

There has been no recent assessment made on the equity of charging interest on Plan 1 student loans during maternity leave.

Student loans have much more favourable terms than commercial loans.

Repayments are linked to income, not to interest, or the amount borrowed. Borrowers earning less than the annual repayment threshold of £19,390 for Plan 1 loans repay nothing at all. The interest rate on Plan 1 (pre-2012) income-contingent repayment student loans is the Retail Price Index (currently 2.6%), or the Bank Base Rate +1%, whichever is lower. The current interest rate of 1.1% will remain in place until such time as the Bank Base Rate changes.

The current system protects borrowers, including people on maternity and other forms of parental leave, if they see a reduction in their income. Repayments are made based on a borrower's monthly or weekly income, not the interest rate or amount borrowed, and no repayments are made for earnings below the repayment thresholds.

Loans are written off after a specified time, with no detriment to the borrower. There are no commercial loans that offer this level of borrower protection. Student loans are subsidised by the taxpayer; the government does not make a profit from the loan scheme.

Supply Teachers: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:****[116557]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effect on school budgets of the cost of supply teachers as a result of staff and (b) capability of schools to meet the costs of staff absence.

Nick Gibb:

Following last year's Spending Review, core school funding is increasing by £2.6 billion in the financial year 2020-21 and will increase by £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively, compared to 2019-20. On average, schools are attracting 4.2% more per pupil this year compared to 2019-20.

Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and this has ensured they have been able to continue to pay for staff and meet their other regular financial commitments.

The Department for Education's Guidance for schools on full opening sets out the options available for schools seeking to manage staffing capacity and absences as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It is available at:

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

In addition to using supply teachers and other temporary staff, schools can also consider using existing staff more flexibly, including support staff and Initial Teacher Training trainees, or volunteers, as would usually be the case.

As stated in our guidance, schools should continue to use their existing resources to manage staffing capacity. Where schools do hire agency workers, we recommend they consider using the Department's and the Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal, as this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deal-for-schools-hiring-supply-teachers-and-agency-workers>.

The Department continue to work with stakeholders and representative bodies to understand staffing capacity and are keeping the situation under close review.

■ Universities: Building Regulations and Fire Prevention

Emma Hardy: [\[116628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his letter to vice chancellors dated 18 November 2019 whether all universities have completed the review requested of them to ensure adherence to building and fire safety regulations; and what matters have been identified as arising from those reviews.

Emma Hardy: [\[116629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the role of the fire safety review, called for in his letter of the 18 November 2019 to vice chancellors, in the evacuation of the Paragon student accommodation in October 2020.

Emma Hardy: [\[116630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has received a copy of the final report into the cause of the fire at The Cube student accommodation in Bolton last year; and what steps his Department has taken in response to that matter.

Michelle Donelan:

The safety of students and staff across the education estate remains Ministers' highest priority. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, received a 100% response from higher education (HE) institutions following his letter of 18 November 2019, which asked them to review their fire safety arrangements.

HE institutions are autonomous bodies and they are responsible for the buildings they own. We expect them to take into account the latest building safety guidance for owners of multi-storey, residential buildings published on 20 January this year by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The evacuation of the student accommodation owned by Paragon was co-ordinated by the building owners with the relevant universities. Students were moved quickly to new accommodation, and the process was monitored by departmental officials.

The department has received a copy of a report on the cause of the fire at The Cube. Further action is for the local authorities. Department officials continue to work closely with their MHCLG counterparts to ensure action is taken across the education estate, including in response to the January guidance, as part of cross government work on fire safety working with the sector and local authorities.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:****[118108]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has put in place plans to scrutinise the husbandry practices of EU nations after the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK is proud of its world-leading food, health and animal welfare standards. After the transition period, we will maintain our own sanitary and phytosanitary system so that we can set our own rules and standards. We have been clear that we will not lower our standards nor put the UK's biosecurity at risk as we negotiate new trade deals.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 retains our standards on animal welfare, animal and plant health and food safety at the end of the transition period. This maintains the same high level of protection for both domestic and imported products.

From 1 January 2021, the UK will assess and inspect trading partners who apply to import live animals and their products, to ensure that our import conditions for food and feed safety and standards, animal health and animal welfare are properly met. Assessments will be coordinated by Defra and will be based on the risk associated with a specific import. This will ensure the UK maintains a high level of protection of human and animal health for its citizens and businesses.

■ Air Pollution: Curriculum**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[116381]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the incorporation of air quality within the national curriculum.

Rebecca Pow:

Air pollution poses the biggest environmental threat to public health and improving air quality remains a top priority for the Government. In delivering against our challenging air quality commitments, we regularly hold discussions with Ministers and officials across Government departments, including the Department for Education. We have had no specific discussions on the incorporation of air quality within the national curriculum.

Defra's Air Quality Grant Scheme has provided funding to local authorities to undertake projects focused on schools. Last year's scheme awarded nearly £500,000 to Blaby District Council, East Sussex County Council, Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority and Wokingham Borough Council to undertake education and awareness projects in schools to encourage behaviour change such as active travel.

■ Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks: Nature Conservation

Ruth Jones:

[116652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of whether the UK's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty meet the standards for category 1 or 2 environmentally protected areas as set out by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Rebecca Pow:

We consider that National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England are most closely aligned with the definition of category 5 protected areas (Protected Landscapes) as set out by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and they are identified as such in our national reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In implementing the proposals set out in the Landscapes Review published in 2019 we intend to support our National Parks and AONBs to become exemplars of the IUCN's category 5 landscapes.

■ Barbecues

Daisy Cooper:

[116665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving local authorities increased powers to control, enforce and penalise the wrongful use of disposable BBQs.

Rebecca Pow:

Fire prevention is a matter for the Home Office, whilst Defra is responsible for measures relating to wildfire mitigation across our natural landscapes. I can confirm that the Government has not issued advice to local authorities on the use of disposable barbecues.

The current byelaw legislation allows for local authorities to restrict and enforce the use of disposable barbecues in parks and public spaces. There are existing powers in legislation which can be used by authorities to regulate and prohibit the lighting of fires on Access Land and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks.

The Government is working with AONBs, National Park Authorities; and other Government departments to educate users about travelling to and spending time outdoors safely in green spaces and in the wider countryside. This includes an updated Countryside Code which advises against barbecues or fires. This guidance is available at the following links:

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

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

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Luke Pollard:

[\[116646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the completion of UK REACH registration dossiers for grandfathered EU REACH registrations, whether a Letter of Access already paid for by a UK registrant for an EU REACH registration will remain valid or the UK registrant pays for a new Letter of Access with the data-owning EU27 registrant when a UK-based registrant or the UK authority is unable to access or get copies of the full study reports as already submitted for EU-REACH registrations.

Rebecca Pow:

UK REACH retains the 'one substance, one registration' principle and allows for the sharing of data between companies with the aim of reducing cost and the need for further animal testing. A Letter of Access (LoA) can offer one way for a business to obtain the information it needs to complete the grandfathering of the registration in question. However, LoAs are commercial arrangements negotiated by industry and as such the range of potential uses for the information is dependent on the scope and wording agreed by the relevant businesses.

■ Dogs: Imports

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[118511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the limit on bringing more than five dogs to the UK on the efforts to rescue and re-home dogs.

Victoria Prentis:

The regulations governing the non-commercial movements of cats, dogs and ferrets stipulate that people cannot bring more than 5 pets per person into the UK unless they are attending or training for a competition, show, sporting event (and written evidence of registration is required). However, dogs imported into the UK for rescue or rehoming must be moved under the commercial 'Balai Directive' regulations, which has different requirements. These regulations place no limits on consignment sizes. Any decisions made by the carriers (such as ferries and trains) to restrict consignment sizes in ways not required by the regulations are commercial decisions to which the Government is not party.

Anybody wishing to move animals into the UK during these unprecedented times must plan all journeys carefully, ensuring that the proposed journey is realistic and complies with all relevant regulations and legislation around the movement of animals throughout the animals' entire journey, including welfare in transport, as well as relevant COVID-19 legislation.

The end of the Transition Period may open up new opportunities for managing our own commercial and non-commercial import and pet travel arrangements. The Government will be considering our pet travel and import arrangements (including for

puppies and kittens) as part of cracking down on puppy smuggling in line with our manifesto commitment.

■ Electric Vehicles: Official Cars

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[118565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of the vehicles used by his Department on Government business are electric vehicles.

Victoria Prentis:

Victoria Prentis

As of 12 November 2020, the proportion of electric cars operated by Defra is 6.0%. The table below shows the proportion split by organisation.

| | DIESEL / PETROL | HYBRID | PLUG-IN HYBRID | FULLY ELECTRIC | TOTAL | FULLY ELECTRIC PROPORTION |
|---|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Animal and Plant Health Agency | 162 | 90 | 7 | 4 | 263 | 1.5% |
| Defra | 87 | 27 | 22 | 14 | 150 | 9.3% |
| Environment Agency | 2,172 | 1,078 | 432 | 251 | 3,933 | 6.4% |
| Marine Management Organisation | 17 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 24 | 4.2% |
| Natural England | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0.0% |
| Rural Payments Agency | 84 | 33 | 6 | 1 | 124 | 0.8% |
| Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0.0% |
| Total | 2,531 | 1,233 | 468 | 271 | 4,503 | 6.0% |

All of the cars above are managed by Defra Group Fleet Services (Environment Agency). There are other cars within Defra (the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and

Sea Fish). However, they manage their own fleets and we do not hold the information requested.

■ Inland Waterways: Access

Sarah Olney:

[\[118557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to make English and Welsh waterways more accessible after the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

After the transition period, Government policy will continue to recognise that access to waterways brings positive public benefits including health and well-being from exercise and recreation in the open air, as well as connecting communities more widely with the natural environment. Our waterways are enthusiastically used by a range of people with differing interests, including pedestrians, cyclists, anglers, paddle craft, and motorboaters amongst others. We believe it is essential that all interests work together when considering how the accessibility of waterways might be improved. This might include waterside path improvement, which would be led by the navigation or local authority involved. We believe that access to unregulated waterways should be achieved through encouraging voluntary access agreements, between riparian landowners and others with an interest in using the waterway, which take into account local circumstances.

■ Marine Environment: Conservation

Luke Pollard:

[\[116647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to implement the £500-million Blue Planet Fund to restore marine ecosystems that the Prime Minister committed to at the UN High-Level summit on biodiversity; what the scope is of projects the Blue Planet Fund will support; how those projects are to be selected; and how that funding is planned to be distributed.

Rebecca Pow:

The Blue Planet Fund is being designed and delivered jointly by Defra and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The Fund will be resourced through the UK Aid budget and will help eligible countries and UK Overseas Territories reduce poverty and protect and sustainably manage their marine resources. It will build on other UK initiatives which aim to protect and manage the marine environment, such as the Blue Belt Programme and Commonwealth Marine Economies programme. The Fund focuses on tackling the key human-generated threats to the ocean including climate change, marine pollution and overfishing.

■ Nature Conservation: Land

Ruth Jones:

[116653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to increase the regular monitoring of protected land to ensure it is in good condition and contributing to nature's recovery.

Rebecca Pow:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Defra is investing in a Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) which is a long-term programme to understand the state and condition of biodiversity, ecosystems and natural capital assets in England. This is being piloted with £5m of funding in 2020/21 by a partnership including Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Forest Research. Data from this programme will inform the annual Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes (MEOPL), which records how protected landscapes in England are changing and provides a broad indication of how they are performing with respect to the criteria for which they are designated.

Natural England is developing a new approach to monitoring protected sites, which include Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites. This includes the use of new technologies such as remote sensing and greater partnership involvement. Natural England's 5-year strategy for investment in monitoring the natural environment and its benefits across England's land and sea was published in 2019:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5752753379082240>

The statutory purposes of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are enshrined in legislation and are primarily to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of those areas. The management of these protected landscapes is informed by statutory management plans, which set out the agreed policies and objectives to help deliver their statutory purposes. These documents, including monitoring reports, are publicly available online via:

<https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/national-park-management-plans/the-ten-english-national-park-management-plans>

<https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/aonbs/overview>

The Landscape Review, led by Julian Glover and published in September 2019, recommended that management plans should be strengthened and set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery. We are carefully considering all the recommendations of the review and will respond in due course.

■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks

Ruth Jones:

[116651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within (a) National Parks and (b) AONBs have favourable conservation status.

Rebecca Pow:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only. Natural England monitors the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England. Based on data from November 2020, the proportion, by area, of SSSI in National Parks that is in favourable condition is 25.5%. The proportion of SSSI in AONBs that is in favourable condition is 33.5%.

■ Water Supply

Colleen Fletcher:

[116503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the amount of water lost through leakage in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Discover Water website publishes up to date records on leakage. Details can be found here: discoverwater.co.uk/leaking-pipes.

Severn Trent and South Staffordshire cover Coventry and the West Midlands. A map of the area that each water company in England covers can be found here: www.ofwat.gov.uk/contact-companies.

Below is the data as reported by the water companies in their annual returns on water resources management plans. We have included the total leakage for Severn Trent Water and South Staffordshire Water which are the water companies in the area. The total leakage is in megalitres per day. One megalitre is 1,000,000 litres.

| WATER COMPANY | TOTAL LEAKAGE ML/D | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Severn Trent Water | Total leakage ML/d | 440 | 429 | 424 | 446 | 418 | 399 |
| South Staffordshire Water | Total leakage ML/d | 69 | 70 | 70 | 72 | 71 | 69 |
| England total | Total leakage | 2921 | 2876 | 2899 | 2967 | 2951 | 2771 |

| WATER COMPANY | TOTAL LEAKAGE ML/D | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | MI/d | | | | | | |
| Water Company | Leakage l/property/d | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
| Severn Trent Water | Leakage l/property/d | 125.68 | 121.58 | 118.84 | 123.27 | 114.88 | 108.51 |
| South Staffordshire Water | Leakage l/property/d | 119.30 | 119.46 | 118.91 | 122.59 | 123.63 | 115.16 |
| England average | Leakage l/property/d | 124.24 | 121.47 | 120.78 | 124.14 | 120.83 | 111.57 |

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Assadolah Assadi

Ian Mearns:

[\[117979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Iranian authorities on the arrested Iranian diplomat Assadolah Assadi in Belgium.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the trial of four Iranians in Belgium in relation to the 2018 plot against a conference in Paris. We are deeply concerned by reports that an Iranian diplomat is one of those standing trial in connection with the incident. While the legal process is ongoing, however, it would be inappropriate to comment further and we have not made specific representations to the Iranian Government. The UK strongly condemns the targeting of civilians and welcomes steps taken to hold those responsible to account. We continue to work closely with our European partners on security and counter-terrorism issues. We are not aware at this stage of a link to the UK.

■ Breast Ironing

Fiona Bruce:

[\[118512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has received on the practice of breast ironing in countries which receive UK Official Development Assistance.

James Duddridge:

Addressing all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), including harmful practices like breast ironing and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), is a priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

UK funded initiatives like our ground-breaking *What Works to Prevent Violence* Programme are working to challenge discriminatory social norms which are a key factor in perpetuating these harmful practices. Rigorous evidence generated through *What Works* has shown that harmful attitudes and norms can change in less than three years. Approaches that engaged whole communities to challenge harmful perceptions and norms achieved significant reductions in VAWG of around 50 per cent. UK Aid has also supported the Africa-led movement to end FGM since 2013, which has helped over 10,000 communities, representing over 27 million people, pledge to abandon FGM. The UK has also recently launched the next component of support. Through a major investment of up to £31.5 million, we are supporting an exciting new partnership to accelerate action to end FGM in high prevalence countries in Africa.

■ Embassies: Coronavirus**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[116590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the covid-19 restrictions and workplace safety guidelines apply to embassies in the UK.

Wendy Morton:

Without prejudice to any immunity from jurisdiction or inviolability which is accorded to any mission or person through the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations (VCDR/VCCR); Her Majesty's Government expects all diplomatic and consular missions to continue to follow the letter and intention of the COVID-19 restrictions to help support our collective efforts to fight the corona virus pandemic.

■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**Hilary Benn:**[\[116394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia; and whether he has made representations to the parties involved.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned by the ongoing violence between federal and regional forces in the Tigray region and the risk it poses to civilians, and by reports of ethnically-motivated attacks. We are gravely concerned at Amnesty International's report of killings of civilians on 9 November; we call for transparency and accountability to be delivered for such incidents. The Foreign Secretary called Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November to raise our concerns and stress the urgent need to prioritise the protection of civilian lives, restore services (including banks and telecommunications)

and enable humanitarian access. He also urged for a de-escalation of violence and called for moves to political dialogue. On 18 November, I reinforced this message with the Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK. The British Ambassador to Ethiopia and other officials also continue to reinforce these messages at the highest levels and we continue to engage regional and wider international partners to push for swift de-escalation of the situation.

■ Iran: Trials

Tulip Siddiq: [\[116591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many trials of British citizens in the Revolutionary Court officials from the UK Embassy in Tehran have been able to attend since the reopening of that embassy in 2015.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[116592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many British citizens in Iranian prisons officials from the UK Embassy in Tehran have been able to visit since its reopening in 2015.

James Cleverly:

Since the reopening of the UK Embassy in Tehran in 2015, officials have not been able to visit dual British nationals detained or attend their trials. Iran does not recognise dual nationality nor grant consular access to our dual national detainees. We have repeatedly pressed, and will continue to press, for consular access and appropriate medical care. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office provides a range of assistance to dual British nationals detained in Iran and their families. We regularly lobby the Iranians on health concerns and mistreatment allegations - and for the immediate and permanent release of all arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran

■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

Tulip Siddiq: [\[116593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government has not asserted its right to consular access in the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; and who authorised the decision not to do so when requested following the recent deterioration in her case.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[116596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the last eight months of release on furlough on the mental health of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; and what steps he has taken to mitigate those effects.

James Cleverly:

As I stated in my answer of 2 November to question 107688, we have made numerous formal requests for consular access to Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and we will

continue to do so. However, Iran does not recognise dual nationality nor grant consular access to dual-nationals; even while on furlough, the authorities continue to treat her as an Iranian national only. It is indefensible and unacceptable that Iran has brought new charges against Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. We have consistently called for her full release and been clear that she must not be returned to prison.

We remain concerned about Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's mental and physical health and we have repeatedly demanded, and will continue to demand, consular access and appropriate medical care. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office remains in regular contact with both Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her family, and we continue to provide our support.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[116599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has requested from the Iranian Government that representatives of the International Bar Association be allowed to attend (a) any future hearings of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in the Revolutionary Court and (b) hearings in the Revolutionary Court of any other British citizen.

James Cleverly:

We formally requested, by Note Verbale, the UK Government's attendance at Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's hearing on 2 November in order to support her but we were not permitted access. So far, we have, regrettably, never been granted access to Iranian judicial hearings for any of our dual British national detainees, but we continue firmly to lobby for access to them. We have not yet requested the International Bar Association to monitor any future hearings.

■ Overseas Aid

Claire Hanna: [\[118607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to maintain the level of the overseas aid budget funding set at 0.7 per cent of gross national income in 2021.

James Cleverly:

Future spending plans are subject to the outcome of the Spending Review. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will deliver a statement on the 2020 Spending Review on 25 November in the House of Commons.

■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[116617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much UK aid funding the Government has allocated to the global response to covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is one of the largest donors to the international response to the COVID-19 crisis. We have committed up to £1.3 billion of new UK aid since the start of the

pandemic, to counter its health, humanitarian and socio-economic impacts in the world's poorest countries, and to find and equitably distribute a vaccine.

This includes the UK's commitment of up to £500 million for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which will contribute to a total supply of 1 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses for 92 developing countries in 2021, subject to the successful approval of stringent safety tests and regulations.

■ World Health Assembly: Taiwan

Alicia Kearns:

[\[116673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the refusal of the World Healthy Assembly at its 73rd plenary to consider Taiwan for membership of the Assembly; and what steps the UK and allied countries are taking to ensure that Taiwan is recognised in global health forums.

Nigel Adams:

The UK continues to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations where statehood is not a prerequisite. This includes the World Health Organization (WHO), where Taiwan can make a valuable contribution. The UK recently worked alongside likeminded countries to lobby the WHO at official level to issue an invitation to Taiwan to observe this month's World Health Assembly and continues to lobby the WHO to allow Taiwan to participate in all relevant WHO technical meetings. Lessons learnt from Taiwan's effective tackling of the COVID-19 pandemic adds significant value to the international fight against the virus.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[\[117184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many remote assessments for an early medical abortion have taken place since 30 March 2020 and how many have conducted by (a) telephone or mobile phone or (b) video call.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Department does not hold this information centrally.

■ Abortion: Drugs

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[\[117180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in how many cases of abortion pills prescribed remotely since 30 March 2020 the abortion was carried out later than 9 weeks and 6 days.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[117181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in how many cases where both abortion pills have been taken at home since 30 March 2020 a woman received a scan to confirm the gestation of her pregnancy.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Department does not hold this information centrally.

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[117183]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women have taken two abortion pills at home (a) at the same time and (b) with an interval between the two since 30 March 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Department does not hold this information centrally.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption

Navendu Mishra:

[116681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 restrictions on levels of alcohol consumption.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has published an online monitoring tool to track behavioural changes, including alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings on alcohol consumption are that intake across the population as a whole remained about the same during the pandemic. Those aged 18 to 34 were more likely to report consuming less alcohol each week than before and those aged 35 to 54 were more likely to report an increase. There was also an increase in the proportion of 'high risk' drinking from April to September. The monitoring tool is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wider-impacts-of-covid-19-on-health-monitoring-tool>

■ Autism: Children

Navendu Mishra:

[116688]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of children diagnosed with Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome; and how many of their families have received additional specialist support.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus**Sir Mark Hendrick:****[103433]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of British residents that have contracted covid-19 on a flight in each of the last six months.

Helen Whately:

It is not possible to systematically identify where infection occurs in individual positive cases of COVID-19.

■ Brain Injuries and Death: Babies**Jeremy Hunt:****[116434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many neonatal brain (a) injuries and (b) deaths were reported in the NHS in each year from 2010 to 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The numbers of neonatal brain injuries and neonatal deaths in England in years from 2010 is shown in the following table:

| YEAR | NEONATAL BRAIN INJURIES ¹ | NEONATAL DEATHS ² |
|------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2010 | 3,390 ³ | 2,015 |
| 2011 | 3,532 ³ | 2,023 |
| 2012 | 3,404 | 1,933 |
| 2013 | 3,393 | 1,774 |
| 2014 | 3,558 | 1,679 |
| 2015 | 3,445 | 1,745 |
| 2016 | 3,446 | 1,832 |
| 2017 | 3,270 | 1,810 |
| 2018 | Not yet available | 1,742 |
| 2019 | Not yet available | |
| 2020 | Not yet available | |

Notes:

¹ Source: Imperial College, London, 2017 and 2019. The 2017 report is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safer-maternity-care-progress-and-next-steps>

² Source: Office for National Statistics: Child mortality (death cohort) tables in England and Wales, available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/childmortalitystatisticschildhoodinfantandperinatalchildhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales>

³ The original report presents a range for the years 2010 (3,160 to 3,619) and 2011 (3,434 to 3,630) as the available data did not cover all births in England. The table presents the midpoints of these ranges.

■ Brain: Tumours

Jim Shannon:

[117258]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to (a) increase the Government funding available and (b) lower the threshold for approval for funding allocated through the National Institute for Health Research for brain tumour research projects.

Edward Argar:

In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million over the five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission through the Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

Similar to other Government research funders, the NIHR only funds high quality research. This maximises the likelihood of positive patient impact and gives the highest chance of success. Without this there would be not only a risk to patient safety but also a risk of wasted investment.

Applications to the NIHR are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, scientific quality, and value for money.

■ Breast Cancer: Clinical Trials

Mike Kane:

[118533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support breast cancer clinical trial recruitment.

Edward Argar:

In May 2020 the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) published a Restart Framework to support the restarting of research paused due to COVID-19. The framework provides a flexible structure for local decision-making. Our goal is to restore a fully active portfolio of NIHR research while continuing to support important COVID-19 studies as part of the Government's response to the pandemic.

The majority of cancer clinical trials are open to recruitment.

■ Cancer: Nurses

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[116537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on additional funding in the Comprehensive Spending Review to address the (a) pre-existing shortage of and (b) increased demand for cancer nurse specialists to tackle the covid-19 cancer treatment backlog.

Jo Churchill:

As part of the Spending Review, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Chancellor of the Exchequer have discussed a range of matters. Decisions on future investment in the cancer workforce in England will be subject to the outcome of the current Spending Review which will be announced in due course.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[109731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing regular testing for covid-19 infection for a named visitor for each person in a care home so that, after that testing, a person's partner, child or significant other can visit that person in their care home on a regular basis.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: We want to bring an end to the pain of separation and help care homes bring families and loved ones together. The launch of visitor testing is a crucial step to making that happen. We aim to rollout visitor testing nationwide by Christmas.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[117343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care homes will be involved in the pilot trialling the use of covid-19 tests to allow care home visits to take place.

Helen Whately:

The trial began on 16 November across 20 care homes in three local authorities: Cornwall, Devon and Hampshire. The care homes taking part in the trial were chosen from areas of low COVID-19 prevalence.

■ Care Homes: Inspections

Theresa Villiers:

[\[109205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that Care Quality Commission staff carrying out care home inspections are regularly tested for covid-19 to help prevent the transmission of that virus by those staff.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: We recognise the need to ensure professionals are able to visit care homes safely. We will begin weekly PCR testing of Care Quality Commission inspectors shortly.

Any symptomatic member of staff is eligible for testing through the self-referral portal.

We will continue to review our social care testing strategy for adult social care in light of the latest evidence and available capacity.

Contact Tracing**Luke Pollard:****[95219]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure venues collecting information for Track and Trace purposes are adhering to the General Data Protection Regulations.

Helen Whately:

All personal data collected by venues to support NHS Test and Trace must be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) to protect privacy. Guidance on how to do this and how to dispose of records after 21 days is provided at the following link:

www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has also published detailed guidance on how organisations can ensure they are GDPR compliant:

<https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/coronavirus-recovery-data-protection-advice-for-organisations/collecting-customer-and-visitor-details-for-contact-tracing/>

The ICO may issue penalties against businesses who are found to be in breach of GDPR.

Contact Tracing: Computer Software**Alex Sobel:****[105530]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason (a) supermarkets and (b) petrol stations are not required to use the NHS QR Code for track and trace.

Helen Whately:

There is a higher risk of transmitting COVID-19 in premises where customers and visitors spend a long time in one place and potentially come into sustained, close contact with other people outside of their household such as pubs, bars and restaurants and close contact services. There is a lower risk where services are taken off site immediately.

In supermarkets, customers generally move around the space rather than congregate, and are expected, by law, to wear face coverings. QR code posters for NHS Test and Trace are therefore not required for the entrance to a supermarket or other retail outlet. Venues that are not required by law to display a National Health Service QR code poster may still choose to do so as part of the effort to fight coronavirus.

Further guidance, including a full list of establishments that must request contact details from staff, customers and visitors, and display an official NHS QR code poster is published at the following link:

www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace

Sarah Owen:

[92902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the findings of the covid-19 contact tracing app trials that took place in (a) Newham and (b) the Isle of Wight; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: We will publish an evaluation of the Isle of Wight and Newham findings in due course.

■ **Contact Tracing: Tower Hamlets**

Apsana Begum:

[107759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the contracts agreed between his Department and (a) Serco, (b) Sitel Group and (c) all other commercial providers of track and trace functions operating in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: National contracts were awarded to commercial providers Serco and Sitel to provide call handling services for the contact track and trace initiative. The contracts have been published and are available at the following links:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/c23fdaf-d1f2-4d8c-a0cd-6b6f35793ccd>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/7645e3ef-ce16-4cae-8932-1eb6521a50cb>

■ **Contraceptives**

Karin Smyth:

[116567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure local authorities are adequately supported in the reopening of comprehensive contraceptive services to support choice of appropriate contraception for women.

Jo Churchill:

Sexual and reproductive health services have remained open during the pandemic though some are temporarily reducing their face-to-face appointments and may only be able to see emergency or urgent cases in person. Services are maintaining access during this time through scaling up of online services including increasing eligibility through current provision or utilising a neighbours' service for residents of another local authority. Public Health England have recently launched the National Framework for e-Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare. This new national framework will allow local authorities and service providers to purchase an expanded range of on-line services including emergency contraception and the contraceptive pill.

The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare have published clinical advice to support ongoing provision of effective contraception which health professionals should work to. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.fsrh.org/documents/fsrh-guidance-srh-services-second-wave-covid-october-2020/>

■ Coronavirus: Bedford**Mohammad Yasin:****[99075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the covid-19 testing facility located at Borough Hall in Bedford will reduce from seven to four days a week during a period in which the infection rate in the borough is increasing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: Demand for testing is increasing and as such some test sites will have reductions of testing capacity, so we can keep maximum capacity in highest risk areas. Allocation decisions are frequently and systematically reviewed to ensure we are using our testing where it can be most effective. We are working to develop more sophisticated approaches, based on the latest evidence to manage the prioritisation process to ensure that we are able to provide appropriate testing for both outbreak management and surveillance purposes.

Mohammad Yasin:**[99076]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the covid-19 testing facility located at Borough Hall in Bedford is reducing its service provision from seven to four days a week.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]:

Demand for testing is increasing and as such some test sites will have reductions of testing capacity, so we can keep maximum capacity in highest risk areas. Allocation decisions are frequently and systematically reviewed to ensure we are using our testing where it can be most effective. We are working to develop more sophisticated approaches, based on the latest evidence to manage the prioritisation process to

ensure that we are able to provide appropriate testing for both outbreak management and surveillance purposes.

■ **Coronavirus: Collective Worship**

Jon Trickett:

[\[91941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) advice and (b) guidance provided by the (i) Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England on the ban on communal worship during the November 2020 covid-19 national lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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

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

It is known that confined spaces, multiple households, limited ventilation, and people raising their voices are all known to be risk factors when spreading COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[103552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what use NHS Test and Trace is making of information from credit checking agencies.

Helen Whately:

In order to request a Home Test, a user must first verify their identity using a service provided by TransUnion. Identity verification is built into the process in order to minimise the risk of fraudulent ordering.

If an individual is not willing or able to undertake the identity verification provided by TransUnion, they should call 119 for further assistance, or seek to book an appointment at a regional test site or mobile testing unit, where a member of staff will confirm their identity in person.

TransUnion provides identity verification checks as part of the registration process for a home test kit. This is not a credit check and will not affect an individual's credit score.

Jeremy Wright:

[\[106262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing registered NHS volunteer responders to assist with NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Volunteer Responders programme, is available to help support people in England who need it. NHS Volunteer Responders carry out simple, one-off non-medical tasks to support people who need help, for instance in accessing essentials.

NHS Volunteer Responders provide a different but complementary service to the NHS Test and Trace service. They are part of the end-to-end service that helps identify, contain and control COVID-19, preventing the spread of the virus, protecting local communities and saving lives.

Rachel Reeves: [\[111487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been trained as contact tracers for the national system since it was established.

Rachel Reeves: [\[111488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been recruited as contact tracers for the national system since it was established.

Rachel Reeves: [\[111489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have worked at least one shift per week as a contact tracer since the NHS test and trace system was established; and how long an average each shift is.

Rachel Reeves: [\[111490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have worked at least three shifts per week as a contact tracer since the NHS test and trace system was established.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Sitel and Serco recruited and trained 18,000 full time equivalent (FTE) staff at the peak of delivery to provide the non-National Health Service call handling services to support the test and trace initiative. There is a standard replacement of staff who leave.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[94334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to introduce fines for those who test positive for covid-19 and refuse to give details of their contacts.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 28 September 2020]: Since 28 September people who test positive for COVID-19 or are contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate must do so by law. The legal duty also requires people to provide accurate details of their household contacts and not to obstruct the work of contact tracers. The legal duty will be enforced with fines for those that do not comply.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[99663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recent loss of test data, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling local Directors of Public Health to run their own test and trace service.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: NHS Test and Trace has always been a partnership between local and national Government. Since August, NHS Test and Trace has provided local authorities with dedicated team of contact tracers to work alongside local public health officials to provide a more specialist service. Local public health officials can use the data provided by NHS Test and Trace to follow up with cases, which in some areas has involved local teams and voluntary partners visiting people at home.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[113236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the tiered regional approach in slowing the rate of covid prior to the national lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Joint Biosecurity Centre is currently assessing the evidence of the effectiveness of non-pharmaceutical interventions of all types. There are some early signs that the introduction and escalation of local alert levels had a material impact on behaviour, the number of household contacts and cases.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[96157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria is being used to review guidance to (a) people shielding and (b) the clinically extremely vulnerable living in local covid-19 lockdown areas; and how regularly that guidance is being reviewed.

Jo Churchill:

Following the introduction of new national restrictions on 5 November, additional advice and support has been provided to clinically extremely vulnerable people to protect themselves further from COVID-19. This advice, and the wider national restrictions, will remain in place until 2 December. At the end of this period we will return to a regional approach based on the latest data. The guidance to clinically extremely vulnerable people is regularly reviewed and the Government will not hesitate to make necessary changes.

Kate Osborne:

[\[97730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to ask clinically extremely vulnerable people to shield again in areas with additional covid-19 restrictions in place.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Shielding was paused on 1 August 2020 in England and clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable people are now required to follow the same local/national arrangements in place as the rest of the population.

Only when the balance of benefit is clear, or in extreme circumstances, will shielding be reintroduced due to the potential harms to people's mental and physical health through social and financial isolation.

The highest risk local areas are discussed regularly each week to assess what level of guidance is appropriate. Where incidence and transmission rates are increasing, we can take a more targeted approach to shielding advice at local authority level. The Government will write to those affected when advice is changed and we continue to work closely with local authorities to ensure that local guidance is available on their websites.

Dan Jarvis:[\[98974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the further covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on 22 September 2020, what plans the Government has to review the guidance on shielding for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: Everyone in England, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, is required to follow the new national restrictions from 5 November, which have been set out by the government and apply to the whole population. Additional guidance and support has been provided to clinically extremely vulnerable people to further protect them from COVID-19 during this time. This advice, and the wider national restrictions, will remain in place until 2 December. The guidance to clinically extremely vulnerable people is regularly reviewed and the Government will not hesitate to make necessary changes as of when reopened.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups**Jane Hunt:**[\[95761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking ensure that guidance on covid-19 relating to BAME people is more accessible to people whose first language is not English.

Jo Churchill:

Since March 2020, Public Health England has translated key public guidance on COVID-19 in multiple languages including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (traditional), Chinese (simplified), French, Gujarati, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi and Urdu. This now also includes translation of shielding guidance into Bulgarian, Hindi and Nepali. Examples of guidance are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

■ **Coronavirus: Greater London**

Apsana Begum:

[108294]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the increased health risk to people (a) living and (b) working in vicinity of the covid-19 testing centre situated in Watney Market Idea store, Shadwell, London.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to rapid and accessible testing for everyone who needs one. We are working with private sector partners to establish local test sites, such as the one at the Watney Market Ideal store, in metropolitan areas across the country. These local test sites are being used to test eligible individuals who may not have access to a car and are set up in places where there is space and local demand for testing. Local test sites are deployed at the direction of Local Resilience Forums and Recovery Coordination Groups and decisions are centrally executed at their direction. This co-design approach between local and national teams has been key in achieving the pace at which these sites have been stood up. To monitor cases we are working closely with local authorities and local Directors of Public Health, sharing highly localised case data on a daily basis to understand and tackle local outbreaks.

Apsana Begum:

[108297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department undertook an Equality Impact Assessment of the decision to situate the testing centre in Watney Market Ideas store in Shadwell.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to rapid and accessible testing for everyone who needs one. We are working with private sector partners to establish local test sites, such as the one at the Watney Market Ideal store, in metropolitan areas across the country. These local test sites are being used to test eligible individuals who may not have access to a car and are set up in places where there is space and local demand for testing. Local test sites are deployed at the direction of Local Resilience Forums and Recovery Coordination Groups and decisions are centrally executed at their direction. This co-design approach between local and national teams has been key in achieving the pace at which these sites have been stood up. To monitor cases we are working closely with local authorities and local Directors of Public Health, sharing highly localised case data on a daily basis to understand and tackle local outbreaks.

■ Coronavirus: Gyms and Leisure

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[118045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence informed the decision to close gyms and leisure centres during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[118046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that gyms and leisure centres remain open during any future lockdown restrictions due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: In recognition of the importance of transparency in these unprecedented times, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has been publishing the statements and the accompanying evidence it has reviewed to demonstrate how the scientific understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data emerges, and how SAGE's advice has quickly adapted to new findings that reflect a changing situation.

Our approach as to keeping gyms and leisure centres open during future lockdowns will be guided by the science and advice from SAGE.

The Government keeps these restrictions constantly under review.

■ Coronavirus: Health Services

Seema Malhotra: [\[117267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he is providing for people with long covid in (a) Feltham and Heston and (b) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: NHS England has provided £10 million to fund over 40 pioneering 'long COVID-19' specialised clinics including 5 in London, with one in south west London. The plans for these clinics were published on 15 November, and commissioning guidance was made available on 6 November.

A number of these clinics are already established, and the new clinics will start to accept patients at the end of November. More details will be made available shortly.

■ Coronavirus: Kent

Gareth Johnson: [\[96041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on the availability of covid-19 tests for people living in North Kent of the closure of the covid-19 testing site at Ebbsfleet; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of tests available at the covid-19 testing site in Rochester.

Gareth Johnson:

[96042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people in Dartford constituency who have been tested for covid-19 in the last four weeks.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 1 October 2020]: There are currently a record number of tests available. For those with symptoms of COVID-19 there is a local testing centre at 221 Erith Road, Bexley and a regional testing centre at Curtis Way Coach Park in Rochester.

Demand for testing is increasing and as such test sites in areas with higher prevalence will be prioritised. Areas with lower prevalence will have reductions of testing capacity.

We do not publish data on the number of people tested in the format you have requested. We publish daily statistics on tests cases and deaths down to lower tier local authority level; weekly Test and Trace statistics and Public Health England surveillance reports showing positive cases by various demographics at GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus: Laboratories

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[91131]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much additional funding he has allocated to NHS labs for Pillar 1 covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

This year's Budget announced a £12 billion plan to provide support for public services, individuals and businesses, whose finances are affected by COVID-19. This includes funding to ensure the National Health Service and other public services receive the funding they need to respond to the outbreak as the situation develops and recover and return to normal afterwards.

The breakdown of the expenditure for the 2020/2021 financial year will be published as part of the Department's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts, expected in July 2021. The Department is unable to circulate this information prior to publication. The data will be fully verified and audited as part of the exercise.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[91137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who the prime contractors with direct contracts are with his Department to run the Lighthouse Laboratories.

Helen Whately:

The Department cannot comment on individual contracts due to commercial sensitivity, but public notices of the contracts awarded have been published as normal at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

■ Coronavirus: Newcastle upon Tyne**Chi Onwurah:** [\[91034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, where the new covid-19 laboratory planned for Newcastle will be located; and who is providing that laboratory.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The new Lighthouse laboratory will be located at Baltic Park and will be managed by Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

■ Coronavirus: North West**Ms Angela Eagle:** [\[91573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the capacity is for (a) pillar I and (b) pillar II covid-19 tests in (i) the North West, (ii) Merseyside, (iii) Wirral and (iv) Wallasey constituency.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: The Government does not publish this data in this format.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[113263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice his Department is giving to local authorities on enforcing mask wearing in public spaces.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Regulations that mandate the wearing of face coverings in an array of indoor, public settings in England also allow for exemptions and reasonable excuses.

The Government expects the vast majority of people will comply with the rules, as they have done throughout the pandemic. However, the Regulations do give powers to the police and Transport for London officers to enforce the requirement to wear a face covering. In doing so, the police will use their usual 'four Es' approach: Explaining, Engaging, Encouraging; and Enforcing only issuing a fine as a last resort.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[106218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people shielding in areas subject to Tier 2 and Tier 3 local lockdown restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

Shielding was paused on 1 August 2020 in England. However, it is important that clinically extremely vulnerable people continue to take extra care, particularly as infection rates rise again. On 13 October, the Government published new guidance to

the clinically extremely vulnerable that advises additional things they are advised to do to keep themselves safe at each local COVID-19 alert level. This new guidance is designed to offer practical and proportionate advice to help people protect themselves and minimise the need to introduce restrictive shielding advice.

Where clinically extremely vulnerable individuals need help with the collection of medicines, shopping or other essentials, support is available from National Health Service Volunteer Responders at all local COVID-19 alert levels. Those in a very high local alert level who need extra support at home should contact their local council.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[86001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for the effectiveness of his payment scheme for people in the highest covid-19 risk areas to self-isolate of the ineligibility to those payments of people with no recourse to public funds.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 was introduced on 28 September, to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by National Health Service Test and Trace and will lose income as a result.

The standard eligibility criteria include receipt of Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment to those who are not in receipt of any of the above benefits but meet the other eligibility criteria and will face financial hardship as a result of having to self-isolate. Depending on their individual circumstances, people who have no recourse to public funds may be eligible for a discretionary payment.

■ **Coronavirus: Redbridge**

Wes Streeting:

[89794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons Mildmay Road covid-19 testing centre in Ilford no longer accepts walk in appointments; and for what reasons the local authority was not informed prior to this change in service.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The Department's policy is and has been that appointments should be made prior to visiting any test centre. These can be booked through GOV.UK, 119 or the NHS COVID-19 App.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Munira Wilson:** [\[100548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using regional NHS Genetics Laboratories to increase covid-19 testing capacity.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Capacity in National Health Service laboratories is rapidly increasing, and available capacity is primarily used to test the patients and symptomatic staff who need a test, in line with the Department's guidance. We operate through a localised system of NHS laboratories so that tests are available locally when needed.

Munira Wilson: [\[100549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and which regional NHS Genetics Laboratories are being used to increase covid-19 testing capacity.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Ninety six National Health Service laboratories operate through 29 pathology laboratory networks. This figure is not broken down by region.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[105491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether more than 16,000 covid-19 tests were misplaced as a result of the technical issue identified on Friday 2 October in the data load process.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: We identified that 15,841 cases between 25 September and 2 October were not included in the reported daily COVID-19 cases.

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

Mr Marcus Fysh: [\[107041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of positive covid-19 tests recorded in respect of patients tested 7-10 days after initial infection and who are no longer likely to be infectious.

Helen Whately:

Current United Kingdom guidance is that testing should be undertaken for people who have a new onset of symptoms, and official advice is to get a test as soon as possible after the onset of symptoms. Data related to the time that a swab test is undertaken relative to the time of infection or the time of symptom onset is not routinely collected. Further information on testing is available at the following link:

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

Mr Marcus Fysh:

[107674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the extent to which (a) polymerase chain reaction testing for covid-19 may identify non-infectious remnant RNA of the covid-19 virus as a positive test result and (b) positive tests for covid-19 reported in England would not indicate contagious cases of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is designed to detect viral RNA. Therefore, there will be cases where the PCR test is detecting remnants of viral RNA in the absence of infectious virus.

Public Health England (PHE) has not assessed the extent to which the PCR will pick up viral remnants rather than infectious virus.

An assessment of which positive cases do not reflect contagious virus would depend on individual case by case review. PHE has not performed such a review and therefore does not hold this data.

Apsana Begum:

[107761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the testing centre in Popular and Limehouse constituency was situated in Watney Market Idea store.

Apsana Begum:

[107762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the distance between the covid-19 testing centre in Watney Market Idea store, Shadwell and the (a) nearest residential area, (b) nearest concentration of shops and (c) operational working area of Watney Market traders.

Apsana Begum:

[107763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of potential health risks of the opening of the covid-19 testing centre in Watney Market Idea store, Shadwell to (a) nearby residents, (b) customers and staff of nearby shops and (c) the Watney Market traders.

Apsana Begum:

[107764]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what consultation his Department undertook with (a) local residents, (b) local shop owners, (c) the Watney Market stall traders and (d) the local authority on the opening of the covid-19 testing centre in Watney Market Idea store, Shadwell, London.

Apsana Begum:

[107765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) local residents, (b) local shop owners, (c) the Watney Market stall traders and (d) the local authority on the functioning of the covid-19 testing centre situated in Watney Market idea store, Shadwell, London.

Apsana Begum:

[\[107766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the effect of the covid-19 testing centre situated in Watney Market Idea store, Shadwell, London on (a) local residents, (b) local shop owners and (c) the Watney Market stall traders.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: The Government is committed to rapid and accessible testing for everyone who needs one. We are working with private sector partners to establish local test sites, such as the one at the Watney Market Ideal store, in metropolitan areas across the country. These local test sites are being used to test eligible individuals who may not have access to a car and are set up in places where there is space and local demand for testing. Local test sites are deployed at the direction of Local Resilience Forums and Recovery Coordination Groups and decisions are centrally executed at their direction. This co-design approach between local and national teams has been key in achieving the pace at which these sites have been stood up. To monitor cases, we are working closely with local authorities and local Directors of Public Health, sharing highly localised case data on a daily basis to understand and tackle local outbreaks.

Esther McVey:

[\[109333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the operational false positive rate has been of community mass testing for SARS-CoV-2 by polymerase chain reaction testing during each of the last four weeks; and if he will publish the quality assurance report supporting the calculation of that rate.

Helen Whately:

The information is not available. All tests have been assessed as performing to manufacturers' specifications before being used. The current tests are very specific and the risk of false positives, where the test is reacting to other viruses, is extremely low in the order of less than 1 in 500. Like any diagnostic test however, there is always the small possibility of a false negative or a false positive result.

Justin Madders:

[\[110155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the covid-19 testing capacity required to ensure that (a) care homes and (b) hospitals continue to receive priority.

Justin Madders:

[\[110156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the waiting time is for covid-19 tests in (a) care homes and (b) hospitals in England as of 2 November 2020.

Helen Whately:

Information is not available on the average waiting time to receive COVID-19 tests. However, we record and publish data on COVID-19 test result waiting times. As of 28 October, care home testing turnaround times have halved and are currently at a median average of 45 hours. In hospitals, between 22 October and 28 October,

86.1% of pillar 1 test results were made available within 24 hours. This has remained broadly consistent since Test and Trace began.

We have also continued to work to improve testing capacity, which has already seen capacity increase to more than 500,000 on 31 October. We are able to deliver more than 130,000 tests a day to care homes across the country, prioritising high priority outbreak areas. We have also encouraged care homes to conduct testing at weekends in order to improve turnaround times by spreading the flow of tests arriving at labs over the full seven days of the week.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who have recently been discharged from hospital and become symptomatic can access a covid-19 test.

Helen Whately:

Anyone experiencing symptoms can access a free test at a testing site or at home via the online booking portal or by calling 119. Our priority is to ensure that anyone with symptoms can get a test. During this period of very high demand in the context of constrained capacity and other demands on testing, we must necessarily apply a strict prioritisation approach, taking into account the latest publicly available evidence and clinical, scientific and economic rationale. For transparency the current priorities for testing have been published on GOV.UK.

Stella Creasy:

[\[89691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cap since 13 September 2020 has been on the number of tests that can be done at (a) drive in test centres and (b) walk through test centres; and who is responsible for setting that cap.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The cap for the number of tests available at drive through sites is set on a daily basis and therefore the number of tests available on any given day does vary.

We are expanding capacity continually, having already surpassed our testing capacity target of 500,000 tests a day by the end of October.

Chris Green:

[\[91074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) false positive and (b) false negative results from PCR testing for covid-19 since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[91132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the void rate is for covid-19 tests in Lighthouse Laboratories under pillar 2 as at 16 September 2020; and what the void rate was at those laboratories in each month since April 2020.

Helen Whately:

Positive, negative and void results are shared on Public Health England's dashboard with local authorities and Directors of Public Health.

Sir Bernard Jenkin:[\[92664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether pooled sample testing for covid-19 is being used in (a) the UK and (b) areas of the UK where covid-19 infections are deemed to be recorded as low; and what assessment he has made of the contribution of experiences of pooled sample testing in (i) Uruguay, (ii) Rwanda, (iii) the US, (iv) Germany, (v) South Korea and (vi) India to (A) increasing the understanding of the covid-19 pandemic spread and (B) reducing the number of covid-19 required to help reduce that pandemic spread.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 September 2020]: A clinical validation study has commenced at a small number of testing sites, which aims to clinically validate pooling for use on the National Testing Programme. There is also a programme about to begin at Cambridge University that we plan to monitor closely. All individuals are asked in advance if they would like to take part in this clinical validation study with the context and reasoning for the study provided. The test result for the individual is unaffected by the clinical validation study being performed.

Marsha De Cordova:[\[93676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure adequate covid-19 testing is available before students take examinations in academic year 2020-21.

Helen Whately:

We have quickly established walk-through sites and deployed mobile test sites so that almost all universities are within one and a half miles, allowing staff and students to get access to tests should they develop symptoms.

In cases of outbreaks we are working with universities to deliver large batches of home test kits which can then be distributed to students isolating in their households or halls of residence to test themselves. We also have a home testing programme that provides access to testing to anyone, anywhere, in the United Kingdom.

Jane Hunt:[\[95250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of permitting GP practices to administer covid-19 tests on their own staff to reduce waiting times for (a) such staff and (b) members of the general public at covid-19 testing centres.

Helen Whately:

The Department is working with National Health Service and the general practitioner (GP) community to deliver a trial providing swab testing in a small number of GP surgeries across England. We are working with the British Medical Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners and NHS England to deliver this in a way that

works for both GPs and for their patients. Safety is our number one priority and this trial is only being delivered within the existing 'COVID-19 safe' working arrangements of GP surgeries which have the appropriate infection control measures in place. This does not replace any of the existing routes for accessing testing – instead it adds to the available routes. The aim of this is to make it as easy as possible for everyone who needs a swab test to get one.

Afzal Khan:

[\[96185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has been made of the accuracy of covid-19 test results; and what steps he is taking to audit the covid-19 testing procedures.

Helen Whately:

Laboratories performing testing for COVID-19 within the National Health Service and Public Health England operate according to the International Standard ISO15189 for Medical Laboratories which ensures the end to end laboratory processes provide a safe and efficient service. As part of this criteria, the laboratories must perform a validation exercise with documentary evidence that any assay is suitable for its intended purpose.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[98728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of covid-19 home test kits (a) available and (b) dispatched in each of the last twelve weeks.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is shown in the following table:

| WEEK START | WEEK ENDING | PILLAR 2 TESTS SENT OUT WEEKLY |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 16 July 2020 | 22 July 2020 | 41,6331 |
| 23 July 2020 | 29 July 2020 | 699,596 |
| 30 July 2020 | 5 August 2020 | 752,292 |
| 6 August 2020 | 12 August 2020 | 867,040 |
| 13 August 2020 | 19 August 2020 | 816,728 |
| 20 August 2020 | 26 August 2020 | 828,698 |
| 27 August 2020 | 2 September 2020 | 1,082,056 |
| 3 September 2020 | 9 September 2020 | 1,160,953 |
| 10 September 2020 | 16 September 2020 | 1,014,700 |
| 17 September 2020 | 23 September 2020 | 1,003,245 |

| WEEK START | WEEK ENDING | PILLAR 2 TESTS SENT OUT WEEKLY |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 24 September 2020 | 30 September 2020 | 1,199,327 |
| 1 October 2020 | 7 October 2020 | 1,003,470 |

Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

This includes 'delivery' testing routes under pillar 2, for example swab tests carried out at satellite testing centers (National Health Service trust locations and care homes) and home swab testing kits delivered by post. We no longer have a 'made available' measure for tests.

Jane Stevenson: [\[99734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to roll out rapid covid-19 saliva testing nationally.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Good progress is being made with utilising technologies to help improve our testing service. We announced £500 million in next generation tests, including saliva tests and rapid turnaround tests that can deliver results in just 20 minutes, which are being piloted in Hampshire, Southampton and Salford. We are continuing to trial new tests and future plans will depend on the outcomes of those trials.

■ Coronavirus: Shadwell

Apsana Begum: [\[109702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the economic effect of the opening of the covid-19 testing centre situated in Watney Market Idea store in Shadwell on (a) local residents, (b) local shops and (c) Watney Market traders.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: Local test sites, such as those situated in the Watney Market Ideal store in Shadwell are deployed at the direction of Local Resilience Forums and Recovery Coordination Groups and decisions are centrally executed at their direction. This co-design approach between local and national teams has been key in achieving the pace at which these sites have been set up.

■ Coronavirus: Students

Rachael Maskell: [\[86101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the accuracy of (a) home testing and (b) centre testing for covid-19 for university students.

Helen Whately:

For home testing, evidence suggests that those with no clinical background or training should be completely able to secure an effective sample. International peer-reviewed evidence suggests that self-swabbing is just as effective at securing a valid sample as clinician-administered testing.

The key driver for implementing pooling-at-source is the significant capacity benefits it brings to the labs, as throughput is increased by the number of swabs in a single vial.

■ Coronavirus: Suffolk**Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[90998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support Suffolk County Council to increase covid-19 testing capacity in Suffolk.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: National Health Service Test and Trace is growing all the time. The number of testing sites is now more than 600 and we have exceeded our target of reaching 500,000 testing capacity by the end of October. We are automating parts of the process, installing new machines, hiring more permanent staff, opening new labs and investing in new technology to process results faster. For people in Suffolk there are regional test sites at Stanstead Airport and the Copdock London Road Park and Ride in Ipswich and mobile testing units are available at sites throughout the county.

■ Coronavirus: Sutton Coldfield**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**[\[90056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 testing in Sutton Coldfield constituency.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: There are two Regional Test Sites within 15 miles of Sutton Coldfield: Birmingham Airport and Kelvin Way as well as six Local Test Sites: 60 Villa Street, Mountford Lane Car Park, South Parade Car Park, Birmingham University South Gate Car Park, Saltley Wellbeing Centre Car Park and Summerfield Community Sports Centre Car Park. These sites form part of the extending national network, a total of over 500 by the end of October.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[111993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to exempt a person from covid-19 restrictions when they have received a vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: Currently there are approved vaccines for COVID-19. We keep all restrictions under review and will consider these in light of any significant developments.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[114807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will prioritise the distribution of the covid-19 vaccination to people who are due to have elective surgery.

Jo Churchill:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use, and which groups within the population to prioritise.

The committee, in their interim advice - have advised that the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors in the initial phase. The prioritisation could change substantially if the first available vaccines were not considered suitable for, or effective in, older adults.

The JCVI and the JCVI sub-committee are currently reviewing evidence on clinical risk factors associated with serious disease and mortality from COVID-19. Following a review of the evidence, the Committee will develop advice on risk groups for any future COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[116658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many fridges of which brand or type the Government has ordered for the storage of the Pfizer covid-19 vaccine; and what the (a) cost and (b) arrival date in the UK is of each of those fridges.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[116659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the capacity of the fridges ordered to store the Pfizer covid-19 vaccine will be in terms of total doses.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[116660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, where the fridges ordered for the purpose of containing the Pfizer covid-19 vaccine will be located; and whether those fridges will be portable.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has secured 58 specialised Twin Guard ultra-low temperature freezers which provide sufficient storage for approximately five million doses of potential COVID-19 vaccines which require ultra-low temperature storage. The cost of the purchase of the ultra-low temperature freezers is commercially sensitive. The ultra-low temperature freezers are in the United Kingdom, fully operational, and located in national storage facilities both in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland, in readiness for the commencement of a COVID-19 immunisation programme. The freezers are not portable.

■ **Coronavirus: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[104208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of covid-19 transmissions that have been linked to the hospitality sector in Wakefield constituency.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not hold data for the hospitality sector by constituency.

■ **Dental Health**

Luke Pollard:

[109643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure oral health remains a priority during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service dental practices are continuing to provide face to face care. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible, taking into account Public Health England's (PHE) guidance and continued infection risks. Over 600 urgent dental centres remain open to support the provision of urgent and emergency face to face care.

PHE's Child Oral Health Improvement Programme Board and the Adult Oral Health Oversight Group have continued to meet and provide strategic oversight for oral health improvement during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Dental Health: Children**

Carla Lockhart:

[91936]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve dental health among children.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service dental practices are continuing to provide face to face care. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible, taking into account Public Health England's guidance and continued infection risks. Over 600 urgent dental centres remain open to support the provision of urgent and emergency face to face care.

Public Health England's Child Oral Health Improvement Programme Board and the Adult Oral Health Oversight Group have continued to meet and provide strategic oversight for oral health improvement during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Dental Services: Protective Clothing

Munira Wilson:

[\[78865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of dental practices which were unable to reopen on 8 June 2020 because they could not acquire personal protective equipment through their business as usual wholesalers.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made. However, supplies of the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) were made available by the Government to the dental wholesalers specifically to support the resumption of face to face care by dental practices from 8 June. National Health Service dental practices, in extreme circumstances, could also have approached Local Resilience Forum for emergency stock.

The additional PPE needed, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is now available free of charge for NHS dental contractors. A dedicated PPE portal has been developed to deliver these items. As of 4 November, over 5,100 NHS dental and orthodontic providers in England have registered with the PPE portal and over 36 million items have been delivered.

■ Dental Services: Ventilation

Rosie Cooper:

[\[102008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the number of patients dentists are able to see of the use of ventilation systems in dental practices to increase the rate of air change per hour.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: There has been no specific assessment.

■ Eating Disorders: Children and Young People

Jon Trickett:

[\[91944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking in response to NSPCC research which found that counselling sessions for eating and body image disorders among children and young people increased since the introduction of a national covid-19 lockdown in March 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise just how important it is that people get the support they need with their mental health and we are aware of reports that demand for eating disorder services has increased since the COVID-19 lockdown in March.

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, an additional 345,000 children and young people will be able to access support through National Health Service-funded services or school- and college-based mental health support teams by 2023-24. We remain committed to delivering the core proposals of the children and young people's mental

health Green Paper, including the introduction of senior leads in mental health and mental health support teams in schools and colleges, as well as the piloting of a four-week waiting time for specialist NHS services.

We set up the first waiting times to improve access to eating disorders services for children and young people - so that by 2020/21 95% of children with an eating disorder will receive treatment within one week for urgent cases and within four weeks for routine cases. Latest figures show that in 2020/21 (Q2), 85.3% of urgent cases were seen within one week and 89.6% of routine cases were seen within four weeks.

In addition, NHS England has recently announced additional early intervention services for young people with eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia in 18 areas across the country, which means teens or young adults coming forward with eating disorders could be contacted within 48 hours and begin treatment within two weeks.

The Government has also commissioned research into the causes and impact of body dissatisfaction and to explore how body image is experienced by different groups, including by different age groups such as young people.

■ **Exercise Cygnus: Private Companies**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[114072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the roles were of private companies involved in Exercise Cygnus.

Jo Churchill:

No private companies were invited to participate in Exercise Cygnus.

■ **General Practitioners**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[115500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people without internet access take up digital GP appointments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

When we introduce a new digital service, we ensure that access to general practitioner (GP) appointments via other channels is still available. Patients are still able to book appointments via the telephone and through NHS 111, and the service has the same features as available online. In addition, we have developed alternative ways for people to access digital services, such as booking appointments by proxy, where a family member or carer has access to the internet.

To support people living in care homes to take up digital GP appointments, NHSX and NHS Digital have negotiated a range of internet connectivity deals for care homes, along with guidance to help care homes choose a suitable internet connection. NHSX will also be distributing tablet devices to care homes so that residents can access digital health appointments and stay connected to loved ones.

A 12-month SIM data package will be included for care homes with poor or no WiFi connections.

■ **General Practitioners: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon:

[98221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide full and safe (a) face-to-face GP appointments and (b) other GP services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement on 31 August issued guidance stating that general practitioner (GP) practices must offer face-to-face appointments at surgeries and continue to use remote triage, video, online and telephone consultations where appropriate – whilst also considering those unable to access or engage with digital services. The importance of providing face-to-face appointment for those who need them was reiterated in a further NHS England and NHS Improvement letter of 14 September.

The Government has published clear guidance on appropriate personal protective equipment for health and social care workers, including GPs. The guidance is consistent with World Health Organization guidance for protecting health and social care workers from COVID-19 and should allow the safe recommencement of regular face-to-face GP appointments.

Practices continue to undertake routine and preventative work including vaccinations and immunisations and screening, as well as supporting their more high-risk patients with ongoing care needs.

Theresa Villiers:

[98900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to enable an increase in the number of face-to-face GP appointments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement on 31 August issued guidance stating that general practitioner (GP) practices must offer face-to-face appointments at surgeries and continue to use remote triage, video, online and telephone consultations where appropriate – whilst also considering those unable to access or engage with digital services. The importance of providing face-to-face appointment for those who need them was reiterated in a further NHS England and NHS Improvement letter of 14 September, in which it also shared a communications toolkit designed to support clear communication with patients about how they can access the right type of appointment.

The Government has published clear guidance on appropriate personal protective equipment for health and social care workers, including GPs. The guidance is consistent with World Health Organization guidance for protecting health and social

care workers from COVID-19 and should allow the safe recommencement of regular face-to-face GP appointments.

Practices continue to undertake routine and preventative work including vaccinations and immunisations and screening, as well as supporting their more high-risk patients with ongoing care needs.

■ **General Practitioners: Internet**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[116533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with limited access to technology do not experience adverse health consequences due to an increase in online GP appointments as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Digital services do not replace face-to-face care but are an essential additional tool that primary care can use alongside other access routes, such as by telephone and in person, to help ensure patients are receiving the right care as quickly and easily as possible. Patients are still able to book general practitioner appointments via the telephone and through NHS 111, and the service has the same features as available online. In addition, we have developed alternative ways for people to access digital services, such as booking appointments by proxy where a family member or carer has access to the internet.

■ **GP Surgeries**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[116675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which 10 GP surgery locations have the highest numbers of patients registered in (a) the East Midlands and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Gynaecology and Maternity Services: Standards**

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[116431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital trusts are rated as (a) inadequate, (b) requires improvement, (c) good and (d) outstanding for maternity and gynaecology.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: Acute core services are not rated at trust or provider level, but at location level only. Ratings from inspections of the locations operated by the provider are combined into the overall ratings for the trust under the headings of safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

National Health Service locations providing a core service of 'maternity and gynaecology' are rated are shown in the following table:

| INADEQUATE | REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT | GOOD | OUTSTANDING |
|------------|-------------------------|------|-------------|
| 2 | 47 | 138 | 12 |

■ Health Professions: Mental Health

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[116534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to prioritise the mental health needs of primary care staff and GPs in a future mental health strategy for frontline workers.

Helen Whately:

Supporting the mental health of all National Health Service staff is a priority for the Government. In response to COVID-19, NHS England and NHS Improvement, in collaboration with the Royal College of General Practitioners, launched the #LookingAfterYouToo: Coaching Support for Primary Care Staff service. The service provides access to mental health services to all primary care workers employed or contracted to deliver work on behalf of the NHS. A national health and wellbeing support package is also available for NHS staff, including a helpline and text service. The NHS People Plan, published in July, is focused on ensuring staff have the health and wellbeing support they need as we look ahead to winter 2020/21. As part of this offer, the NHS is setting up a first wave of staff mental health hubs providing outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to mental health services.

■ Health Professions: West Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[90057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 testing for health professionals in the West Midlands.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: All National Health Service staff are eligible for priority testing for COVID-19. For NHS staff access to testing is provided through pillar 1 testing and there is capacity within trusts to ensure staff can get tested. A number of tests are reserved for essential workers, including NHS workers, and they can book a visit to a test site, or order a home test kit if they cannot get to a site, through GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test-essential-workers>

Essential workers can order five test kits for themselves and other symptomatic members of their households. However, for households of more than five the 119 contact centre raise an order on their behalf. A list of essential workers and those who are prioritised for COVID-19 tests is available at GOV.UK at the following link:

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

■ Health: Swimming Pools

Karen Bradley:

[117248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of opening swimming pools for treatment of mental and physical health issues during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The national restrictions are designed to get the 'R' rate under control through limiting social contact and reducing transmissions. As part of this package, from 5 November until 2 December indoor and outdoor leisure will need to close.

People are still allowed to leave their homes for exercise and recreation outdoors, on their own, with their household, with their support bubble or with any one person. Our guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of COVID-19 recognises how important exercise can be for a person's mental health physical health and includes tips on how to stay physically healthy.

■ Healthy Start Scheme

Alison Thewliss:

[116546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the uptake of healthy start vouchers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Department is currently developing a digital approach to Healthy Start, to make it easier for families to apply for and use the scheme. We are developing and testing an online application form for Healthy Start, to replace the current paper form, and a payment card to replace paper vouchers.

All eligible beneficiaries receive a letter inviting them to apply for Healthy Start, together with a pre-populated application form. The scheme is also promoted through the Healthy Start and Start4Life websites.

■ HIV Infection: Drugs

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[114296]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to promote (a) knowledge and (b) take-up of PrEP among communities affected by HIV in addition to gay and bisexual men.

Jo Churchill:

The Public Health England (PHE) commissioned HIV Prevention England (HPE) programme is currently running a campaign that aims to raise awareness of pre-

exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) among black African communities. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.startswithme.org.uk/>

PHE's Innovation Fund, has funded seven projects between 2017 and 2019 that tested and evaluated new approaches to raising awareness of PrEP in communities including, trans people, Latin Americans, black African men and women and women of colour. More information is available at the following links:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/public-health-england-hiv-prevention-innovation-fund-cohort-2-evaluation-report>

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/public-health-england-hiv-prevention-innovation-fund-cohort-3-evaluation-report>

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Daniel Zeichner:

[109415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the clinical benefit of extending the 2020-21 national childhood flu immunisation programme cohorts to (a) the additional Year 7 cohort confirmed in England and (b) any further secondary school cohorts beyond Year 7.

Jo Churchill:

This year the flu programme was expanded in light of the risk of both flu and COVID-19.

The flu vaccination is recommended for those in at risk groups, and frontline health and social care workers and was extended to new cohorts such as children in school year seven to protect themselves and also prevent onward transmission to vulnerable members of the community. This is in keeping with advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

■ Laboratories: Coronavirus

John Spellar:

[87480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much laboratory testing capacity in industry he has secured for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2020]: Testing capacity is published on GOV.UK but is not broken down by sector. On 4 November 2020, testing capacity was 521,016.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[86626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to provide daily updates to (a) the Sussex Resilience Forum and (b) other resilience forums on the capacity and prioritisation of Pillar 2 testing capability.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: Throughout the pandemic, our approach has been to increase transparency around the Government's response to the coronavirus and we are always looking to improve the data we publish. We are working with the country's official statisticians to provide the most useful statistics to help the public understand how NHS Test and Trace is operating in a clear and transparent way. Every day local authorities get test, case and contact tracing data, with further data shared with local Directors of Public Health, to help control and manage outbreaks in their area.

■ Maternity Services: Disadvantaged and Ethnic Groups**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[117966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to deliver safer maternity services to (a) ethnic minorities and (b) socially deprived communities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: Work to reduce health inequalities around maternal mortality rates is being led by Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE, Chief Midwifery Officer. This includes understanding why mortality rates are higher, considering evidence about what will reduce mortality rates and taking action.

The NHS Long Term Plan outlines plans to reduce health inequalities and address unwarranted variation in maternity care. Targeted and enhanced continuity of carer can significantly improve outcomes for women. The Long Term Plan sets out that 75% of women from ethnic minority backgrounds and women from the most socially deprived areas will receive continuity of carer by 2024.

■ Medical Records: Children**Andrea Leadsom:**[\[116467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the digital red book.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: NHSX is working with a number of suppliers to make digital versions of the red book available to parents of new-borns across England from 2021. The initial model will let parents choose from a number of assured products. Parents will have the option of a digital product, free of charge, to supplement their paper red book.

■ Medicine: Education**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[117211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps the Government has taken to increase the number of funded medical places at universities.

Helen Whately:

The Government has increased the number of funded medical school places in England by 1,500 over the last three years – a 25% increase. As part of this record expansion, we opened five new medical schools across the country. As a result of this action, this year we have seen record numbers of medical students in training.

Daniel Kawczynski:[\[117212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that new medical schools are adequately funded during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises that COVID-19 is having an adverse impact on higher education providers' income and has taken action to ensure that all medical schools in England are adequately funded.

The Government has announced a package of measures to provide further financial support to all higher education providers. This includes the provision of additional funds available through the Teaching Grant to support increasing capacity in high-cost courses.

Daniel Kawczynski:[\[117213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support new medical schools with a focus on innovative medical education.

Helen Whately:

The Government works with the General Medical Council, the Medical Schools Council and Health Education England (HEE) to engage with and support all medical schools in England. This includes the five new medical schools in Sunderland, Lancashire, Chelmsford, Lincoln and Canterbury delivered as part of the Government's expansion in medical school places.

HEE is supporting the new medical schools to teach innovative curricula and share good practice in medical education through regular meetings. Medical schools in the United Kingdom are seen as being at the vanguard of innovative teaching across the world in areas such as immersive technology, simulation teaching and provision of remote learning through HEE's online learning platform.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[116430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to encourage schools, CCGs and local education authorities to work more collaboratively to tackle mental health issues in children and young people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Government's Green Paper on children and young people's mental health aims to improve the provision of mental health

support through its key proposals, including creating new Mental Health Support Teams in and near schools and colleges.

These teams will support mental health leads in schools and colleges to put in place effective whole school/college approach to promote and support good mental health. They will work alongside the support that already exists, such as counselling, educational psychologists, school nurses, pastoral care, educational welfare officers, local authority provision and National Health Service mental health services.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[116541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the proposed spending on mental health services for children set out in the NHS Long Term Plan in response to the findings of the 2020 NHS Digital Report entitled Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2020 that identifies covid-19 and its consequent economic and domestic pressures as causal factors in the 50 per cent increase in mental health problems for children and young people.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We remain committed to continuing our investment in expanding and transforming mental health services in England. That will amount to an additional £2.3 billion of funding a year in mental health services by 2023/24.

We recognise just how important it is that all people, including children and young people, get the support they need with their mental health and have the tools to protect their mental wellbeing. Our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance

Olivia Blake:

[118136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £1.5 billion announced on 30 June 2020 for hospital maintenance was designated for support for mental health facilities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: The £1.5 billion announced in June 2020 included a Critical Infrastructure Fund for hospital maintenance and funding to eradicate mental health dormitories. Of this, £33.5 million has been allocated this year to mental health trusts for maintenance and £250 million has been allocated to remove dormitories, coming to 19% of the announcement.

■ Mental Health Services: Mothers**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[115555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to improve perinatal mental health services (a) during pregnancy and (b) in the first postnatal year.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: We remain committed to improving perinatal mental health services for new mothers and their partners - not only during the current pandemic. From April 2019, new and expectant mothers have been able to access specialist perinatal mental health community services in every part of the country.

The NHS Long Term Plan includes a commitment for a further 24,000 women to be able to access specialist perinatal mental health care by 2023/24, building on the additional 30,000 women who will access these services each year by 2020/21 under pre-existing plans. Specialist care will also be available from preconception to 24 months after birth, which will provide an extra year of support.

■ Mental Health Services: Quarantine**Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[114823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support he is providing for people with severe mental illness in (a) response to the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions and (b) preparation for winter 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Supporting the mental health of everyone is vital, especially in these unprecedented times. National Health Service mental health services remain open for business and will be available throughout the national restrictions and the winter, providing support online and by phone where necessary.

All mental health trusts have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent helplines where people with severe needs or experiencing a mental health crisis can access urgent support and advice. These will continue to provide support through the national restrictions and the winter.

■ Mental Health Services: Young People**Sarah Champion:**[\[117272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to pages 19 and 20 of the NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 to 2023-24, when the specific baseline on access to NHS-funded mental health treatment for 18 to 25 year olds will be published.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The work around validating and publishing baseline data on access to mental health services for 18 to 25-year olds is ongoing.

NHS England does not yet have a revised publication or dissemination date. Work on the development of metrics has been slowed due to the pandemic but is continuing in order to ensure delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to increase access and improve experience of care for this age group.

■ **Mental Health: Research**

Wera Hobhouse:

[115758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendation 4 of the UK framework for mental health research, whether the recommended portfolio review of UK mental health research funders has been published.

Edward Argar:

The 2018 Framework for Mental Health Research recommended a portfolio review of United Kingdom mental health research funders, including the Medical Research Council and the National Institute for Health Research. MQ has subsequently led on a second portfolio review of UK mental health research funders in 2019, building on previous work. The report, 'UK Mental Health Research Funding 2014-2017', was published in 2019 by MQ.

■ **Miscarriage: Mental Health Services**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[116529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the mental health needs of bereaved families who have experienced a miscarriage are supported within NHS mental health provision.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Every part of the country has perinatal mental health services in place and we remain committed to improving and expanding these services. By 2023/24, at least 66,000 women in total with moderate to severe perinatal mental health difficulties will have access to specialist perinatal mental health services. The new services will integrate maternity, reproductive health and psychological therapy for women experiencing moderate-severe or complex mental health difficulties directly arising from, or related to, the maternity experience, including perinatal loss.

The national bereavement care pathway brings together information, tools and resources to support the provision of high quality care for women and their families who experience pregnancy or baby loss, as well as linking to online learning for all healthcare professionals and staff who are involved in the care of a woman who experiences perinatal loss. This is available at the following link:

<https://nbcpathway.org.uk/>

■ NHS: Migrant Workers**Martyn Day:**[\[117298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on (a) broadening eligibility for the covid-19 pandemic-related visa extension for health workers to include (i) frontline NHS support workers and (ii) other people working in an NHS role, and (b) extending the duration of the existing one-year extension.

Helen Whately:

On 20 November 2020, the Home Secretary announced that frontline and other National Health Service workers' whose Tier 2 (General) visas expire between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021 will be entitled to a free, one-year extension. This measure includes doctors, nurses and paramedics amongst others and includes their dependents. The Government previously provided free visa extensions for health professionals that were due to expire between 31 March 2020 and 1 October 2020. This recent announcement means that this offer is extended to 31 March 2021.

This extension only covers those on Tier 2 (General) visas, rather than those on visas that give a generic right to work in the United Kingdom. The Government has ensured these individuals can benefit from the reimbursement scheme for the Immigration Health Surcharge.

■ Nutrition: Medical Equipment**Mr Mark Harper:**[\[84660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the 5,000 DNA Nudgebox machines will be rolled out across NHS hospitals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 September 2020]: To date 114 DNA Nudgeboxes, which equates to 1,140 tests per day capacity, has been delivered to hospitals and mental health units in England. DNA Nudge continue to increase their deployment capabilities and speed and are in a good position to deliver the contracted 5,000 Nudgeboxes as per agreed timelines in 2021.

■ Obesity: Health Services**Stuart Anderson:**[\[117372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 September 2020 to Question 82393, what (a) research and (b) evidence his Department is using to inform policy on the expansion of weight management services.

Jo Churchill:

We are using a range of evidence including published literature and considering the evidence and views of expert stakeholders, including patient groups. We will continue to consider the views of a wide range of stakeholders and experts as we develop our

plans for implementing the obesity strategy including the expansion of weight management services and we will continue to listen going forwards.

■ Pharmacy

Sir George Howarth:

[\[116398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Community Pharmacy Consultation Service referrals there have been for minor ailments since the launch of that service in October 2019; and, of those referrals, how many were made through the NHS 111 service.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that the NHS 111 service has made 235,309 referrals for minor illness assessment since the launch of the service in October 2019 up to 17 November 2020.

Since 1 November 2020, general practices have been able to make minor illness referrals to the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (NHS CPCS). Between 1 November and 17 November, there have been 516 referrals from general practices to the NHS CPCS.

■ Podiatry: Staff

Neil Coyle:

[\[117279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department taking to ensure more people are recruited and trained as podiatrists in the NHS.

Neil Coyle:

[\[117280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on the (a) recruitment and training of new podiatrists and (b) delivery of preventative outcomes for patients by podiatrists.

Neil Coyle:

[\[117281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of reintroducing bursaries for people studying podiatry on (a) levels of recruitment, (b) the sustainability of the profession and (c) improvements in preventative health; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the National Health Service has the workforce it needs to deliver high quality care. As part of the new funding package for healthcare students non-repayable, training grants of at least £5,000 per academic year will be made available to eligible new and continuing pre-registration podiatry students, studying at English universities.

We know that for some professions there are particular challenges in recruiting suitable applicants to pre-registration courses and so as part of the new funding package we have also made available an additional specialist subject grant of £1,000

to eligible new students who choose to study in shortage professions, including podiatry. We will continue to monitor the impact of our policies, with data on numbers of acceptances onto podiatry courses expected to be available when the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service publish their end of cycle data later this year.

■ **Prescription Drugs: Safety**

Jim Shannon:

[\[114182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to meet the aims of the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge to halve severe avoidable medication-related harms by 2022 compared to 2017 levels.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched its third Global Patient Safety Challenge 'Medication Without Harm', in 2017, with the aim of reducing the global burden of severe and avoidable medication-related harm by 50% over five years.

In response to this challenge, the Department established a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) to advise on a programme to improve safety in the use of medication, including the best way to measure progress. Their report, published in February 2018, made recommendations for a programme of work to tackle medication error and improve medicine safety.

■ **Protective Clothing: Coronavirus**

Philip Davies:

[\[117962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of face masks in controlling the transmission of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Face coverings are largely intended to protect others and not the wearer against the spread of infection. Evidence on the effectiveness of face coverings in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in community settings is constantly developing, and research is being conducted all over the world, leading to a variety of observations and suggested conclusions that vary in their degree of confidence.

■ **Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies: Coronavirus**

Jane Stevenson:

[\[118105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific advice from SAGE on the potential need for a national covid-19 lockdown in January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic. Data and scientific advice

informing the fight against COVID-19 are published on GOV.UK and specific relevant findings are shared in presentations accompanying significant policy announcements.

■ **Social Services: Inspections**

Helen Hayes:

[\[106436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to require Care Quality Commission inspectors to obtain a negative covid-19 test before undertaking an inspection in a social care setting.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the need to ensure professionals are able to visit care homes safely. We will begin weekly PCR testing of Care Quality Commission inspectors shortly.

Any symptomatic member of staff is eligible for testing through the self-referral portal.

We will continue to review our social care testing strategy for adult social care in light of the latest evidence and available capacity.

■ **Speech and Language Therapy: Waiting Lists**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[109190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting lists for NHS speech and language sessions.

Jo Churchill:

We want routine NHS services such as speech and language therapy to return for patients as quickly as possible, but this must be done in a safe and managed way. With a rise in COVID-19 activity, we have been clear that non-COVID-19 services will be maintained as far as possible. 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. Clinically urgent patients should continue to be treated first, with priority then given to the longest waiting patients specifically those breaching or at risk of breaching 52 weeks by the end of March 2021.

In the longer term, a critical element of reducing waiting lists for speech and language therapy is ensuring we recruit and retain the workforce needed to meet demand for services. To encourage students to study nursing, midwifery or one of the allied health subjects, including speech and language therapy, from September 2020 the Government has made available additional maintenance grant funding of at least £5,000 per academic year, for new and continuing students at English universities. In addition, students with child dependants will benefit from an extra £1,000.

■ Strokes: Health Services

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[114894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help maintain support for stroke survivors during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[114895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Government plans to continue delivering its commitments for stroke during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have ensured that stroke services across England continue to provide rehabilitation and post-acute services to stroke survivors and their families and carers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have funded the Stroke Association over the last six months to provide Stroke Connect, which was developed in direct response to COVID-19 to ensure stroke survivors and their carers had support when discharged from hospital.

The Department has also funded the Stroke Association over the last six months for them to continue to provide frontline support to stroke survivors and others connected to stroke during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Suicide: Pupils and Students

Colleen Fletcher: [\[114203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the number of suicides involving (a) Secondary School, (b) Further Education and (c) Higher Education students; what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the incidence of suicides in education settings; and what steps his Department is taking on suicide prevention in education settings.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Departmental officials are in regular contact with counterparts at the Department for Education.

We have made no assessment of the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on incidences of suicides in educational settings. To help us get access to quicker data on suicide numbers, Public Health England is piloting a national surveillance system to monitor suspected suicide and self-harm, by collecting near real-time data from local systems. This will allow us to identify patterns of risk and inform national and local responses. In November, the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health research group published a report which used real-time data to compare the average number of suicides pre- and -post-lockdown. The researchers found no evidence of a significant rise in suicides post-lockdown in a population of nine million people. This does not identify which suspected suicides took place in an educational setting.

We remain committed to supporting children and young people's mental health and implementing the core proposals of our Green Paper on improving children and young people's mental health provision. Our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme is providing schools and colleges with the knowledge and access to resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[106903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have to quarantine after returning from a holiday because the Government guidance changed during that holiday are eligible for for a self-isolation payment.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 does not cover people who are in quarantine after returning to the United Kingdom from abroad, unless they have tested positive for coronavirus or have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Stephen Timms:

[\[98862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people with No Recourse to Public Funds are eligible to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: To be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment, an individual must be employed or self-employed, unable to work from home, and currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Where an individual is not in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits but meets the other eligibility criteria and may face financial hardship if they have to self-isolate, local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment. Depending on their individual circumstances, people who have no recourse to public funds may be eligible for a discretionary payment.

■ UK Lighthouse Labs Network

Munira Wilson:

[\[117378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who are overseeing diagnostic tests in Lighthouse Labs require a valid Health and Care Professionals Council registration.

Helen Whately:

The Lighthouse Laboratories employ a number of laboratory staff who are working in various regulated and unregulated roles.

Biomedical Scientists and Clinical Scientists are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and professionals must be registered with the HCPC to use these titles.

The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care's (PSA) Accredited Registers Programme independently assesses organisations who register practitioners who are not regulated by law. The registers held by the Academy of Healthcare Scientists and the Register of Clinical Technologists are accredited by the PSA. Unregulated laboratory staff are able to join these registers.

HOME OFFICE

■ Company Liquidations

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[116558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of changes to immigration rules after the transition period on the number of businesses going into liquidation; and what support his Department plans to make available to prevent businesses going into liquidation after the transition period.

Kevin Foster:

The Government is introducing a new global points-based immigration system which works in the interests of the whole of our United Kingdom.

We recognise this will mean a change for some businesses, which is why we have continued to support them through extensive communications and engagement to build awareness and promote understanding. In April, the Government published an Impact Assessment to accompany what is now the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020 which considers the expected impact of the future immigration system.

We will continue to review and assess the operation of the new system and the experiences of users.

■ Fines: Coronavirus

Jack Dromey:

[\[118508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how money raised by fines issued for the breaching of coronavirus restrictions is used by her Department.

Kevin Foster:

The Secretary of State for the Department for Health and Social Care designated ACRO Criminal Records Office, as the organisation legally able to process Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) issued in relation to the Coronavirus Regulations.

ACRO is responsible for the distribution of funds generated by fines under the Coronavirus Regulations to local authorities in England and Wales. The Home Office is not in receipt of money raised by these fines

■ Home Office: Electric Vehicles

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[118563]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of the vehicles used by her Department on Government business are electric vehicles.

Chris Philp:

At present across the Home Office Fleet there are no pure electric vehicles.

The Home Office currently has 15% of its total fleet that are plug in hybrid electric vehicles.

The Home Office is working towards the Office for Low Emission Vehicles 'Road to Zero' target of 25% of fleet cars to be low emission at the tailpipe by 2022. Against that target (which relates only to cars), the Home Office currently has 19% of its fleet as qualifying with 241 plug in hybrid vehicles from a total of 1282 qualifying vehicles.

■ Immigrants: Finance

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[113668]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of Government support for people with No Recourse to Public Funds conditions.

Chris Philp:

Many of the wide-ranging COVID-19 measures the Government has put in place are available to migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and have been recently extended.

The assistance being given under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme are not classed as public funds and are available to all those who are legally working or self-employed respectively, including those with NRPF status. Both these schemes have been extended until spring 2021.

The Government has continued to keep the situation under review and has introduced further measures as required, such as the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme in England. This provides a £500 payment to those who have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Support is also available for those who do not meet the criteria of the scheme, in the form of a £500 discretionary payment, paid by local authorities. This payment is available to those with NRPF, who meet any additional criteria set by the local authority. Further information on this scheme and discretionary payment can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>.

Individuals whose lawful basis of stay in the UK is based on their family life or human rights can apply to have the NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, if the welfare of their child is at

risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we have continued to assess and prioritise NRPF 'change of conditions' applications and deal with them compassionately. To support the swifter processing of applications, we have introduced evidential flexibility so that caseworkers can make a decision without requiring every piece of information. Data published in July shows the average time taken to make a decision on cases is 30 days despite a large increase in applications in quarter 2 of 2020. Of the decisions taken in the same period, 89% were granted. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-recourse-to-public-funds-applications-to-change-conditions-of-leave-july-2020>

Stephen Timms:

[114048]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November to Question 105275, whether the figures for Leave to Remain with No Recourse to Public Funds extensions in that Answer include applicants on the five year route.

Chris Philp:

We can confirm that the figures published in the Answer to Question 105275 for Leave to Remain with No Recourse to Public Funds extensions does include applicants on the five year route.

Helen Hayes:

[118041]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will (a) fully fund local authorities for the additional support they are providing to households with No Recourse to Public Funds conditions during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) reimburse local authorities for additional support already provided to those households.

Helen Hayes:

[118042]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to review (a) the No Recourse to Public Funds policy and (b) the effect of that policy on BAME people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Government has provided councils with £6.4 billion to support their communities through this pandemic. This includes £4.6 billion in un-ringfenced funding, £1.1 billion from the Infection Control Fund, £300 million to support Test and Trace as well as funding allocated to councils from the new Local Alert Level system and a number of grants to support communities and vulnerable people

The Government has also provided additional funding for the devolved administrations under the Barnett formula as part of the wider government response. Funding provided to local authorities under the Covid-19 emergency response will be paid through a grant that is not ring-fenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how this funding is spent.

The assistance being given under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme are not classed as public funds and are available to all those in work or self-employment respectively, including those with NRPF status and those on zero-hour contracts.

The Home Office has published its policy equality statement on the impact of the No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) policy on migrants on the 10-year human rights route. It can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-change-of-conditions-of-leave-to-allow-access-to-public-funds-if-your-circumstances-change>.

The Home Office continues to keep the impact of the pandemic under review and will make changes should these be necessary and appropriate.

■ Immigrants: Private Rented Housing

Neil Coyle:

[114201]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department will take to ensure that information on tenants' immigration status is kept fully up to date on the new Right to Rent online checking system for landlords.

Neil Coyle:

[114202]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what redress will be available to landlords or prospective tenants who miss out on or have their leases delayed as a result of inaccuracies, errors or missing information on the new Right to Rent online checking system.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office online right to rent service allows landlords to conduct right to rent checks on non-EEA citizens with a valid biometric resident permit or card, EEA citizens and their family members with status granted under the EU Settlement Scheme and EEA nationals granted status under the new points-based immigration system.

The information shown in the online right to rent checking service is derived from the Home Office immigration database, ensuring that information stays in step with the individual's immigration status. The individual will be able to check their information is accurate before they choose to share it. If there are errors or technical issues with the information displayed individuals, are advised to contact our support centre to ask for the issue to be investigated before they share the information with a landlord.

Should errors occur, in order to avoid delays, non-EEA nationals can choose to use their biometric residence card or permit to evidence their right to rent. Furthermore, EEA citizens are able to rely on their passport or national ID card until 30th June 2021.

If a landlord is unable to establish that an individual has the right to rent, they are able to make a request to the Landlord Checking Service.

Work to provide further support to those individuals who encounter difficulties with the service to make sure they are able to demonstrate their right to rent is ongoing.

■ Immigration Rules: Religion

Alexander Stafford:

[\[117405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of immigration rules for people of faith on faith groups in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

This Government recognises the importance of faith across our communities in the UK and welcomes the value added by members of religious institutions from across the world. This is reflected in the two dedicated immigration arrangements which exist for Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers. These provisions will continue in the future immigration system and be opened to EEA and Swiss nationals.

Faith leaders have a dedicated point of contact within the Department, who regularly engage on such topics to ensure the future immigration system works for the whole of the UK. I have also met with senior figures from the Roman Catholic Church to discuss their thoughts on the migration system.

All immigration routes, including the two dedicated routes for religious organisations, are subject to regular review.

■ Immigration: Appeals

Kate Hollern:

[\[118007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many immigration cases that have been successfully appealed remain unresolved in (a) England and (b) Blackburn.

Chris Philp:

Where an appeal has been allowed in favour of the appellant, we take all reasonable steps to implement the allowed appeal accordingly.

The requested information cannot be accurately extracted from our internal systems. To provide this information a manual reconciliation of outstanding appeals implementations work would be required. A manual reconciliation of individual cases would incur a disproportionate cost.

■ Refugees: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[\[112107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support people with refugee status who are unable to work due to delays in accessing national insurance numbers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has bespoke arrangements with the Department for Work and Pensions to allocate national insurance numbers (NINOs) to refugees. This process

has continued to operate throughout the pandemic and has not been subject to delays.

An individual's NINO is printed on their biometric residence permit (BRP). We are aware of a recent technical issue that delayed the production of a small number of BRPs. That issue has been resolved and measures put in place to prevent it from happening again.

It is possible to start work without a National Insurance number if you can [prove you have a right to work in the UK](#). You can also still apply for benefits.

■ Refugees: National Insurance

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[113669]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of people with refugee status unable to work as a result of delays in accessing National Insurance numbers.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold the required data in a way that would allow it to provide an accurate assessment of the number of people with refugee status unable to work as a result of delays in accessing National Insurance Numbers (NINo).

Finding the requested information would be likely to breach the disproportionate cost threshold.

In January 2018 we introduced an aligned BRP and NINo process for people recognised as refugees. We now obtain the NINo directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for inclusion on the Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). This means that the migrant does not need to make a separate application to DWP for a NINo.

Using this process we have issued nearly 60,000 BRPs to refugees. We have also introduced a number of checks into the BRP NINo alignment process to mitigate any delays that may arise in obtaining the NINo or printing the BRP.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review

Stephen Timms:

[117166]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 106891 on Windrush Lessons Learned Review, what data on ethnicity she plans to collect to inform the review and evaluation of the public funds stream to the compliant environment.

Priti Patel:

I accepted the Windrush Lessons Learned Review's important findings, including those relating to measures designed to regulate access to work, benefits and services, including access to public funds

We are currently in the discovery phase of the review. We are scoping what data is available on the cohort that may not have recourse to public funds. This scoping phase will include what demographic data is available for analysis.

■ Yarls Wood Immigration Removal Centre

Zarah Sultana:

[\[116669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has for the future of Yarls Wood immigration removal centre and the detention of women under immigration powers there.

Chris Philp:

The immigration removal estate is kept under ongoing review to ensure that the Home Office has sufficient capacity, in the right places and that it provides value for money.

In August, the pre-existing Short-Term Holding Facility (STHF) at Yarls Wood, in which clandestine entrants may be held by UK Visas and Immigration for a short time to resolve their position before being dispersed through appropriate routes, was temporarily expanded to incorporate the whole site. At this time Yarls Wood was operated solely in accordance with the STHF Rules 2018.

In light of changing demands in the immigration removal estate and in line with business recovery, we have now transitioned part of the Yarls Wood site back to an immigration removal centre for women.

In order to meet operational needs and demands, we will continue to operate the immigration removal estate, including Yarls Wood, in a flexible manner and in line with the STHF Rules 2018 and the Detention Centre Rules 2001, as appropriate.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Safety

Andy Slaughter:

[\[116422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Building Safety to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on 19 October 2020, whether the Building Safety Charge will apply to retrospective building faults.

Christopher Pincher:

The proposed Building Safety Charge has been designed to ensure that the costs leaseholders pay for building safety measures are transparent and reasonable. We envisage this will include ongoing costs, such as those for the Building Safety Manager, and powers for the Secretary of State to exclude specific costs from being re-charged.

The department is working on proposals to protect leaseholders from unfair costs caused by historic building safety defects.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris:

[\[116576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will (a) make an assessment of the effect on solvency of lost revenue for closed businesses during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown and (b) extend eviction protection for businesses beyond 31 December 2020.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government has put forward an unprecedented package of support for business in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19, including loans, tax relief and cash grants, as well as financial support for employers and self-employed people. In November, the Government announced plans to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until March 2021, confirmed an extension to the existing loan schemes to the end of January 2021 and an ability to top up Bounce Back Loans, as well as an increase to self-employed support and over £200 billion in VAT relief, business rate relief, tax deferral, loans and support for individuals. Further grant support totalling £2.2 billion has also been made available to support businesses impacted by the 5 November to 2 December national lockdown and localised restrictions. This is in addition to the £11.86 billion in cash grants already delivered to almost a million businesses in England between March and September.

In September, the Government extended its moratorium on the landlord's right of forfeiture for non-payment of rent introduced through the Coronavirus Act 2020 until the end of this year. We recognise the impact that this extension has on landlords, lenders and investors; therefore, we expect all sides of the sector to use this time to negotiate on outstanding unpaid rents.

■ Evictions and Repossession Orders: Coronavirus

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[116441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to protect (a) renters from eviction and (b) homeowners from repossession during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The stay on housing possessions ended on 20 September and possession claims can now be actioned through the courts, but evictions will not be enforced apart from in the most serious cases. The Government has now changed the law to ensure that bailiffs do not enforce evictions in England over the period of national restrictions or over the Christmas period. No eviction notices are to be served until 11 January 2021 at the earliest and, given the 14-day notice period required, no evictions are expected to be enforced until 25 January 2021 at the earliest. The only exceptions to this are the most serious circumstances: illegal occupation, false statement, anti-social behaviour, perpetrators of domestic abuse in social housing, where a property is unoccupied following the death of a tenant and extreme rent arrears equivalent to 9 months' rent with any arrears accrued since 23 March discounted.

To protect homeowners from repossession, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has announced a moratorium on the enforcement of lender repossession until 31 January 2021, except for in exceptional cases such as a borrower requesting proceedings to continue. For homeowners, mortgage holidays have been extended with applications open to 31 March 2021. Additionally, borrowers that have been affected by Coronavirus and have not yet had a mortgage payment holiday, will be entitled to a six-month holiday. Those that have already started a mortgage payment holiday will be able to top up to six months without this being recorded on their credit file.

■ Homelessness

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[116440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support rough sleepers and other people experiencing homelessness in winter 2020-21.

Kelly Tolhurst:

As we move into the winter months, we recognise the upcoming challenges that local authorities are facing as a result of the pandemic.

The 'Protect Programme', the next step in the ongoing targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19, was announced by the Prime Minister on Thursday 5 November.

This scheme will provide a further £15 million to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This programme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter and is on top of the previously announced £10 million Cold Weather Fund for all councils, giving local areas the tools they need to protect people from life-threatening cold weather and the risks posed by COVID-19. This builds on the success of the still ongoing 'Everyone In' campaign, which is helping to protect thousands of lives during the pandemic - by September it had supported over 29,000 vulnerable people, with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support.

■ Housing: Insulation

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[116413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with housing associations to ensure that, where an ESW1 form is required by law, private owners in buildings partly owned or managed by housing associations are issued with the required ESW1 form in a timely manner to ensure that the sale of their property is not unnecessarily delayed; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The External Wall System process (EWS1) was designed by industry to assist with valuation of high-rise residential buildings where cladding may be a concern. Its use

is determined by the policies of mortgage lenders. It is not a Government policy or legal requirement and not all lenders use it. It is the responsibility of the building owner, whether freehold or commonholder, to ensure their building is safe. The Government is encouraging lenders to accept a broader range of evidence to assure themselves of a building's safety, and building owners to be forthcoming with what information they have. This evidence could include a fire risk assessment that includes external walls, or a recent building control certificate.

Andy Slaughter:

[116419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 110299, whether the work that Michael Wade is developing on protecting leaseholders from unaffordable costs will seek to replace the Building Safety Charge in the Building Safety Bill.

Christopher Pincher:

The proposed Building Safety Charge has been designed to ensure that the costs leaseholders pay for building safety measures are transparent and reasonable. We envisage this will include ongoing costs, such as those for the Building Safety Manager, and powers for the Secretary of State to exclude specific costs from being re-charged.

My department is working on proposals to protect leaseholders from unfair costs caused by historic building safety defects.

Andy Slaughter:

[116421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Building Safety to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on 19 October 2020, for what reason the Government decided to change its policy on allowing costs to be placed onto leaseholders.

Christopher Pincher:

It is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the cost of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause. Government has repeatedly said that building owners should step up and not pass these costs on to leaseholders, where possible.

Where developers or building owners have been unable or unwilling to pay, we have introduced funding schemes providing £1.6 billion to accelerate the pace of work and meet the costs of remediating the highest risk and most expensive defects – Aluminium Composite Material cladding and other unsafe cladding systems like High Pressure Laminates.

The department is working on proposals to protect leaseholders from unfair costs caused by historic building safety defects. We will provide an update before the Building Safety Bill returns to Parliament.

Andy Slaughter: [\[116423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which external financial advisers are working with Michael Wade on protecting leaseholders from unaffordable costs.

Christopher Pincher:

Michael Wade has engaged with a number of stakeholders from the financial sector, including lenders, insurers and their representative bodies. He has not employed one specific financial adviser to work with him on this project, rather he has sought input from across the sector.

Andy Slaughter: [\[116424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 110299 on High Rise Flats: Insulation, what plans he has in place to ensure that the funding solution that Michael Wade is drawing up will work when leaseholders are financially unable to pay for remediation costs.

Christopher Pincher:

The department is undertaking analysis on the affordability of costs for leaseholders and an update to the analysis will be included in the revised Impact Assessment to the Building Safety Bill.

My department will provide an update before the Building Safety Bill returns to Parliament.

Andy Slaughter: [\[116425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 110299 on High Rise Flats: Insulation, whether the leaseholder funding solution that Michael Wade is working on will prioritise the buildings most at risk.

Christopher Pincher:

The programme has prioritised remediation of combustible cladding – and particularly Aluminium Composite Material cladding – because it acts as a fire accelerant and poses the greatest risk of fire spread. We have made £1.6 billion available to support the remediation of unsafe cladding.

Our impact assessment also identifies work not related to cladding that will need to be remediated. Michael Wade, senior adviser to MHCLG, is working with leaseholders and the financial sector to identify financing solutions that protect leaseholders from unfair costs of building safety works while ensuring that the bill does not fall on taxpayers.

Hilary Benn: [\[118490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his oral Answer on 16 November 2020, Official Report, col 16, if he will

publish the information his Department holds on outrageous fees for very little being charged by some waking watch providers.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government recognise residents' concerns about the cost of waking watch measures and the lack of transparency of these costs. That is why we have collected and published information on waking watch costs. This will enable those that have commissioned it to make comparisons and challenge providers on unreasonable costs. The data is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-waking-watch-costs.

The Government also welcomes the National Fire Chiefs Council update to its guidance on Simultaneous Evacuation published in October (available at: www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Simultaneous-evacuation-guidance). We have asked the Fire Protection Board to advise Fire and Rescue Services on how best to operationalise the revised guidance including looking into other measures such as installing building-wide fire alarm systems to reduce the dependency on waking watches wherever possible.

■ **Motorhomes**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[116408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to improve the UK's network of motorhome stopover points.

Christopher Pincher:

My department has no specific plans to improve motorhome stopover points in England. Local authorities are responsible for granting planning permission and licensing of these stopover points where necessary.

■ **Night Shelters: Coronavirus**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[118518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question 105417 on Night Shelters: Coronavirus, what written advice he received from Public Health England during the production of the operating principles for night shelters or as part of the Night Shelter working group; and if he will publish that advice.

Kelly Tolhurst:

I refer the Hon. Member to my previous answer to question 105417 on 5 November 2020.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[118519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question 105417 on Night Shelters: Coronavirus, if will publish the membership of the Night Shelter Working Group; and how many times that group has met in each of the last 12 months.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) to provide Operating Principles for the sector, to help them open shelters as safely as possible where necessary, when self-contained accommodation cannot be made available and when local partners agree that it's the right thing to do.

The Night Shelter Working Group membership included representation from PHE, the Department of Health and Social Care, Housing Justice, and Homeless Link. This group has been meeting regularly during the pandemic.

Paul Blomfield:[\[118520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question 105417 on Night Shelters: Coronavirus, what estimate he has made of the cost per night shelter of transforming their traditional models to be covid-19-secure.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) to provide Operating Principles for the sector, to help them open shelters as safely as possible where necessary, when self-contained accommodation cannot be made available and when local partners agree that it's the right thing to do.

Faith and community groups provide a range of services through winter months and the costs associated with making changes to operate in a Covid-19 secure way may vary. We have announced funding that will give local areas the tools they need to support vulnerable rough sleepers this winter. Our £10 million Cold Weather Fund is available to all local authorities to help them to bring forward self-contained accommodation and to support rough sleepers off the streets. Meanwhile, our £2 million Transformation Fund will help move the faith and community sector a more innovative and Covid-secure options for those who use shelters.

■ Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[116387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with faith leaders on financial support for places of worship during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Over the course of the Covid-19 outbreak we have engaged faith groups through regular meetings of our Places of Worship Taskforce and faith roundtables. Among the subjects discussed has been the financial sustainability of places of worship. We are only too aware of the effect the reduction in income and donations has had on many of our places of worship as a result of the pandemic.

During the pandemic, faith and belief groups have been able to access a range of government-backed financial support measures, and we will continue to work with

them to further understand how government can support them to respond to the pressures they face on sustaining their organisations during this time.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[116530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that religious services will be able to resume at the earliest possibility in England.

Kelly Tolhurst:

From 2 December, the Government will adopt a regionally-differentiated approach to controlling transmission of the Coronavirus, where different tiers of restrictions apply in different parts of the country.

Communal worship will be permitted to restart under all local restriction tiers.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[115822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government supports the World Trade Organisation proposed waiver for covid-19 intellectual property.

Greg Hands:

The Government has long-supported affordable and equitable access to medicines, including in developing countries. A robust and fair intellectual property system is essential to drive innovation, allow economic growth and enable society to benefit from knowledge sharing. There are flexibilities within the Agreement for the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and World Trade Organisation (WTO) Members can use these to ensure access to medicines. The Department for International Trade welcomes initiatives such as Diatropix launched this week in Dakar – where British and Senegalese partners will share technology to produce COVID-19 antibody tests, making 10 million available across west Africa by the end of March 2021. This initiative, supported by development funding from the UK and elsewhere, will make a practical difference in the fight against COVID-19.

■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[118072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2020 to Question 91998 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees, what the type of fossil fuel project is for each request being considered by UKEF.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: The fact that UK Export Finance (UKEF) is considering a transaction is not necessarily indicative of future support.

The projects currently being considered relate to: petrochemical, chemical derived fertiliser, gas fired power station efficiency upgrades, power related pipeline, floating production, storage, and offloading (FPSO) activities, water pumps for oil and gas platforms, wastewater treatment, and equipment for oil and gas production, as well as potential support to be provided under UKEF's Export Development Guarantee product.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[118559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2020 to Question 91998 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees, whether each project is (a) upstream, (b) midstream or (c) downstream.

Graham Stuart:

The seven applications under consideration by UK Export Finance (UKEF) referred to in the response to Question 91998 are broken down as follows:

Two of them are upstream, one is midstream, two are downstream, and one is for power. The other application relates to UKEF's EDG product for which the applicant is active in a range of sectors including both the O&G and renewables sectors.

■ Overseas Trade: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[\[118523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the level of changes in costs for importers and exporters of staff availability during the covid-19 outbreak.

Graham Stuart:

We have no data on the level of changes in costs for importers and exporters as a result of staff absence during the Covid-19 outbreak.

■ Trade and Agriculture Commission: Membership

Alan Brown:

[\[117296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the devolved Administrations on the future composition of the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Greg Hands:

My Rt hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade is in contact with relevant Cabinet colleagues with regard to the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC). The Government also works closely with the devolved administrations on all aspects of our trade policy and I have written to my counterparts seeking their views on the Commission.

The TAC will ensure that public and industry interests are protected in Britain's agriculture trade policy.

■ UK Trade with EU

Gareth Thomas:

[\[117168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish an assessment of the effect on produce traded between the UK and the EU which has been processed from developing country products, in the event of a trade deal between the EU and the UK not being concluded by 31 December 2020; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

We continue to negotiate with the European Union (EU) at pace to work to get an agreement, but we are preparing for all outcomes.

We are on track to provide continuity for developing countries to the fullest extent possible. We have announced the Generalised Scheme of Preference (GSP) recently and provide regular updates on progress on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

The EPAs and GSP will allow for developing countries to cumulate with the EU to preserve existing supply chains. Goods that transit through the EU on their way to the United Kingdom will still be eligible for preferential treatment, subject to the requirements set out in these agreements.

JUSTICE

■ Care Proceedings

Alex Cunningham:

[\[118526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2020 to Question 114866 on Care Proceedings, how many and what proportion of care proceedings cases have not been heard within the six month limit in each of the last three quarters in 2020.

Alex Chalk:

Information relating to the time to the first definitive disposal for care proceedings is published by the Ministry of Justice on a quarterly basis.

The table below details the latest published statistics on the total number of disposals in care proceedings, the mean and median disposal duration (in weeks), and the proportion of disposals made within 26 weeks.

The number of disposals relates to the number of children subject to a disposal outcome. The following outcomes are considered as disposals for the purposes of these statistics:

- The making of a Care Order, Supervision Order, Residence order or Special Guardianship Order;
- A decision by the court to make no order; and
- The withdrawal of an application.

The table details the statistics available for the last three quarters, covering the fourth quarter of 2019 and the first and second quarter of 2020. Validated statistics for the third quarter of 2020 are not yet available to the Ministry of Justice and are due to be published on 17 December 2020.

The latest Family Courts Statistics Quarterly publication can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2020>

| YEAR | QUARTER | TOTAL DISPOSALS | MEAN DISPOSAL DURATION (WEEKS) | MEDIAN DISPOSAL DURATION (WEEKS) | % DISPOSED IN 26 WEEKS |
|------|---------|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2019 | Q4 | 5,946 | 33.7 | 30.1 | 40% |
| 2020 | Q1 | 5,314 | 35.1 | 31.7 | 36% |
| | Q2 | 4,119 | 35.9 | 32.0 | 34% |

■ Offenders: Death

Ms Lyn Brown: [116435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the Death of Offenders in the Community 2019-20 statistics will be published.

Ms Lyn Brown: [116436]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information he has received from Regional Directors of Probation on the number of (a) self-inflicted deaths and (b) deaths from other causes among adult (i) women and (ii) men under the care of probation services in the community in each month since March 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

The publication of the Deaths of Offenders in the Community statistics for 2019-20 has been delayed following the introduction of a new method of data collection which has necessitated further work to ensure that the data meets the required publication standards. We intend to publish the statistics as soon as possible and will finalise the date and pre-announce it in the near future.

Information on deaths of offenders in the community since March 2020 is not currently available, with the exception of the limited number of deaths that are specifically related to COVID-19, which are reported in the HMPPS COVID-19 Statistics. Preparation for the next annual publication will begin early in the new year to ensure that publication is timely. This forms part of a wider programme to improve our data on deaths of offenders in the community to better inform work preventing such deaths.

■ Trials: Crown Court**Alex Cunningham:**[\[116474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many trials have been completed in Crown courts in each year since 2008.

Chris Philp:

Crown Court trials which proceed on the planned date are recorded as effective. We do not record trials in the Crown courts under a category of completed.

Data showing effective trials from 2008 to 2019 can be found in the table below:

Volume of effective trials² in Crown Courts in England and Wales, annually 2008 - 2019

| YEAR | EFFECTIVE TRIALS ¹ NUMBER |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| 2008 | 17,044 |
| 2009 | 17,899 |
| 2010 | 18,949 |
| 2011 | 19,077 |
| 2012 | 18,729 |
| 2013 | 17,238 |
| 2014 | 17,931 |
| 2015 | 19,493 |
| 2016 | 18,921 |
| 2017 | 17,607 |
| 2018 | 14,991 |
| 2019 | 12,100 |

Notes

¹ In the Crown Court, a trial is effective once a jury has been sworn in, regardless of whether they go on to reach a verdict.

² The total number of trials listed during the reporting periods indicated. Not all cases will go to trial, for the purposes of trial effectiveness we consider a 'trial' at the point of initial listing. A trial which goes ahead on the planned date and occurs is then considered as 'effective', a trial that is listed but does not go ahead is considered either cracked, ineffective or vacated as detailed in the supporting guidance

document which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>.

In addition, the most recent publication of the National Statistics series 'Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly' will provide the quarterly information to Q2 2020 at the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>

■ Young Offenders

Andy Slaughter:

[116417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many proven offences were committed by children who turned 18 prior to conviction in the 12 months to March (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions, convictions and sentences for offences committed by children up to December 2019; 2020 data is not yet available.

Published information is available in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888664/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2019.xlsx

Detailed information on the circumstances of cases, including age at time of offence vs. age at time of conviction, may be held on court record. However, to be able to identify these cases, we would have to access individual court records, which would be of disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Community Relations: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[116703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to what projects and programmes he has allocated Shared Future funding under the Fresh Start Agreement in (a) 2020-21 and (b) forthcoming financial years.

Mr Robin Walker:

In 2015, the UK Government provided £60m over five years in support of the Executive's delivery of confidence and relationship building measures within and between communities, contributing to the conditions that will allow the removal of peace walls and the creation of a shared future.

The UK Government has released £12m in each financial year since 2016-17, with the final £12m being provided to the Executive in 2020-21. The Northern Ireland Budget for the 2020-21 financial year confirmed £12 million of non ring-fenced

resource funding for Shared Future projects. The Northern Ireland Executive is responsible for allocating this non ring-fenced spending and has not yet published its decisions for the 2020-21 period.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Repayments

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[118568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has received reports of airline companies refunding vouchers given as a result of flight cancellations due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport has not received reports of airline companies refunding vouchers given as a result of for cancelled flights. The Government has been clear with industry that it is acceptable for airlines to offer a voucher as an option to a cash refund to the consumer, but that the risks need to be clearly communicated to consumers. Where a passenger believes they are entitled to receive a refund and did not accept a voucher, they are able to make a complaint to the airline.

The Department has also been clear that airlines and travel agents should not deny consumers their legal right to a refund if it is requested, and this should be done in a timely manner. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is routinely reviewing the refund policies and practices of all UK airlines, as well as a number of international airlines that operate flights to and from the UK. The CAA continues to work with carriers to drive down waiting times, while recognising the challenges businesses are facing.

■ Biofuels

Drew Hendry:

[\[118039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether liquid biofuels are included in his Department's climate change policies; and what steps he plans to take to support the liquid biofuels industry.

Rachel Maclean:

Liquid biofuels play an important role in our policies to reduce carbon emissions from conventional road vehicles in use today, and potentially from those transport modes harder to reach through electrification.

The government has successfully supported the UK biofuel market since 2008 through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO). Targets for the supply of low carbon fuels set through the RTFO have increased over time and are set to do so until at least 2032. In addition, an advanced biofuels market is being promoted by making available £20 million of capital funding through the Future Fuels for Flight and Freight Competition.

The Department will continue to monitor and review the support schemes it has in place for liquid biofuels and other low carbon fuels. In so doing we will consider how liquid biofuels are best deployed across sectors and in the delivery of cost-effective savings against future carbon budgets.

■ **Bridges: Hinckley**

Dr Luke Evans:

[117383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that the A5 Watling Street railway bridge near Hinckley does not become the most bashed bridge in Britain in 2020-21 as it reportedly was in 2019-20.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail revealed the most-struck bridges in the country (including Hinckley bridge) to remind drivers and operators of their obligations to prevent costly and dangerous bridge strikes. It has worked with industry bodies - including Highways England and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) - and hauliers as part of a Bridge Strike Prevention Group to help companies and their employees to avoid striking bridges, resulting in an 11% decrease in incidents in the last financial year (April 1 2019 - March 31 2020).

Highways England has undertaken many studies in the past and has installed extra signage on the approach to, and on the bridge, in an effort to raise drivers' awareness of the risks. Highways England are currently in discussions with a developer about the possibility of lowering the carriageway in the vicinity of the low bridge, as part of the developer's scheme proposal.

A new campaign 'Wise Up, Size Up' will feature on petrol pumps at motorway service stations across Britain along with posters, reminding drivers to check their routes before setting off and the Senior Traffic Commissioner, Richard Turfitt, issued a letter last month to all goods vehicle and Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licence holders, warning that regulatory action, which could result in the loss of their operator's licence, could follow should they fail to take appropriate measures to prevent bridge strikes.

■ **Bus Services**

Colleen Fletcher:

[116505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many bus routes have been discontinued in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

Changes to bus services are notified to the Traffic Commissioners.

The Traffic Commissioners Annual Report for 2020-21 is due to be published in Autumn 2021. The latest published data for 2019-20 from the Traffic Commissioners regarding the number of cancelled registrations can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-commissioners-annual-report-2019-to-2020>

Reports for previous years can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioners-annual-reports>

The numbers of cancelled registrations will not be the same as the number of cessations of bus services: a registration that is cancelled may be complemented by a new service introduction that is an exact match or a slight variation to the one that has been cancelled.

■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Alan Brown:

[117295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 restrictions on the coach hire industry; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

We have announced several financial support measures available to UK businesses, including the coach industry. This includes measures announced on 24 September as part of the Winter Economy Plan, further support on 22 October for businesses in local lockdown areas, changes to the Job Support Scheme (JSS), and increased business grants. With the introduction of new national restrictions on 5 November, the COVID-19 Job Retention Scheme has also been extended until March 2021.

The full return to education supports a key revenue source for the industry and this has been augmented by the additional vehicles needed compared to previous years. The Department of Education has announced over £70 million to local transport authorities to provide additional dedicated school and college capacity in our transport system, helping children and young people to get to and from their schools and colleges whilst social distancing reduces the capacity of existing public transport. It is for local transport authorities to decide how to use this funding, but some of this has been used to fund additional coach services.

We continue to work closely with representatives from the coach sector including the Confederation of Passenger Transport, and with other government departments, to understand the ongoing risks and issues the sector faces and how these could be addressed.

■ **Driving: Coronavirus**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[116429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether driving lessons and driving tests will be allowed to recommence immediately after the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown restrictions have ended.

Rachel Maclean:

The Prime Minister has confirmed that when the current national restriction period ends, the country will move to local restrictions on a 3 Tier basis. Driving lessons and

driving tests were permitted under the previous Tier 3 restriction. It is not yet clear what impact the new restrictions will have on driving lessons and driving tests, but the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency will update its advice on GOV.UK as soon as it has clarity.

■ Electric Vehicles

Jim Shannon:

[118000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the supply of electric cars in the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

The government is going further and faster than ever to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. These ambitions will be supported by an accompanying package of £2.8 billion.

The government has committed up to £1 billion to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains, including developing gigafactories in the UK to produce the batteries needed at scale. The government has committed the first £500m of this investment through the Automotive Transformation Fund to put the UK at the forefront of the design, development, and manufacturing of zero emission vehicles.

The government will invest £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure, targeting support on rapid charge points on motorways and major roads to dash any anxiety around long journeys, and installing more on-street charge points near homes and workplaces to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car.

While we expect the cost of electric vehicles to come down, the government will provide £582 million to extend the plug-in car, van, taxi and motorcycle grants to 2022–23 to reduce their up-front cost. The government has also put in place a favourable tax regime that rewards the cleanest vehicles on our roads.

Jeff Smith:

[118032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to (a) encourage people to switch to electric cars, (b) make those cars more affordable and (c) increase their rate of sale.

Rachel Maclean:

The government is going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. This ambitious transition will be supported by an accompanying package of £2.8 billion. The government has committed up to £1 billion to support the electrification of UK vehicles and their supply chains, including developing gigafactories in the UK to produce the batteries needed at scale. The government will invest £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging

infrastructure, targeting support on rapid charge points on motorways and major roads to dash any anxiety around long journeys, and installing more on-street charge points near homes and workplaces to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car. While we expect the cost of electric vehicles to come down, the government will provide £582 million to extend the plug-in car, van, taxi and motorcycle grants to 2022–23 to reduce their up-front cost. The government has also ensured that a favourable tax regime has been put in place that rewards the cleanest vehicles on our roads.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Batteries**

Jonathan Edwards:

[118509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the need to invest in research into universal interchangeable batteries as part of the transition to electric vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The government is supporting a wide range of research, development and scale-up of world-leading battery technology in the UK through the £318m Faraday Battery Challenge. The Faraday Battery Challenge aims to ensure the UK builds on its strengths and leads the world in the design and manufacture of electric vehicles. Challenges with interchangeable battery technologies include need to standardise battery size and location in a vehicle, requirement for more batteries than vehicles and concerns around safety. Trial programmes in other countries have failed in recent years and improving battery range and fast charging technology is reducing the commercial case for a battery swapping system. The technology could work well in countries with relatively low vehicle numbers and smaller vehicle types. We will keep this under review.

Jonathan Edwards:

[118510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the need to invest in research into flow batteries as a part of the transition to electric vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The government has committed £318m into the Faraday Battery Challenge to support the research, development and scale-up of world-leading battery technology in the UK. The Faraday Battery Challenge is focused on developing cost-effective, high-performance, durable, safe and recyclable batteries to capture the growing electric vehicle market. We are also supporting research into flow batteries for grid applications.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Greater Manchester**

Jeff Smith:

[118029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to support investment in electric vehicle charging points in Greater Manchester.

Rachel Maclean:

Within the Greater Manchester area the government has provided funding of £14,390,042 to deliver electric buses and the associated charging infrastructure under the Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme, alongside £1,800,000 to Transport for Greater Manchester to deliver 30 rapid chargepoints dedicated for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles.

Last week, the government announced we are going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. This ambitious transition will be supported by an accompanying package of £2.8 billion, which includes £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure. Local authorities, businesses and motorists purchasing an eligible plug-in vehicle can apply for a grant to contribute towards the costs of the electric vehicle charging points. This is in addition to the £400 million Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund, which leverages private sector funding to increase the number of chargepoints installed across the UK.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[116383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to tackle the effect of haulage vehicles on air quality.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[116384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with representatives of the road haulage sector on reduce the effect of that sector on air pollution.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[116385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to help ensure the haulage sector to minimise its contribution to air pollution.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to improving air quality and the freight sector has a significant role to play in this. The Government encourages more sustainable alternatives to road haulage where practical, including e-cargo bikes and electric vehicles for urban deliveries and mode shift to rail freight.

The implementation of Clean Air Zones will affect the use of haulage vehicles substantially in some cases.

There are official level discussions with representatives of the road haulage industry about the implementation of existing policies and the development of further policy related to road freight and pollution.

Support is being provided by local authorities and through the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme to help businesses upgrade to newer vehicles and achieve compliance with NO2 limits where Clean Air Zones restrict access for older HGVs.

We are also consulting on options for improving the productivity of existing fleets, for example through the use of longer semi-trailers which have reduced the number of HGV journeys and the associated emissions.

■ **Merchant Shipping: Security**

Mike Kane:

[118535]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Maritime and Coastguard Agency and (b) UK Chamber of Shipping on administrative changes to maritime security notifications on merchant shipping routes between UK and EU ports from 1 January 2021.

Robert Courts:

Vessel operators are required to provide security information via pre-arrival notifications (PANs) through the Consolidated European Reporting System (CERS), prior to arrival into a UK port. The PAN includes details of the ship, previous port history, crew and passenger lists and special or additional security measures being taken. Under EC Regulation 725/2004 the UK is able to provide exemptions for the operators of regular, scheduled voyages between an EU port and a UK port.

From the 1 January 2021, UK legislation will allow the UK to continue to provide exemptions to vessels coming into the UK from EU ports, but operators will need to begin providing information if they have previously had an exemption in place. EU member states will not be able to issue exemptions to vessels operating scheduled services from the UK, irrespective of where the ship is registered or what country's flag it sails under.

Industry stakeholders have been made aware of the change through stakeholder meetings, such as the National Maritime Security Committee for Industry, and officials wrote to industry stakeholders on a number of occasions to inform them of the change. The change was also published on GOV.UK on the 19 December 2018 and is available at the link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-an-exemption-from-maritime-security-notifications-from-1-january-2021#what-shipping-companies-must-do>

■ **Ports: Air Pollution**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[116386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of queues at ports after the end of the transition period on roadside air quality.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has assessed the potential for queues occurring at ports at the end of the transition period. We continue to work with Local Resilience Forums to reduce the negative effects of queues through their traffic management plans. We anticipate the traffic management plans will help mitigate queues at the ports and air quality impacts.

■ Railways: North of England

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [118566]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Transport for the North on the Northern Powerhouse Rail project.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Secretary of State has had regular discussions with the Chair of Transport for the North, and TfN Board members about Northern Powerhouse Rail, most recently in September. The Secretary of State has regular conversations with Northern Leaders in his role as the Northern Powerhouse Minister. I have also held two roundtables with leaders from each area of the North and Midlands to discuss the Integrated Rail Plan. In the Integrated Rail Plan, the Department will set out how projects, including HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, can be connected strategically to deliver the train services that people need and deserve, as effectively as possible.

■ Shipping

Mike Kane: [118534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish end of transition period guidance to (a) employers, (b) crew and (c) international flag states in the shipping industry.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport, together with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, has published specific guidance on the recognition of seafarer certificates of competency from 1 January 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recognition-of-seafarer-certificates-of-competency-from-1-january-2021>), as well as guidance for shipping companies on exemptions from maritime security notifications (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-an-exemption-from-maritime-security-notifications-from-1-january-2021>).

Government has published extensive transition guidance, of relevance to employers and employees across the whole economy, which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/transition>. The need for further specific guidance for the shipping industry is being kept under review.

■ Travel: Costs

Caroline Lucas: [117971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the percentage change in real terms of the average cost to the individual of travelling by (a) private car, (b) bus, (c) train and (d) domestic aeroplane since (i) 1980, (ii) 1997, (iii) 2010, (iv) 2015 and (v) 2017.

Rachel Maclean:

(a-c) The Department for Transport publishes statistics on travel costs, based on data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in the Transport Statistics Great Britain compendium. This is available from Table 1308 at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/transport-expenditure-tsgb13>

Please note this table gives absolute changes in the indices and covers 1987 to 2018.

(d) The costs of travelling by air are not available from ONS data. However, DfT estimates are available based on fare data collected from the Civil Aviation Authority passenger survey from 2000. The real cost of the average UK one-way air fare, including taxes and charges, covering domestic flights from 2010 to 2018 decreased by 15%. From 2015 to 2018 the real cost increased by 2%, and from 2017 to 2018 the real cost increased by 10%.

TREASURY**■ Airports: Non-domestic Rates****Steve Double:****[116570]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending business rates relief to airports in England.

Steve Double:**[116571]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons airports in England were not included in the business rates relief plans for retail and hospitality businesses.

Jesse Norman:

In response to COVID-19 the Government expanded on previous support for the high street to support those businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors most adversely affected by the pandemic and reductions in consumer footfall. A range of measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for business rates relief, has also been made available.

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the aviation industry as a result of COVID-19. On 24 November the Government announced a package of financial support for English commercial airports and ground handlers. This support, which will shore up jobs and reinforce local economies, will be equivalent to the business rates liabilities of each business, up to a maximum of £8 million per site, and subject to certain conditions. This scheme will open in the New Year.

The Government has also announced that from 15 December, passengers returning to England from countries not on the travel corridor list will have the option to pay for and take a test after five days of self-isolation, with a negative test result releasing them from the rest of the self-isolation period. This new testing scheme will allow

passengers to travel more freely, driving international business and supporting the travel industry as it continues to rebuild out of the pandemic.

■ **Beer: Non-domestic Rates**

Olivia Blake:

[\[118609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will include brewers in the retail, hospitality and leisure business rates relief programme; and if he will reopen the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and include brewers.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided Local Authorities with £1.1 billion across England via the Additional Restrictions Grant, for businesses which are not legally closed, but which are nonetheless severely affected by local or national restrictions.

Local Authorities have discretion on how to use this funding to support businesses in their areas, but the Government encourages them to set up discretionary grant schemes to support businesses such as brewers which can remain open, but which are nonetheless severely affected by the enhanced COVID-19 restrictions.

There are currently no plans to change the scope of existing business rates relief. HM Treasury is conducting a fundamental review of the business rates system and will consider any future reliefs through that process.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[116516\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide (a) sliding scale grants or (b) greater financial support for business sectors most effected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is acutely aware of the extreme disruption to people's lives, jobs, and businesses due to the necessary actions to tackle COVID-19.

This is why we announced the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme, which will provide businesses in England which are legally required to close with grants of up to £3,000 per four-week closure period, depending on their rateable value.

Through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open), local authorities which were subject to restrictions on socialising between 1 August and 5 November will also receive additional funding so that they can make grants of up to £2,100 per month of closures to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses which were able to remain open but which experienced a severe reduction in demand due to restrictions on socialising.

On top of this, we have 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 to support businesses in their areas, but we encourage them

to set up discretionary grant schemes to support businesses which can remain open, but which are nonetheless severely affected by the enhanced COVID-19 restrictions.

Businesses across the country should also be able to benefit from other measures in the Government's unprecedented package of support for businesses, including:

- The extension to 31 March of the CJRS, through which employees will receive up to 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked up to a maximum of £2,500 per month;
- Support for the self-employed via the SEISS, which will provide the self-employed with grants worth up to 80% of trading profits, covering November to January;
- The extension of the application deadline for loan guarantee schemes to the end of January 2021;
- An adjustment to the Bounce Back Loan Scheme rules to allow those businesses who have borrowed less than their maximum (i.e. less than 25% of their turnover) to top-up their existing loan; and
- Help for businesses in repaying loans from Government-backed schemes through the Pay as you Grow scheme and allowing lenders to extend the terms of CBILS loans to up to 10 years.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[116517]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will introduce a mechanism for businesses to opt to close once they meet certain criteria to enable access to more appropriate financial support and furloughing schemes .

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the pandemic the government's economic priority has remained the same: to protect jobs and livelihoods. Since March, the government has provided support for people, businesses and public services totalling an estimated £200 billion. We are committed to ensuring we take the right action at the right time to support individuals and businesses in every region and nation of the United Kingdom.

That is why we have a substantial support package available for businesses regardless of whether they are open or closed. The Chancellor recently announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until the end of March 2021. This provides businesses with a grant to cover 80% of the wages of their employees. We have added additional flexibility so it can be used to cover reduced hours as well as for businesses that are closed. To date CJRS has supported 9.6 million jobs at the cost of roughly £41.9bn.

Alongside the CJRS, businesses have also benefited from the access to finance schemes, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme. Under the BBL Scheme, the government provides lenders with a 100% guarantee to enable them to provide loans between £2,000 and £50,000 to the smallest businesses across the UK with a simple, streamlined application process. All eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will pay no

business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April 2020. Businesses will also benefit from the reduced rate of VAT for tourist attractions and goods & services supplied by the hospitality sector.

For businesses that remain open but are severely affected by restrictions can receive support through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (open), which provides up to £2,100 of support per month. They can also access one-off funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant, worth £1.1bn nationally and distributed by local authorities.

■ Cars: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[116706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to address the loss of access to the VAT Margin Scheme as a consequence of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol for (a) cars sourced in Great Britain and sold in Northern Ireland by car dealers and (b) the consequent increase in costs of cars to consumers.

Jesse Norman:

The Northern Ireland Protocol frames the approach to VAT on goods, including the second-hand margin scheme, in Northern Ireland. As is the case for tax policy generally, the Government is keeping this under review.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Drew Hendry:

[\[118540\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of backdating Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme support payments for workers who continued to work part-time at the start of covid-19 outbreak and were ineligible for the original operation of that scheme but who are now eligible for that scheme through flexible furlough.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been delivered at an unprecedented pace and is protecting thousands of jobs up and down the UK, with 1.2 million employers applying to help to pay the wages of 9.6 million furloughed jobs.

In light of recent developments in the path of the virus, the CJRS has been extended until the end of March 2021 for all parts of the UK. People employed and on payroll on 30 October will be eligible, and neither the employer nor the employee needs to have previously claimed or have been claimed for under the CJRS to make a claim under the extended CJRS, if other eligibility criteria are met. Furthermore, businesses will have flexibility to use the scheme for employees for any amount of time and shift pattern, including furloughing them part-time. By having the eligibility cut-off date the day before the announcement, this addresses the risk of abuse while also ensuring that there is no gap in support.

The scheme is designed to help those who otherwise would have been made unemployed and to provide support to businesses as quickly as possible. Allowing

backdated payments to people working part-time since March is not consistent with the objectives of the scheme, would require more process and substantially increase the risk of fraud.

■ Exports: VAT

Sarah Olney:

[118558]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the decision to abolish VAT-free shopping on the UK's (a) tourism and (b) hospitality industries.

Kemi Badenoch:

Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.
- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government is also continuing to meet and discuss with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

HMRC estimate that VAT RES refunds cost around £0.5 billion in VAT in 2019 for around 1.2 million non-EU visitors. In 2019 the ONS estimate there were substantially more EU visitors (24.8 million) than non-EU passengers (16.0 million) to the UK. This implies an extension to EU residents would significantly increase the cost by up to an estimated £0.9 billion. This would result in a large amount of deadweight loss by subsidising spending from EU visitors which already happens without a refund

mechanism in place, potentially taking the total cost up to around £1.4 billion per annum.

The independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has today set out their assessment of the precise fiscal impact of the withdrawal of the scheme. Factoring in a higher-than-usual elasticity of 1.9 to account for spending on luxury goods, the OBR estimate that the change will result in a significant direct Exchequer saving of around £400 million per year, once passenger numbers recover from the impacts of COVID-19. This includes an assumption that approximately 20,000 – 30,000 fewer tourists visit Great Britain a year – far away from the hundreds of thousands or millions of visitors that others have claimed. Overall, the behaviour response with this higher elasticity is expected to reduce the tax revenue by a quarter.

■ International Military Services: Iran

Tulip Siddiq:

[116597]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a decision has been made by his Department on whether to grant the outstanding March 2017 application for an Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation licence to discharge the IMS debt to the Central Bank of Iran.

John Glen:

As the competent authority for the implementation of financial sanctions in the UK, the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), part of HM Treasury, ensures financial sanctions are properly understood and enforced. Part of this role involves licensing legitimate activity in relation to sanctioned individuals or entities.

OFSI considers granting a licence if an activity falls within licensing grounds set out in the applicable legislation and considers the relevant evidence, on a case by case basis, before deciding whether to grant a licence. Licences are granted in strict adherence to the applicable law.

OFSI does not, however, comment on individual licence applications. Where a licence has been issued by OFSI, it does not compel any party to take any action.

■ NFU Mutual: Coronavirus

Ben Lake:

[118562]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with NFU Mutual on that organisation's treatment of covid-19 support grant payments to businesses as income in insurance claims.

John Glen:

Following the letters issued by the Treasury and the Association of British Insurers at the end of September, in which the majority of insurers committed to not make deductions from business interruption insurance settlements to account for specific government grant funds, I am aware that NFU Mutual has continued to make such deductions. As stated in my letter, these grants are intended to provide emergency support to businesses at this time of crisis, and it is the Government's firm

expectation that they are not to be deducted from business interruption insurance claims.

As such, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) are looking into this matter further. The FCA sets the conduct standards required of insurance firms in relation to their business which aim to ensure customers are treated in a fair manner. You will note that the FCA has already written to relevant insurers providing clarification on how government support should be treated in claim calculations and asking that they consider very carefully the appropriateness of any deductions in the context of individual insurance policies. The FCA has also made it clear that it may intervene and take further actions where firms do not appear to be meeting the FCA's expectations and treating their customers fairly, although neither the Government nor the regulator is able to confirm or comment on any discussions with individual firms.

I am monitoring this issue closely and will assess what, if any, further steps are needed to resolve this issue for policyholders.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[116514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the business rates holiday granted for retail, hospitality, leisure and nurseries for the 2020-21 tax year for (a) part or (b) all of 2021-22.

Jesse Norman:

The unprecedented full business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure properties for the financial year is worth £10 billion to business in 2020-21. The Government will continue to look at how to adjust support in a way that ensures people can get back to work, protecting both the UK economy and the livelihoods of people across the country. The Government will consider all reliefs in the round, against the broader fiscal and economic impacts of COVID-19, as part of the Business Rates Review.

■ **Parents: Coronavirus**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[116513\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial provision is available within the 14-day self-isolation period for the parents of schoolchildren who have been told to stay at home and self-isolate through NHS Test and Trace but who have not themselves been notified to self-isolate and therefore do not have an 8-digit NHS Test and Trace code with which to recoup lost earnings during that period.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has committed to a significant package to support individuals through this difficult time. This includes the introduction of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, as well as the injection of an additional £9.3bn into the welfare system according to Office for Budget Responsibility estimates.

If an employee has average weekly earnings of at least £120 per week, they will be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if they are self-isolating under Government guidance and cannot work from home. This includes parents living in the same households as children self-isolating with symptoms of COVID-19. The Government has changed the rules so that SSP is now payable from day 1, not day 4, for COVID-19 cases.

Parents of children who are self-isolating under Government guidance may be eligible for “new style” Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they are ineligible for SSP and unable to work from home. The Government has made it easier for people to claim by removing the seven-day waiting period which means people can get support from day one.

In terms of wider support, the Chancellor has recently announced that the CJRS will be extended until the end of March 2021. The Government has striven to ensure that the CJRS can be accessed by as many people as possible. All employers with a UK bank account and a PAYE payroll scheme registered on or before 30 October can claim, while employees are required to have been employed and on an employer's PAYE payroll on 30 October 2020. Any employee who meets the eligibility criteria can be furloughed by their employer.

Parents on lower incomes can also benefit from the Government's wider changes to the welfare system to support the most vulnerable. These changes include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants.

■ Personal Care Services: VAT

Carolyn Harris:

[116575]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the VAT reduction for the hospitality sector until March 2021 to hair, beauty, spa and wellness services.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July in order to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021. This relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are currently no plans to extend the scope to include other sectors.

The Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

John Stevenson:

[\[116453\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support (a) employed and (b) self-employed people in the travel industry during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Jesse Norman:

Following the implementation of further national restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, the Government has announced additional economic measures to provide financial support to employed and self-employed individuals, including those working in the travel industry.

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until March 2021 which will provide employees with 80 per cent of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The Government is providing broadly comparable support for the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, with grants raised to 80 per cent of average trading profits, up to £7,500 for 3 months.

These schemes are part of a £200bn package of support offered to businesses, including billions of pounds worth of loans, grants and tax deferrals, which will help protect jobs throughout the UK and across all sectors through the winter.

■ UK Trade with EU: Rules of Origin

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[116410\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the future UK-EU trade agreement sets effective rules of origin requirements for products where there is no domestic manufacturing in order to support UK businesses and consumers who purchase imported goods.

Jesse Norman:

The Government's intention is that any UK-EU trade agreement will include clear, simple, and trade facilitating Rules of Origin which will support the needs of businesses and consumers across the UK, and it has been working closely with UK industry throughout the negotiation process. The Government continues to seek solutions that fully respect UK sovereignty, and provide for mutually beneficial outcomes across all chapters and areas, including on rules of origin.

In addition, the UK's Global Tariff Regime has been developed, in part, in order to support businesses and UK consumers who purchase imported goods. Tariffs have been removed on a number of products that are not produced in the UK, or which the UK does not produce much of, in order to reduce cost pressures for UK households and businesses. Regardless of whether the UK agrees a trade agreement with the EU, this tariff liberalisation will mean those products will still be able to enter the UK at zero tariffs, supporting UK businesses and consumers.

VAT: Coronavirus**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[116518\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the temporarily reduced rate of VAT for (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) other heavily effected sectors in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021. This relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are currently no plans to extend the scope to include other sectors.

The Government has announced a significant support package to help businesses through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the government-backed loan schemes.

Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus**Ian Lavery:**[\[116485\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend business rates relief to all wholesalers.

Ian Lavery:[\[116486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend business rates relief to all wholesalers.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published guidance for local authorities on eligible properties. As set out in the guidance, support is available to premises that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues; for assembly and leisure; or as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation. It is for local authorities to determine eligibility for reliefs, having regard to guidance issued by the Government.

A range of further measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for the business rates holiday, has also been made available.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Civil Servants: Political Impartiality

Tom Randall:

[\[909397\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office on civil service impartiality and diversity and inclusion.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Civil Service is committed to developing inclusive workplaces. We are refreshing our approach based on new evidence of what works.

The focus will be on embedding best practice, ensuring the Civil Service acts as an exemplar employer.

Senior officials are consulting Departments and staff on the new approach, and are working closely with Ministers from across Departments who have an interest.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Children: Poverty

Stephen Farry:

[\[116700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government plans to take, other than through free school meal vouchers, to tackle childhood poverty.

Will Quince:

Tackling child poverty is a key priority for the Government. Our recent focus has been on supporting people financially during these unprecedented times with an injection of £9.3 billion pounds to strengthen the welfare system in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme builds on that support with an additional £170m for local authorities in England, to support families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter.

Devolved Administrations have received equivalent funding through the upfront funding guarantee, which was recently increased to £16bn for the year.

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 Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, will also be expanded across England next year. It will cover Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2021, and cost up to £220m. It will be available to children in every local authority in England, building on previous programmes – including this summers, which supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities.

Our 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 into and progress in work wherever possible.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Rosie Cooper:

[\[117208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support is available to people who are extremely vulnerable to covid-19 who cannot work from home and choose to shield themselves.

Justin Tomlinson:

Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP informing them of this and may have been advised to shield in the past. Individuals who receive a new notification that they need to shield should work from home where possible and if not possible follow their respective Government's advice on not going to work.

Employees who are clinically extremely vulnerable can be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Where they are not furloughed, and they are unable to work, for example where they cannot work from home, they may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from their employer.

Employees who are not eligible for SSP and the self-employed, may be eligible for New Style Employment and Support Allowance, subject to the wider eligibility criteria.

Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to receive Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Employment: Disability

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[116531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's 2017 Green Paper entitled Improving Lives, what research she has commissioned on potential new policies to support disabled people in employment; and when the conclusions of that research are planned for publication.

Justin Tomlinson:

A range of research and evaluations have been commissioned to explore the commitments made in Improving Lives. This includes:

- Investigating the acceptability of different healthcare professionals issuing fit notes amongst different audiences
- Understanding the provision of occupational health and work-related musculoskeletal services
- Employment Advisers in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies: Evaluation
- Self-employment for people with disabilities and health conditions

- Private providers of occupational health services
- Employers' motivations and practices: A study of the use of Occupational Health Services
- Sickness absence and health in the workplace: understanding employer behaviour and practice
- Innovation and knowledge development amongst providers of occupational health
- International comparison of occupational health systems and provisions
- Group Work/JOBS II: Process Evaluation
- Group Work/JOBS II: Cost Benefit Analysis
- Health-led Employment Trial Evaluation
- The work aspirations and support needs of claimants in the ESA Support Group and Universal Credit equivalent

The following reports have been published on gov.uk:

- Exploring perceptions and attitudes towards the extension of fit note certification (August 2020)
- Understanding the provision of occupational health and work-related musculoskeletal services (May 2020)
- Employment Advisers in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies: process evaluation report (July 2019)
- The work aspirations and support needs of claimants in the ESA Support Group and Universal Credit equivalent (February 2020)
- Sickness absence and health in the workplace: employer behaviour and practice. An interim summary report (June 2019)
- Self-employment for people with disabilities and health conditions (May 2019)
- Private providers of occupational health services: interim report (April 2019)
- Employers' motivations and practices: A study of the use of Occupational Health Services (April 2019)

Publication dates are not confirmed for the remainder of commissioned projects.

■ Social Security Benefits

Wendy Chamberlain:

[118597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the value of unclaimed benefits.

Guy Opperman:

On 29th October 2020 the Department for Work and Pensions published the report "Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2018 to 2019". The full report is available online.

For Great Britain, the following estimates are available for 2018/19:

Pension Credit: Up to £1.8 billion of available Pension Credit went unclaimed;

Housing Benefit: Up to £3.4 billion of available Housing Benefit went unclaimed;

Income Support / Income-related Employment and Support Allowance: Up to £1.2 billion of available Income Support / Income-related Employment and Support Allowance went unclaimed.

Estimates are not available for other DWP benefits, including Universal Credit.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Gavin Robinson:

[\[118536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of awarding a retrospective £20 uplift that was received by universal credit claimants to people who remain on legacy benefits such as (a) employment and support allowance, (b) income support and (c) jobseeker's allowance.

Will Quince:

The temporary Universal Credit Standard Allowance uplift was introduced to support those facing the most financial disruption due to the pandemic. There are no plans to extend the uplift to legacy benefits. Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) if they believe that they will be better off. Claimants should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under UC before applying as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Navendu Mishra:

[\[116684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what reasonable adjustments have been put in place by her Department and its contractors when undertaking telephone assessments for disabled persons.

Justin Tomlinson:

The department and our assessment providers are committed to providing a quality, sensitive and respectful service to everyone. Individuals are encouraged to alert their assessment provider of any additional requirements they may have and providers will endeavour to meet any such reasonable requests.

Individuals can access additional support throughout the assessment process, for example help filling in the questionnaire. Companions are able to join the telephony assessment, as they would have done for the face to face assessment. This is confirmed to the individual in the initial invitation to assessment letter for all telephone assessments. If choosing to request a companion, they will be added to the call by the Health Professional at the start of the assessment.

To further enhance the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) telephony service, PIP providers have implemented a video relay service for claimants with British Sign Language requirements, to enable deaf claimants to participate in an assessment; we are exploring whether this solution could support the Work Capability Assessment process.

■ Universal Credit

Stephen Farry:

[\[116699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the £16,000 savings limit for universal credit entitlement.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

The capital limit above which entitlement to Universal Credit ends is £16,000. Claimants have the opportunity to declare what type of capital they have, both when making a claim to Universal Credit and throughout the time they are getting Universal Credit.

The limit strikes a balance between protecting less well-off people and the taxpayer, whilst at the same time recognising the conscientious efforts of people who have built up capital.

This limit also ensures that the help which comes from taxpayers, many of whom are themselves on low incomes and have limited capital, is directed to people who need it most.

Stephen Farry:

[\[116701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) suspending deductions and (b) implementing a grant in lieu of advances during the five week wait for receipt of universal credit.

Will Quince:

Nobody in need has to wait for a payment under Universal Credit (UC). UC New Claim Advances allow eligible claimants to receive up to 100% of their estimated Universal Credit payment upfront. Claimants will receive their annual award over 13 payments during their first year, instead of 12. These upfront payments can be spread across two years instead of one from October 2021, as announced in the 2020 Budget. New Claim Advances are not loans. They are the claimant's benefit paid early, which is then recovered over an agreed period.

The Department's deductions policy strikes a fair balance between a claimant's need to meet their financial obligations and their ability to ensure they can meet their day-to-day needs. Since October 2019, Universal Credit deductions are a maximum of 30% of a claimant's standard allowance down from 40% previously. We also recognise the importance of safeguarding the welfare of claimants who have incurred debt, so last resort deductions over the 30% cap can be applied to protect vulnerable

claimants from eviction and/or having their fuel supply disconnected, by providing a repayment method for arrears of these essential services.

The main aim of the deductions policy in Universal Credit is to safeguard the welfare of claimants who have incurred debt in a cost effective and efficient way. It provides protection for claimants from the consequences of homelessness, imprisonment or having vital utilities disconnected. Regulations protect claimants from excessive deductions and there are no plans to suspend them.

■ Universal Credit: Severe Disability Premium

Neil Gray:

[\[116499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on disabled claimants of legislation to convert the severe disability premium transitional payment into a transitional element.

Justin Tomlinson:

Severe Disability Premium transitional payments are part of the wider transitional protection framework and it has always been the intention to convert Severe Disability Premium transitional payments into a transitional element as soon as we had developed the capability to do so safely and effectively. This ensures fair and equal treatment for all people receiving a transitional element. When the Severe Disability Premium transitional payment is converted to a transitional element the flat rate payment will be the same amount and will be included in the Universal Credit award.

■ Work Capability Assessment: Equality

Navendu Mishra:

[\[116685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints her Department has received from claimants in respect of breaches of the Equality Act 2010 during the processing of (a) personal independence payment and (b) limited capability for work and work related activities applications.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department takes every complaint incredibly seriously and will investigate any matters raised and respond accordingly as quickly as possible.

The Department does not record complaints information in a way which enables us to answer this question. DWP categorises complaints against specified categories that focus on identifying broadly where service has failed, for example, "DWP staff don't treat me with respect - You discriminated against me". It would be under this category Equality Act 2010 breaches would be captured.

As we would have to search through each complaint to obtain specific information about (a) processing of personal independence payment and (b) limited capability for work and work related activities applications would be to interrogate each complaint on a case by case basis to identify whether there had been breaches of the Equality

Act 2010, the information requested would therefore could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS604\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy having drawn an advance from the contingencies fund totalling £2,262,587,000 to enable expenditure on Covid-19 support packages for business to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act in March 2021. The schemes are:

Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) (closed) and (open) schemes

Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme.

| | LOCAL RESTRICTIONS SUPPORT GRANT (CLOSED) SCHEME | LOCAL RESTRICTIONS SUPPORT GRANT (OPEN) SCHEME | ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT SCHEME | TOTAL £M |
|-------------|---|---|--|----------|
| RDEL | 1,005.4 | 126.3 | 1,130.9 | 2,262.6 |

The funding is urgently required to support businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £2,262,587,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2,262,587,000 has been met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation Bill.

CABINET OFFICE

■ UK-wide Christmas arrangements

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS601\]](#)

On 24 November 2020, agreement was reached between the UK Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland on a time-limited change to social contact restrictions over the Christmas period.

Christmas is an important time of year for many people in the UK. Regardless of faith, the Christmas period is a time spent with family and friends while schools and offices are closed. COVID-19 continues, however, to pose a very real and ongoing threat. It will not

be possible to take full advantage of the winter holiday season and to celebrate Christmas in the normal way. There will be some hard choices for families and friends, and there will be situations where it is not possible to gather in the way many usually would.

In this context, the UK Government and the devolved administrations have reached agreement on a single set of UK-wide measures to help people come together with their loved ones in a way that is as safe as possible.

- Between 23 and 27 December, up to three households will be able to join together to form an exclusive Christmas 'bubble'.
- Everyone can be in one bubble only, and cannot change bubble during this time period (the only exemption to this being children (aged under 18) of separated parents).
- People (e.g. nannies, cleaners, tradespeople) can continue to work in someone's home where necessary during this period. To reduce risk, they should observe social distancing wherever possible, and where it can be avoided should not go into homes that are hosting Christmas bubbles.
- A Christmas bubble will be able to spend time together in private homes, attend places of worship, or meet in a public outdoor place.
- Travel restrictions across the UK will be lifted to allow people to travel to form their bubble. Beyond this, people should follow local restrictions in the area they are staying.
- Students who move home from university for the holidays will count as part of their family's household, and in England an existing support bubble will count as one household.

Even where it is within the rules, meeting with friends and family over Christmas will be a matter of personal judgement for individuals, mindful of the risks to themselves and others. People should reduce unnecessary contact socially with people they do not live with as much as possible in the two weeks before they form their Christmas bubble. Everyone should think carefully about what they do during this period, balancing some increased social contact with the need to keep the risk of increased transmission of the virus as low as possible. This is particularly important when considering those who are vulnerable and elderly.

The clinically extremely vulnerable can form a Christmas bubble, but it is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection for those people. Given the additional risks, visits out of care homes should only be considered for care home residents of working age, where the home is in agreement, and when an individual risk assessment has been completed.

Parents should continue to send their children to school, and students should continue to attend college, in line with local guidance. The UK's four chief medical officers continue to advise that the best place for children and young people is in education. There is no need for children to be taken out of school early.

It is essential that everyone follows the rules applicable to where they are in the UK. In England, that means continuing to follow the local tiers that will apply from 2 December. It will be particularly important for everyone to follow the social distancing guidelines in the new year and the start of January 2021. Historically, this period is when the NHS sees the greatest pressure on services such as Accident & Emergency, and the highest rates of bed occupancy, and this year the NHS is dealing with COVID-19 as well.

While it will not be a normal Christmas, this UK-wide agreement should offer hope for families and friends who have made many sacrifices over this difficult year.

Guidance on the UK-wide Christmas arrangements and how they apply in England can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk); the devolved administrations will similarly be updating their guidance - at [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot), [gov.wales](https://www.gov.wales), and nidirect.gov.uk.

TREASURY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[[HCWS603](#)]

HM Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £21,715,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for HM Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £21,715,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

In line with the latest OBR forecasts, further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

■ Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance Update

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):

[[HCWS599](#)]

The government will bring forward regulations that will increase most tax credits rates and thresholds and will increase the Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance rates in line with the general rise in prices as measured by the September 2020 Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI has been the default inflation measure for the government's statutory annual review of benefits since 2011.

The annual uprating of benefits will take place for tax credits from the start of the new tax year and for Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance in the first full week of the 2021-22 tax year. In 2021, this will be 6 April for tax credits and 12 April for Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance.

The government is committed to supporting those who need it most. The annual up-rating process takes into account a variety of measures:

- The majority of elements and thresholds in Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit will be increased by September's CPI figure (0.5%) from April 2021. In line with established practice and the Office for Budget Responsibility's expectations in their welfare forecast, the maximum rate of the childcare element, the family element, the withdrawal rate and the income disregards will remain unchanged.
- The 0.5% increase will be applied to the rate of the Working Tax Credit basic element announced by Written Ministerial Statement on 4 November 2019 (£1,995). The statutory annual review of benefits is separate from the temporary £20 per week uplift to the Working Tax Credit basic element and the Universal Credit standard allowance, which was announced as a temporary measure in March 2020, and enacted for one year under different legislation in response to the public health emergency. As we have done throughout this crisis, we will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context in the new year.
- Child Benefit will be increased in line with CPI (0.5%) from April 2021.
- As set out in legislation, Guardian's Allowance will be uprated in line with prices, measured by CPI (0.5%).

The full list of proposed benefit and credit rates will be placed in the Libraries of the House in due course.

■ **The Government and UK Statistics Authority's response to their joint consultation on the reform to Retail Prices Index methodology**

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS602\]](#)

Today, the Government and UK Statistics Authority have published the response to their joint consultation on the reform to Retail Prices Index (RPI) methodology. The consultation response document can be found at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>

A copy of the consultation response has been deposited in the Library of the House.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Social Security Benefit and Pension Up-rating 2021/22**

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[\[HCWS600\]](#)

I have concluded my statutory annual review of benefit and State Pension rates. The new rates will apply in the tax year 2021/22, and come into effect on 12 April 2021. The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Act 2020 enables me to increase the basic and new State Pensions and the Standard Minimum Guarantee in Pension Credit by providing a discretion to increase them for one year even though there has been no growth in earnings.

State pensions will be increased by 2.5%, in line with the Government's manifesto commitment. The full rate of the new State Pension will now be worth £179.60 per week. The Standard Minimum Guarantee in Pension Credit will also increase by the same cash amount as the basic State Pension, rising by 1.9%.

All other benefits will be increased in line with CPI - which was 0.5% in the relevant reference period. This includes working-age benefits, benefits to help with additional needs arising from disability, carers' benefits, pensioner premiums in income-related benefits, Statutory Payments, and Additional State Pension.

Separate to the uprating review, I can confirm that the increase to Local Housing Allowance rates in April this year will be maintained in cash terms in 2021/22. The assumption in the forecast is that rates will remain at these levels in future years, subject to the Secretary of State reviewing annually in the usual way.

All of these pensions and benefits are transferred to Northern Ireland, and corresponding provision will be made there. Some of these benefits are devolved to Scotland; in respect of these, the Scottish Government will bring forward corresponding legislation in the Scottish Parliament.

The statutory annual review is separate from the temporary £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit, which was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020, and enacted for one year under different legislation to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context in the new year.

I will place the full list of proposed benefit and pension rates for 2021/22 in the Library of the House.