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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Bereavement Leave

Alexander Stafford:

[\[117413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to include changes to bereavement leave in the employment Bill.

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. Time off for Dependants can also be used to deal with practical issues, including registering the death and making funeral arrangements.

We will bring forward details of the Employment Bill in due course.

■ Carbon Emissions

Alexander Stafford:

[\[117404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to allocate funding to the development of future employment roles for workers in the (a) oil and gas and (b) other sectors to ensure that the economy is prepared for the transition towards net zero emissions.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The oil and gas sector, and particularly its supply chain, has a key role to play as we move to a net zero economy and we have committed to supporting this energy transition with a transformational North Sea Transition Deal. The focus of this deal will be on ensuring the sector can support the energy transition and anchoring the supply chain across the UK. Key features include a focus on new low carbon technologies, emissions reduction, skills supporting high-quality jobs, and innovation that will decarbonise our economy.

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.

This included the announcement to make the UK the world leader in clean wind energy, creating jobs, slashing carbon emissions and boosting exports. This includes £160 million that will be made available to upgrade ports and manufacturing infrastructure across communities in the UK. This new investment will see around 2,000 construction jobs created and these new plans will enable the sector to support up to 60,000 jobs directly and indirectly by 2030 in ports, factories and the supply chains, manufacturing the next-generation of offshore wind turbines and delivering clean energy to the UK.

The Green Jobs Taskforce, which I and the Skills Minister, my hon Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan) will chair, forms part of the Government's ambitious plan to build back greener and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Its aim will be to focus on the immediate and longer-term challenges of delivering skilled workers for the UK's transition to net zero including supporting workers in high carbon transitioning sectors, like oil and gas, to retrain in new green technologies. This will also be a key aim for the upcoming North Sea Transition Deal.

■ Carbon Emissions: Public Expenditure and Infrastructure

Alexander Stafford:

[\[117400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will introduce a net zero test for all infrastructure policy and spending decisions made by his Department.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK's climate change framework enables the Government to determine how best to balance emissions reductions across the economy. Any net emissions increase from infrastructure projects are managed within the Government's overall strategy for meeting carbon budgets and the 2050 net zero target, as part of an economy-wide transition.

■ Carbon Emissions: Research

Alexander Stafford:

[\[117403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has in place to implement (a) standardised climate reporting metrics and (b) carbon taxation while supporting UK net zero emissions research and development in sectors that will be subject to carbon penalties.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Meeting net zero and delivering the global transition to a low carbon economy will require unprecedented levels of investment in green technologies, services and infrastructure. The Government launched an ambitious 10 Point Plan this month, which will mobilise £12 billion of Government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030. This sets out a strong framework for

investment, with a clear signals to investors of our commitment to net zero by 2050. As set out by the Chancellor in November 2020, the UK will become the first G20 country to make TCFD-aligned disclosures fully mandatory across the economy, with most requirements introduced in the next three years. This will provide decision-useful information to investors on the exposure of companies, asset managers and asset owners to climate risks.

The UK remains committed to carbon pricing as a key policy in decarbonising its economy and reducing industrial emissions, and will introduce an effective new system from 1 January 2021.

■ Climate Change Convention

Chris Law:

[\[118016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the effect of climate change on gender equality and women and girls in the global south is being tackled through its presidency of COP26.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Through our Presidency of COP26, we will support all to be active agents of change in addressing climate and environment issues. We will champion women, indigenous people and other key groups roles as decision-makers, educators and climate leaders in order to deliver effective, long-term solutions to climate change. For example, through the UK-funded Climate Ambition Support Alliance, we are supporting the ECBI (European Capacity Building Initiative) 'Women Negotiator Mentoring Initiative.' This initiative will help to level the playing field in international climate negotiations, not only in terms of developed and developing countries, but also between men and women.

The UK is also fully committed to implementing and facilitating the implementation of the Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25, both domestically and internationally. We recognise that the Gender Action Plan is a valuable tool in addressing the differentiated impacts of climate change and continue to call on all countries to develop gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and actions.

■ Climate Change: Females

Chris Law:

[\[118017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the Government is supporting the implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan which calls for women's equal participation in climate change negotiations through its Presidency of COP26.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK is fully committed to implementing and facilitating the implementation of the enhanced UNFCCC Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25, both domestically and internationally. We welcome the steps taken so far by Parties, non-Party stakeholders

and the UNFCCC Secretariat to centre gender equality in climate action. We continue to call on all countries to implement the Gender Action Plan and to develop gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and actions.

We recognise the impact of climate change on women and girls, in particular those from the global south or indigenous communities. The UK is committed to providing sufficient space for key constituencies, including women and girls from these communities, to participate and express their views. For example, through the UK-funded Climate Ambition Support Alliance, we are supporting the ECBI (European Capacity Building Initiative) 'Women Negotiator Mentoring Initiative.' This initiative will help to level the playing field in international climate negotiations, not only in terms of developed and developing countries, but also between men and women.

More broadly, the UK is committed to championing diversity and inclusivity throughout our COP26 Presidency. Our network of leaders, diplomatic representatives and expert voices reflect this in all of their work. We are also working with a diverse group of "Friends of COP" - leading world figures who are sharing their expertise for a successful summit.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Energy**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[117229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's latest Transparency Data release on ministerial meetings, April to June 2020, if he will (a) set out the criteria for deciding whether to meet with interested energy production companies or organisations and (b) publish copies of minutes and any other documents from each of the meetings listed.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Ministers meet with many different organisations, as set out in the transparency data release. There are a range of factors which influence whether a Minister meets with an organisation, including relevance to Government policy and ministerial availability. Minutes of ministerial meetings are not routinely published.

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[117207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recourse people have who are extremely vulnerable to covid-19 in the event that they feel pressured into work by their employer.

Paul Scully:

Government guidance on shielding and protecting those who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 states that this group of people are strongly advised to work from home. If they are unable to do so they should not attend work for this period of restrictions. The full guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting->

[extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19](#).

The Government's safer working guidance makes clear what employers should do to support clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable workers. In all instances, employers must carry out a workplace risk assessment and take action, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees. The Government's safer working guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

If a worker has a concern about the safety of their workplace, they can raise this through their employee representative, trade union or directly to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or their local authority. Where HSE identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks.

Individuals can seek impartial advice on their specific situation from ACAS (or the Labour Relations Agency in Northern Ireland). ACAS have also provided detailed guidance for those who are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable from COVID-19, which can be found here: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus/vulnerable-people-and-high-risk>.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Greater Manchester

Jeff Smith: [\[118030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses in Greater Manchester who have successfully registered as a certified installer to administer home improvements under the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Green Homes Grant Scheme launched for applications on 30 September and as announced on 18 November will run until 31 March 2022.

Our installer data is at Local Authority rather than regional level, so we do not have the total number of installers who cover Greater Manchester. In each of the 10 Local Authorities within Greater Manchester, there are between 57 and 83 TrustMark registered installer businesses available.

■ Housing: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [\[117225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle the risks that may arise from the concurrence of covid-19 and cold homes.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Improving energy efficiency is the best long-term solution to tackle fuel poverty. The Energy Company Obligation, worth £640m per year, is focused on low-income and vulnerable households and the Green Homes Grant, launched in September 2020, is a £2 billion programme which will help improve the energy efficiency of homes in England. Of this, £1 billion is specifically for low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

In addition to the available funding to support low-income households with improving the energy efficiency of their homes, we recognise that some households may need more immediate support and so also assist with energy bills for low income and vulnerable consumers through the Warm Homes Discount, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments.

We have also successfully negotiated an agreement with energy suppliers to support customers impacted by COVID-19. Based on the circumstances, this could include reassessing, reducing, or pausing debt repayments for households in financial distress and support for prepayment meter customers to stay on supply.

■ Hydrogen**Alexander Stafford:**[\[118140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much (a) green and (b) blue hydrogen will be included in his Department's target of 5GW low carbon hydrogen production capacity.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to developing hydrogen as a decarbonised energy carrier, as confirmed in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution announced by the Prime Minister on 18th November.

The Plan set out that the Government, working with industry, is aiming for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity in the UK by 2030, to set us on the right pathway to net zero by 2050.

The Ten Point Plan package aims to bring forward a combination of commercial-scale CCUS-enabled 'blue' hydrogen and smaller scale electrolytic 'green' hydrogen projects. Both these production methods – and other innovative techniques – will be needed to deliver UK hydrogen demand expected by 2050.

This twin-track approach to policy development will enable production to be brought forward at the necessary scale during the 2020s, to grow the supply chain and build confidence in the sector, whilst scaling up green hydrogen which is likely to dominate the global market in the long term. The levels of green and blue hydrogen production that make up the 5GW will depend on market developments in the 2020s.

DEFENCE**■ War Pensions: Coronavirus****Justin Madders:****[118020]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer to Question 97598 on War Pensions, what new processes Veterans UK are piloting to ensure war pension claims can be considered during the covid-19 outbreak.

Johnny Mercer:

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face medical assessments are not presently being undertaken. However, in order to allow claims to continue to be processed, War Pension customers across most of the UK are now sent a self-assessment form to complete themselves alongside a primary health care factual report form for their GP to complete. In cases where the customer resides in Northern Ireland, Veterans UK is piloting a process whereby medical assessments are carried out via telephone.

Furthermore, Veterans UK is undergoing a significant transformation programme to digitise its pension and compensation schemes. This includes the development of self-serve systems for claimants, such as apps which can be accessed through an individual's computer, and mobile devices and online claim forms for war pensions and new compensation claims.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts and Publishing: Exports****Tracy Brabin:****[116608]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support the economic recovery of (a) UK publishing industry exports and (b) other creative exports.

Caroline Dinéage:

We appreciate that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge to many of DCMS' creative sectors including the publishing industry. Through regular ministerial-led roundtables, working groups and contact with DCMS officials, we will continue to work with the publishing sector to assess and understand the difficulties it faces in these challenging times and through recovery.

The Government has provided unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency. The Government's response has been one of the most generous and comprehensive in the world, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Bounceback Loan Scheme and business rates reliefs.

The publishing sector has also benefited from the government's introduction of a zero rate of VAT to e-publications, which was brought forward to 1st May this year. It

ensures e-publications are entitled to the same VAT treatment as their physical counterparts.

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

■ **Coronavirus: Disinformation**

Ruth Jones:

[\[120145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps he has taken to tackle (a) misinformation and (b) disinformation on covid-19.

Caroline Dinenage:

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

That is why we stood up the Counter Disinformation Unit up on 5 March to bring together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities. The Unit's primary function is to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and impact of misinformation and disinformation regarding COVID-19 and to work with partners to ensure appropriate action is taken.

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

DCMS Secretary of State and DHSC Secretary of State hosted a joint roundtable in November to ask social media platforms to reduce the spread of harmful and misleading narratives, particularly around the potential COVID-19 vaccine. Social media platforms agreed to continue to work with public health bodies to ensure that authoritative messages about vaccine safety reach as many people as possible; to commit to swifter responses to flagged content and to commit to the principle that no user or company should directly profit from COVID-19 vaccine misinformation or disinformation.

■ **Sports: Coronavirus**

Jo Stevens:

[\[119269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the (a) interest rate and (b) terms will be for loans awarded under the Sport Winter Survival Package.

Nigel Huddleston:

The loan terms are still being finalised, but we expect these to be on generous terms with initial repayment holidays. Further details will be set out when Sport England opens the scheme for applications shortly.

EDUCATION**■ Care Leavers****Tulip Siddiq:****[118057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to (a) provide additional social care support for care leavers and (b) integrate the support his Department provides to care leavers with other Government support programmes for that group.

Vicky Ford:

The department is committed to improving the life chances of care leavers and it is taking action to improve the support they receive from children's social care and across government.

Since 2014, local authorities have been required to support young people to remain with their former foster carers up to age 21, in a Staying Put arrangement. The department has provided over £140 million to local authorities to implement Staying Put, including £33 million this year.

We are piloting Staying Close in 8 local areas which provides an enhanced support package for those leaving residential care, including move-on accommodation and a package of practical and emotional support. We are committed to rolling out Staying Close nationally.

In 2018, we also extended support, from a Personal Adviser, to all care leavers to age 25.

Since 2018, we have funded 47 local authorities to fund specialist posts to provide intensive support to care leavers who are most at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. To date, we have funded £6 million.

In 2018, we commissioned 3 Care Leavers Social Impact Bond programmes to support care leavers aged 16 to 25 secure sustainable education, employment and training.

We have established the Civil Service care leaver internship scheme, which provides paid internships for care leavers, and are looking to provide similar opportunities in other large public sector employers, such as the NHS, police and the fire service. We also launched the care leaver covenant for public, private and voluntary sectors to show their commitment to care leavers through providing concrete offers of support.

To support local authorities to improve their leaving care services, we appointed a national adviser for care leavers, Mark Riddell MBE, who recently published his second report on examples of best practice as well as innovative approaches that local authorities have used to support care leavers during COVID-19.

In October 2019, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced the establishment of a new Care Leavers Ministerial Board, bringing together Ministers from across government to consider what more we can all do to help care leavers succeed to adulthood.

Alongside the Board, the department works closely across government on policies that impact on care leavers' lives, for example, the Department for Work and Pension's recent budget announcement that care leavers would be eligible for the higher rate of Housing Benefit to age 25.

Education support for Looked After Children is important to them succeeding in the longer term. Since 2014, Virtual School Heads have made a significant impact in bringing expert leadership to the system that has seen a reduction in permanent exclusions and absenteeism (now the same or better than all other children and significantly better than children in need). In 2018, Looked After Children had the same persistent absence rates as all children (10.9%), whilst permanent exclusion rates for them are now lower than all children (0.05% compared to 0.1%).

■ Children in Care: Ethnic Groups

Tulip Siddiq:

[118056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason black children are disproportionately represented in the care system.

Vicky Ford:

The Main report: children looked after in England including adoption 2018 to 2019 notes that as of the 31 March 2019 there were 78,150 children looked after in England. The majority are of white ethnicity (74%). 10% were of mixed ethnicity and 8% were of Black or Black British ethnicity. Since 2015, the proportion of children looked after of white ethnicity has decreased steadily from 77%. It is likely this slight change is due to the broadly non-white make up of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, a group which has recently grown in number:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850306/Children_looked_after_in_England_2019_Text.pdf.

As of 31 March 2019 there were 5,070 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children looked after by local authorities in England, up 11% from 4,480 at 31 March 2018. In March 2019, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children represented 6% of all looked after children in England.

Factors which drive children's social care activity are complex and the department is keen to understand this in more depth.

■ Children: Social Services

Tulip Siddiq:

[118053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to include racial disparity within the terms of reference for the forthcoming review of children's social care in England.

Tulip Siddiq:

[118054]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the terms of reference for the upcoming review of children's social care in England.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[118055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to commence the review of children's social care in England.

Vicky Ford:

The review is a fundamental part of the government's manifesto. The urgent local and national response to the COVID-19 outbreak has delayed the launch of the Review of Children's Social Care, but the department is making preparations to launch as soon as possible and will set out further details at that point. The review will be bold, broad and independently led, taking a fundamental look across children's social care, with the aim of better supporting, protecting and improving the outcomes of vulnerable children and young people.

■ National SEND Reference Group

Tulip Siddiq: [\[118060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the process was for (a) establishing the terms of reference and (b) recruiting members for the National SEND Reference Group; and who participated in that process.

Vicky Ford:

The National SEND Reference Group is an external body, organised and managed by the National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen). It was set up in April 2020 so that special schools, colleges and alternative provision could report experiences and issues arising from COVID-19 to the department. Officials attend the group's meetings as part of wider stakeholder engagement. In establishing the group, nasen invited a range of system leaders intended to represent the breadth and diversity of the specialist sector, including across the regions and settings serving different pupil populations.

■ Pre-school Education

Tulip Siddiq: [\[118059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the potential effect of occupancy levels in early years settings in the January census on early entitlements for the spring term.

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 spring term 2021 will be announced as soon as possible.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Dr Dan Poulter:

[118144]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will introduce a fully-funded national programme on emotional wellbeing and recovery in the context of covid-19 for all school-aged children.

Vicky Ford:

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

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

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

Schools cannot provide mental health support on their own. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has published a mental health and wellbeing support plan, which sets out a wide range of action that the government is supporting across the NHS and wider services to support mental health and wellbeing recovery, including for children and young people:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-mentally-well-winter-plan-2020-to-2021/staying-mentally-well-this-winter>.

It includes the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme funded jointly by the Department for Education and DHSC. This will provide schools and colleges all over England with the knowledge and practical skills they need to support teachers, students and parents, to help improve how they respond to the emotional impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The programme is funding expert advisers in every area of England to train and support schools and colleges during the autumn and spring terms.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury:

[\[117363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on families with 18-year-old students with Down's syndrome not being in education for four weeks due to shielding during the covid-19 outbreak, particularly in cases where a parent or carer will need to take time off work to provide care and support with learning at home.

Vicky Ford:

In September, the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) reviewed the new information which showed that most adults with Down's syndrome were at a higher risk amongst the population. Therefore, the UK CMOs decided that people aged 18 or over who have Down's syndrome should be added to the clinically extremely vulnerable group. People who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend their college or other educational setting.

We know that any period of absence from an education setting can cause anxiety for learners and their families, and we are aware that some young people with Down's syndrome have expressed their disappointment at being advised to remain at home. However, it is too early in the implementation of the national restrictions to conduct any formal assessment of the impact on families. We have been working with our partners, including a wide range of charities and organisations which support families of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) throughout the COVID-19 outbreak to understand the impact on them. We will continue to gather regular information from parents, carers, and young people themselves, through organisations such as the National Network of Parent Carer Forums. We continually review and update our guidance to educational settings to reflect the advice of the CMOs, as more information on the impact of COVID-19 for different groups becomes available.

Our priority is to ensure that young people can continue to learn even when they are unable to attend their usual setting. We have worked with providers to co-design the remote education service for schools, further education providers and teachers. In addition, the Oak National Academy education offer provides free video lessons across a broad range of subjects, including specialist content for pupils with SEND.

Where a young person who is clinically extremely vulnerable has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), parents, education settings, health professionals and local authorities should work together to agree the best arrangement for that individual young person and their family to ensure that they continue to receive the support they need.

Families can request new or increased services from adult social care via their local authority, if this support is required to ensure the young person is safely cared for whilst they remain at home. It is for the local authority to carry out an assessment and to determine what service provision is required. During the period of national restrictions, those providing care or support to meet a vulnerable or disabled person's

everyday needs can continue to visit them in their home, ensuring they follow social distancing guidance where close or personal contact is not required.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[118107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to prioritise the health and wellbeing of university students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

Protecting the mental health and wellbeing of students continues to be a priority for this government and I have convened representatives from the higher education (HE) and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that university students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak. In my recent letter to Vice Chancellors in October, I outlined that student welfare should remain a priority.

We expect HE providers to continue to support their students and identify and address the needs of their student body. Many HE providers have bolstered their existing mental health services and adapted delivery mechanisms, which includes reaching out to students who may be more vulnerable, to ensure that students are able to access the support that they need. Staff at universities and colleges have shown resourcefulness and there are many examples of good practice.

We have worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, which has been funded by up to £3 million by the OfS. Student Space is a mental health and wellbeing platform that aims to bridge any gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and is designed to work alongside existing services. Ensuring students have access to quality mental health support is my top priority, which is why I asked the OfS to look at extending the platform. I am delighted they have been able to extend the platform to support students for the whole of the 2020/21 academic year because no student should be left behind at this challenging time. This resource provides dedicated one-to-one phone, text and web chat facilities as well as a collaborative online platform providing vital mental health and wellbeing resources.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has overall policy responsibility for young people's mental health. We continue to work closely with them to take significant steps to support the mental health and wellbeing support for students in higher education settings.

The DHSC is committed, through the NHS Long Term Plan, to investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year into mental health services by 2023-24. This will see an additional 345,000 children and young people, and adults, able to access support through NHS-funded services.

Over £9 million has been provided by the government to leading mental health charities to help them expand and reach those most in need. Students struggling with their mental health can also access support via online resources from the mental

health charity Mind, the NHS and Public Health England, and via the following website: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>.

■ Students: Loans

Emma Hardy: [118099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on student loan repayments for people living in overseas countries experiencing hyperinflation.

Emma Hardy: [118100]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to change the regulations governing the Student Loans Company to enable that company to make adjustments to repayments for people living in overseas countries undergoing hyperinflation.

Michelle Donelan:

The repayment of student loans is governed by the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009 (as amended). The Student Loans Company has arrangements in place to collect repayments from all borrowers who move away from the UK by establishing a repayment schedule based on the borrower's income.

Overseas repayment thresholds are calculated using World Bank cost of living data, which is used to compare differences between the cost of living in the UK and other countries. This data is reviewed annually. The thresholds take account of living costs in different countries, so that repayments are based on ability to repay, wherever the borrower lives.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Brexit

Alberto Costa: [118026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to reassure farmers concerned about the potential effect on their sector of the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain. We have carried out extensive planning with industry and the Devolved Administrations to prepare for the end of the year, and we are committed to ensuring the continued supply of agri-food goods across the UK. We are equally committed to minimising disruption to movement of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

The Government has been clear that it seeks a free trade agreement with the EU, based on friendly cooperation and maintaining tariff and quota free access. We continue to monitor the market and using the powers available to us under the Government's new Agriculture Act will be ready to respond in the event that market disruption occurs.

■ Alcohols

Alyn Smith:

[\[118103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether licences from the Rural Payments Agency will be required for ethyl alcohol imported from the EU after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Yes, under retained EU law, amended by the Import and Export Licences (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, any import of ethyl alcohol into the UK after the end of the transition period will need to be accompanied by an import licence issued by the Rural Payments Agency.

■ Animal Feed

Alberto Costa:

[\[118027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on the import of animal feeds of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

We will continue to keep Parliament informed with appropriate analysis at appropriate times in a way that does not impede our ability to strike the best deal for the UK. The Government intends to achieve a free trade agreement (FTA) with the EU and the aim is for a zero tariff and zero quota FTA which we are working hard to achieve.

At the end of 2020 the UK will transition to Most Favoured Nation (MFN) terms with all those nations that it does not have a free trade agreement with. The MFN principle means that the same tariff must be applied to all WTO trading partners, unless an exception applies such as an FTA. The Government will publish more detail of the economic analysis in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) alongside the legislation, as is standard practice to support tax policy decisions.

Ensuring that UK food and feed remains safe and what it says it is remains a top priority. We are committed to having in place a robust and effective regulatory regime which will mean businesses can continue to run as normal and therefore there are no changes in terms of imports of animal feed to the UK. The majority of feed imported into the UK will not be subject to import checks and this will continue to be the case at the end of the Transition Period. The UK will retain EU legislation that is applicable at the end of the Transition Period to ensure feed is safe, and our high standards of food and feed safety and consumer protection will be maintained.

■ Beverage Containers: Recycling

Ben Lake:

[\[118088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with local authorities on materials to be included in his Department's proposed deposit return scheme.

Rebecca Pow:

Waste is a devolved matter. As part of the Government's ambitious commitments to reforming producer responsibility systems, we have committed to introduce a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers.

Officials have been developing proposals for a deposit return scheme for drinks containers using further evidence and ongoing engagement with stakeholders. This has included several meetings with representatives from local authorities. The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee, the Local Government Association and a Local Authority representative from both Northern Ireland and Wales are also members of our DRS industry working group which has met to discuss materials to be included in a DRS.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme**Alberto Costa:**[\[118028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of whether the introduction of the Environmental Land Management Scheme has the potential to be an income source for farmers.

Victoria Prentis:

Our new Environmental Land Management scheme will provide an opportunity for farmers to derive an additional income stream through the delivery of environmental benefits. This will be centred around support aimed at incentivising sustainable farming practices, creating habitats for nature recovery and establishing new woodland and other ecosystem services to help tackle challenges like climate change.

■ Pets: Ticks**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[117241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the merits of reintroducing compulsory tick treatment for pets at UK borders.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[120034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reintroducing compulsory tick treatment for pets at UK borders in response to reports of tick-borne diseases brought to the UK from pets that have recently travelled abroad.

Victoria Prentis:

Tick surveillance has shown that tick distribution and abundance is changing throughout the UK for many reasons, including habitat and climate change. Small numbers of localised infestations with non-native tick species have been reported in recent years. For these reasons, Defra strongly encourages pet owners to treat their pets to safeguard their animals against ticks and tick transmitted diseases when

travelling abroad. Further advice can be obtained from their local vet, and via the Public Health England leaflet available on GOV.UK.

While Defra has no immediate plans to amend the tick controls for pet animals entering the UK, the end of the Transition Period will open up new opportunities for managing our Pet Travel rules. We remain aware of the concerns around ticks and tick-borne disease, and future policy will be guided by risk assessment. Defra also continues to monitor the disease situation through the Tick Surveillance Scheme.

■ **Protective Clothing: Waste Disposal**

Munira Wilson:

[117379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of biohazardous personal protective equipment discarded by the public that is being sent to landfill rather than incineration.

Munira Wilson:

[117380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance his Department has published on the disposal of personal protective equipment by the public.

Rebecca Pow:

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

Defra has not made estimates on the proportion of biohazardous personal protective equipment (PPE) discarded by the public that is being sent to landfill rather than incineration. This is because PPE used by the public is not required to be incinerated and therefore can be discarded in residual waste. All waste has to be disposed of in accordance with environmental regulations and the waste hierarchy and disposal to landfill is the last resort.

Defra has published guidance on the correct disposal of PPE for the public which is available online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste>. This explains that PPE should be placed in residual 'black bag' waste at home or whilst at work, or a litter bin if outside, and that PPE should not be put in a recycling bin or dropped as litter.

The guidance also details what members of the public should do if they, or a member of their household, are self-isolating at home. To dispose of any face coverings or PPE in this circumstance, members of the public are advised to double bag the waste and store it for 72 hours before putting them in a 'black bag' waste bin.

■ **Wines: Certification**

Chris Elmore:

[117332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of removing the requirement for VI-1 certification for wine on wine retailers and distributors.

Victoria Prentis:

Further to the answer I gave to the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark on 1 September [78691], no assessment has been made of the impact of delaying the introduction of UK import certification on wine to 1 July 2021. This easement has been introduced to allow businesses time to make the necessary adaptations to meet the requirement. Additionally, Defra officials are working closely with UK industry to ensure we have the capability to meet the equivalent EU requirement being introduced on 1 January 2021.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Ahlam al-Tamimi**

Bob Blackman: [\[117239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on the extradition of Ahlam Tamimi.

James Cleverly:

We have not discussed the matter of Ahlam Tamimi's extradition with the US Administration, as this is a matter between Jordan and the United States.

■ **Armed Conflict: Western Sahara**

Hywel Williams: [\[117942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the United Nations on the recent escalation in conflict in the Western Saharan region.

James Cleverly:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara and have regular discussions with the UN, both in New York and in the region. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process. We strongly support the UN Secretary General's efforts to appoint a Personal Envoy as soon as possible.

■ **Belgium: Iran**

Steve McCabe: [\[118486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Belgian counterpart on the potential role of (a) an Iranian diplomat and (b) Iranian authorities in an alleged plot to target the National Council of Resistance of Iran annual rally in June 2018.

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. The Foreign Secretary has not had any recent conversations with his Belgian counterpart in relation to this trial. We are not aware at this stage of a link to the UK.

■ **Gulf States: Overseas Aid**

Martyn Day:

[\[117302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113155, how many of the 15 projects and programmes referred to were subjected to an Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessment.

James Cleverly:

I refer the Honourable member to my response of 12 November to question 113154.

■ **Iran: Terrorism**

Steve McCabe:

[\[118487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the veracity of reports by Reuters on 9 October 2020, that an Iranian diplomat charged with terrorism offences in relation to a planned attack on a National Council of Resistance of Iran rally in 2018 has made threats of retaliatory terrorist attacks if his trial proceeds.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of media reports that an Iranian diplomat, who is charged with involvement in a plot against a conference in Paris in 2018, has threatened "retaliation" should he be convicted. The UK Government does not have access to the court documents on which these reports are based. While the legal process is ongoing it would be inappropriate to comment further.

■ **Iraq: Kurds**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[117387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the state of bilateral relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government of Iraq; and what steps his Department is taking to improve relations in that region.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to work closely with both the Government of Iraq (GoI) and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in order to support ongoing political, economic, and security cooperation. The UK has frequent Ministerial and official

engagement with Gol and KRG leadership on this matter. Most recently, the UK's Defence Senior Advisor for the Middle East and HM Ambassador to Iraq met with both Gol and KRG leadership on 18-19 November to discuss the need for ongoing security and economic cooperation.

■ **Iraq: Politics and Government**

Jim Shannon:

[\[119238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his Iraqi counterpart to support political stability in that country.

James Cleverly:

The UK maintains frequent engagement with all levels of Iraqi political leadership, both in London and through our Embassy in Baghdad. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Prince of Wales were pleased to welcome Prime Minister Kadhimi and members of his Government to the UK in October 2020. During PM Kadhimi's visit, the UK was proud to partner with the international community and financial institutions in launching the Iraq Economic Contact Group to support the Iraqi Government in implementing vital economic reforms. This continued engagement is critical to ensuring that the UK and Iraq work together to support the safety, security and prosperity of all Iraqis.

■ **Israel: Palestinians**

Gareth Bacon:

[\[118121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the potential merits of increasing investment to support peacebuilding efforts between Israelis and Palestinians.

James Cleverly:

The United Kingdom remains a strong supporter of all efforts to promote peace. We believe that peace is best achieved through negotiations between the parties, but international action can also play a role in supporting progress. We remain in close contact with our international partners on ways to promote a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, which is long overdue. The UK continues to be a leading donor in the region, with UK aid helping to improve the lives of Palestinians and in support of the UK's commitment to maintain the viability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

■ **Middle East: Peace Negotiations**

Gareth Bacon:

[\[118120\]](#)

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 US Middle East Partnership for Peace Act.

James Cleverly:

The UK remains committed to making progress towards a two-state solution. We welcome all efforts towards peace. We also support the growth of civil society in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and efforts to improve the Palestinian economy. We will continue to monitor the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, as it progresses through the US legislative system.

Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[118560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral statement on the Integrated Review on the 19 November 2020, Official Report, col 501, with which aid organisations the Government is in daily contact and communication.

James Cleverly:

The Government is routinely in constant communication with a wide range of Non-Governmental Organisations and other partners both within the UK and internationally who play a key role in our fight against poverty.

Polisario Front**Hywel Williams:**[\[117941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has he with the Polisario Front or through third party interlocutors on the recent escalation in conflict in the Western Saharan region.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly discusses Western Sahara issues with the parties including the Polisario Front. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**Bowel Cancer****Henry Smith:**[\[104094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the care and treatment provided to people with metastatic colorectal cancer in England in light of survival rates being lower than comparable European countries.

Jo Churchill:

There is a wide range of treatment options available to manage metastatic colorectal cancer and these are set out within pathway guidance published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

While treatment decisions are based on individual clinical circumstances, systemic anti-cancer treatment is the mainstay of care. There are a number of treatments available depending on where the colorectal cancer has spread. For example, where cancer is in the liver, patients may be able to access interventional procedures including laparoscopic resection and ablative treatments as well as radiotherapy (Selective Internal Radiation Therapy and Stereotactic Ablative Radiotherapy).

■ **Bowel Cancer: Screening**

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[115581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog in people waiting for (a) colonoscopy, (b) flexi sigmoidoscopy and (c) other diagnostic tests for bowel cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: In October the NHS issued £150 million in capital funding for investments in diagnostic equipment. Over £100 million of this has been allocated for endoscopy equipment, this will expand capacity to help to reduce the current waiting list.

Additionally, guidance published in June, has enabled endoscopy teams to use Faecal Immunochemical Testing to identify patients with the highest risk of bowel cancer so they can be prioritised for urgent colonoscopy.

■ **Breast Cancer: Radiotherapy**

Tracey Crouch: [\[110111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NICE guidance on early breast cancer will be amended to recommend shorter courses of breast radiotherapy be offered after the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidance on the diagnosis and management of early and locally advanced breast cancer (reference NG101) in July 2018

NICE's processes allow it to carry out an exceptional review of a guideline when significant new data becomes available. NICE is aware of the FAST trial and will be tracking the Fast-Forward clinical trial, a randomised clinical trial testing a one-week course of curative whole breast radiotherapy against a standard three-week schedule in terms of local cancer control and late adverse effects in women with early breast cancer. NICE will be looking at the evidence and considering its impact on the guideline.

■ Cancer: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Grahame Morris:

[\[113534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the estimate in Macmillan Cancer Support's report entitled *The Forgotten C*, published in October 2020 that it could take (a) 20 months to tackle the cancer diagnosis backlog and (b) 17 months to tackle the starting first cancer treatment backlog in England.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The estimates in the Macmillan report, 'The Forgotten C' are not recognised by the Department or NHS England and NHS Improvement.

In the latest cancer waiting times data for September 2020, urgent referrals were at more than 100% of 2019 levels, and over 45,000 people received a cancer treatment – 96% of last year's levels. Across the period from March to September 2020, over 291,000 cancer treatments were carried out - 86% of the level in 2019.

In September 2020, 94.5% of patients with a decision to treat a first treatment of cancer received treatment within 31 days.

■ Coronavirus: Disadvantaged

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[115691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the reasons for health inequalities; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle health inequalities to protect people at greatest risk from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: On the 22 October the Minister for Equalities, (Kemi Badenoch MP) published her first quarterly report to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on progress to tackle COVID-19 disparities experienced by individuals from an ethnic minority background, making 13 recommendations. This includes reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by relevant Government departments to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of COVID-19. As well as taking action to modify existing policy, and policy in development, to address these disparities. All of which the Prime Minister has accepted.

The report is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928646/First_Covid_Disparities_report_to_PM_Health_Secretary_Final_22-10-20.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Jim Shannon: [\[96894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the UK Government adopting policies on covid-19 herd immunity similar to those adopted by the Swedish Government.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is guided by the science and is focused on protecting the vulnerable and keeping COVID-19 under control. While we are monitoring the development of the outbreak around the world, the Government has made no specific assessment of the response of the Swedish authorities to the pandemic.

Jon Trickett: [\[97464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the Government has not advised clinically vulnerable people to shield at this stage in the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Shielding advice is only applicable to people who those who have been identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.

Previous shielding advice helped protect those most at risk from COVID-19 at the start of the pandemic, but many people told us they found this advice very restrictive. The current guidance is designed to offer practical and proportionate advice to help people protect themselves and minimise the need to introduce the most restrictive forms of shielding. This reflects the latest advice from senior clinicians, based on our current understanding of the virus. During the current period of national restrictions (4 November to 1 December) those who are clinically extremely vulnerable have been advised to stay at home where possible, and to avoid going to work or the shops. They have received a letter outlining the guidance and the support that is available to them. This letter can be used as evidence to an employer or the Department for Work and Pensions for Statutory Sick Pay or other benefit purposes.

It is important that guidance and support to the clinically extremely vulnerable balances the risk of exposure to the virus with the potential negative consequences of shielding for a prolonged period. The guidance to clinically extremely vulnerable people is regularly reviewed and the Government will not hesitate to make necessary changes.

Individuals who are clinically vulnerable are advised to be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise contact with others as well as washing their hands carefully and more frequently than usual.

■ Coronavirus: Drugs and Vaccination

Ben Bradley: [\[115020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that supply chains of (a) medicines and (b) vaccines related to the treatment of

covid-19 can continue in the event that no deal is reached with the EU by the end of the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

The Department, in consultation with the devolved administrations and Crown Dependencies, is working with trade bodies, product suppliers, and the health and care system to help ensure continued supply of medicines and medical products, including medicines and vaccines related to the treatment of COVID-19, to the whole of the United Kingdom at the end of the transition period.

As set out in a letter from the Department to industry of 17 November, we are implementing a multi-layered approach, that includes asking suppliers of medicines, vaccines and other medical products to the UK from or via the European Union to get trader ready, reroute their supply chains away from any potential disruption and stockpile on UK soil where this is possible. The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-17-november-2020>

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[112043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for rolling out the Triumph and Ambush candidate vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has asked the National Health Service to be ready to deploy any safe, effective vaccines when available. We are working at pace for the delivery of any potential COVID-19 vaccination programme as quickly as possible. The scale of what is rolled out and when will depend on a safe, effective vaccine being available.

Planning considerations include the size and make-up of the workforce needed to deliver a potentially extensive vaccination programme at pace, training requirements, guidance, consumables and other equipment, as well as the supporting infrastructure required, including warehousing, transport, logistics and end-destination 'clinic' storage.

The UK Government has committed to procuring a COVID-19 vaccination on behalf of the United Kingdom. As health is a devolved matter, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for deployment of vaccination in their countries. The Government is working closely with the devolved administrations to ensure successful delivery across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Derek Twigg:

[\[114066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of GP administration of covid-19 vaccines on the time GP's are able to spend with patients at their surgery.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Building on the tried-and-tested routes used to deliver the flu vaccine, general practice will have an important role in the COVID-19 vaccination programme. NHS England will allocate £150 million through the General Practice Covid Capacity Expansion Fund, to support expanding general practice capacity up until the end of March 2021. The ambition is for general practices to remain open and accessible to all patients. However, we recognise that the additional workload associated with COVID-19 vaccine delivery may require prioritisation.

■ **Eyes: Cancer****Jim Shannon:**[\[114889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with eye cancer in the last three years.

Jo Churchill:

In the years 2016-2018, which represents the most recent three years for which data is available, the number of people in England diagnosed with eye cancer was 726 in 2016, 726 in 2017 and 721 in 2018.

■ **Health Visitors****Tim Loughton:**[\[114763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) children and (b) children on child in need or child protection plans have received (i) remote and (ii) face to face contact with a health visitor for (A) antenatal, (B) new birth visit, (C) six to eight week review, (D) 12 month development review and (E) two and a half year review purposes, since 23 March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Health visitor service delivery metrics are collected and published on a quarterly basis by Public Health England. The latest figures relate to October to December 2019, the statistics relate to all children resident in a local area, characteristics of the child such as if they are on child in need or child protection plans are not recorded. Annual data for 2019/20 will be published in February 2021. The delivery metrics are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/health-visitor-service-delivery-metrics-2019-to-2020>

No timescales for national data collection from local areas for 2020/21 activity have been established. Virtual contacts will be counted as valid, mandated service delivery for data for 2020/21 during the period of the pandemic response.

■ Health Visitors: Employment

Tim Loughton:

[\[114747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent health visitors there have been in each of the last 10 years.

Jo Churchill:

Responsibility for commissioning of health visiting services transferred to local authorities in October 2015. Local authorities are best placed to respond to the needs of their local population through commissioning National Health Service trusts and private sector organisations to provide health visiting services.

There is no single source that counts health visitors across the whole public sector.

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

The following table shows the number of HCHS health visitors as at September each year since 2010 and July 2020, the latest available data, full time equivalent (FTE).

HCHS HEALTH VISITORS, FTE

September 2010	7,849
September 2011	7,802
September 2012	7,687
September 2013	8,304
September 2014	9,162
September 2015	10,236
September 2016	9,521
September 2017	8,497
September 2018	7,884
September 2019	7,063
July 2020	6,644

Source: NHS Workforce Statistics

NHS Digital also collects and publishes data on staff, including health visitors, in some English independent sector healthcare organisations. These statistics do not represent the entire independent sector workforce as only 59 organisations provided data for September 2019.

The following table shows the number of FTE independent sector health visitors as at September each year since 2015 to 2019, this is the latest available data.

	INDEPENDENT SECTOR HEALTH VISITORS, FTE
September 2015	957
September 2016	1,132
September 2017	1,240
September 2018	1,085
September 2019	1,147

Source: NHS Digital. Independent Healthcare Provider Workforce Statistics

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Dan Jarvis: [\[113553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to expand the availability of the flu vaccine in England to non-priority groups.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Delivery of the flu vaccine programme has begun, with priority given to those who are most at risk from the effects of flu, and frontline health and social care workers.

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

Tulip Siddiq: [\[113614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have (a) requested and (b) received an NHS flu vaccination in each month since the start of winter 2020-21; and how many people so (i) requested and (ii) received that vaccination in each month in winter 2019-20.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Public Health England publishes weekly provisional flu vaccine uptake data based on general practitioner automated returns throughout the flu season, with publication starting this season on 8 October 2020. This gives the proportions of those eligible who have been vaccinated and is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports

The number of people who request a National Health Service flu vaccination in each month since the start of winter 2020/21 is not collected.

Monthly provisional flu vaccine uptake data, based on automated and manual returns, is also published, with the first set of monthly data due to be published on 26 November covering the period 1 September to 31 October 2020. Monthly flu vaccine uptake data for 2019/20 is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-gp-patients-monthly-data-2019-to-2020>

Tulip Siddiq:

[113615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) schoolchildren up to Year 7, (b) pregnant women, (c) people over the age of 65, (d) people in the extremely vulnerable category, (e) people aged 50 to 65 and (f) people in the entire population have received a flu vaccination since the start of winter 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Public Health England (PHE) publishes weekly provisional flu vaccine uptake data based on general practitioner automated returns throughout the flu season. This gives the proportions of those eligible who have been vaccinated and is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports

Monthly provisional flu vaccine uptake data, based on automated and manual returns, is also published, with the first set of monthly data released on 26 November covering the period 1 September to 31 October 2020. This data includes flu vaccine uptake in school aged children and is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-uptake#seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake:-figures

The flu vaccination programme has now been extended to those aged 50 to 64 years old from 1 December. PHE does not hold data on individuals vaccinated outside of the National Health Service programme such as through private vaccination.

Derek Twigg:

[114069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of eligible patients have had the flu vaccine to date.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: Public Health England publishes weekly provisional flu vaccine uptake data based on general practitioner automated returns throughout the flu season which is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports

This gives the proportions of those eligible who have been vaccinated.

Monthly provisional flu vaccine uptake data, based on automated and manual returns, is also published, with the first set of monthly data released on 26 November covering the period 1 September to 31 October 2020. This will include the first set of

monthly data on uptake in frontline line healthcare workers and school-aged children. The data is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-uptake#seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake:-figures

Justin Madders: [96950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many flu vaccines were held in stock on 29 September 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Overall, there is sufficient vaccine for over 30 million people to be vaccinated in England this winter.

Public Health England (PHE) secures sufficient volume of flu vaccines used in the children's flu programme to ensure that eligible children aged less than 18 years who present for vaccination can be offered an appropriate vaccine. Information on the number of doses procured by PHE is commercially sensitive. However, by 29 September 2020, PHE had distributed over 1.3 million doses of flu vaccine to National Health Service providers of the children's flu programme in England.

Derek Twigg: [99530]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 September 2020 to Question 84148 on Influenza: Vaccination, what the stock of additional seasonal flu vaccinations is as of 6 October 2020.

Kate Osamor: [99684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 1 October 2020 to Question 91107 on Influenza: Vaccination, how many additional doses of the seasonal flu vaccine his Department has acquired.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Overall, there is sufficient vaccine for over 30 million people to be vaccinated in England this winter.

The Department has agreed to procure over 8 million additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available from November. This is in addition to the stock that general practitioners and pharmacists have ordered directly from manufacturers.

Kate Osamor: [99685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason some pharmacists and GPs are experiencing delays in acquiring the seasonal flu vaccine.

Jo Churchill:

General practitioners (GPs) and pharmacists are directly responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults. This year we have seen an early increase in demand for the flu vaccination, and GPs and pharmacists have used their first deliveries of flu vaccine.

The flu vaccine is delivered to GPs, pharmacies and other services in batches for operational reasons, including allowing GPs and pharmacies to schedule clinics and appointments alongside their other usual services and to allow people to choose when to have their vaccination.

There is sufficient vaccine for over 30 million people to be vaccinated in England this winter and flu vaccination deliveries will continue in all areas in England throughout the winter months as they do every year.

■ Medical Treatments

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[114226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the language in NICE criteria to ensure it is (a) accessible and (b) understood by (i) patients and (ii) people caring for them.

Jo Churchill:

We have no plans to review the language the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) uses. NICE is an independent body and is responsible for its own methods and processes. NICE has a public involvement programme team that develops and supports patient, service user, carer and public involvement.

■ Mortality Rates: Tyne and Wear

Ian Mearns:

[\[114837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings and recommendations of the publication, *Understanding high mortality rates among people with multiple and complex needs: exploring underlying factors and opportunities for prevention in Newcastle and Gateshead*, published in October 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 November 2020]: This report is an important addition to the evidence base around a complex subject, which as the report suggest requires a whole systems approach to support people. The Government announced £46 million from the Shared Outcomes Fund to provide improved support to individuals overcoming multiple complex needs, such as homelessness, reoffending and substance misuse. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government-led programme will undertake a two-year pilot to support eight to 15 local areas to deliver new interventions and systems change to better support up to thousands of individuals with multiple complex needs.

■ Neurofibromatosis: Diagnosis

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[102960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) improve rates of early diagnosis of neurofibromatosis type 1 and (b) raise public awareness of that condition.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 20 October 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned a national specialised service to address the healthcare needs of neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1) patients with rare complications that cause major health problems, called complex-NF1. There are two centres responsible for the diagnosis and long-term care of patients with complex NF1, which are based at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.

These centres also provide education with the National Health Service to raise and maintain awareness of NF1 and are expected to form a relationship with local health and social care providers to help optimise any care for complex NF1 patients provided locally.

■ Oesophageal Cancer

Jim Shannon:**[91970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

The following table shows the number of people diagnosed with oesophageal cancer between 2014 and 2018 in England.

YEAR	DIAGNOSES
2018	7,829
2017	7,601
2016	7,611
2015	7,665
2014	7,358

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cancer-registration-statistics-england-2018-final-release>

■ Protective Clothing: Females

Fleur Anderson:**[110262]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that women working in the NHS are provided with a full range of scrubs and personal protective equipment in sizes that meet their needs.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: We are committed to understanding workers' needs. Following anecdotal feedback, NHS England and NHS Improvement have

launched a project led by the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer to gather the robust evidence and data we need to understand any problems and take action.

Getting a range of the types of personal protective equipment (PPE) frontline staff require is of paramount importance. Our buying teams are aware of the various different categories they need to buy, and source as many different sizes as possible.

We are moving from a system of quality control to quality assurance, with the onus on quality assurance at source, while building user confidence around product quality and reliability in addition to driving a more efficient supply with lower waste and higher user acceptance.

■ **Rare Diseases: Coronavirus**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[114227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support patient support groups for rare diseases that are experiencing reductions in funding as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Department, alongside NHS England, is considering the impact of COVID-19 on patients with rare diseases. NHS England has had discussions with some services and patients/patient groups to understand the impact of COVID-19 including what has worked well; what has not worked so well; and opportunities for transformation. NHS England has worked with commissioned providers, patient groups and charities throughout the pandemic to ensure that patients, carers and their families have been supported during the COVID-19 outbreak and ensuring those discussions inform planning for autumn and winter.

■ **Sunscreens: VAT**

Patricia Gibson:

[\[107034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of making sunscreen exempt from VAT to improve affordability for consumers and help reduce incidences of skin cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: No such discussions have taken place or are planned to be held in the near future.

■ **Throat Cancer: Diagnosis**

Jim Shannon:

[\[111520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the saliva hpv test for throat cancer will be available on the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

Researchers from the University of Cambridge, who developed the Cytosponge test, are currently putting the test through an economic evaluation and hope that it will be rolled out within general practitioner practices within three to five years.

■ Thrombotic Thrombocytopenic Purpura: Drugs**Zarah Sultana:****[114340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making Caplacizumab available on the NHS as a treatment for acquired thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is developing guidance on Caplacizumab for treating acute acquired thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura. NICE was able to recommend Caplacizumab for routine use on the NHS in its draft guidance. It expects to publish final guidance in December 2020.

NICE's draft recommendation on the use of Caplacizumab for treating acute acquired thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-ta10361/documents/final-appraisal-determination-document>

■ UK Relations With EU**Angus Brendan MacNeil:****[115539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what contingency plans he has with respect to the UK's future relationship with the EU in the event of an interruption in the supply of medicines after the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: The Department, in consultation with the devolved administrations and the Crown Dependencies, is working with trade bodies, product suppliers, and the health and care system to help ensure continued supply of medicines and medical products, to the whole of the United Kingdom at the end of the transition period.

As set out in a letter from the Department to industry of 17 November, we are implementing a multi-layered approach, that involves asking suppliers of medicines, vaccines and other medical products to the UK from or via the European Union to get trader ready, reroute their supply chains away from any potential disruption and stockpile on UK soil where this is possible. The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-17-november-2020>

HOME OFFICE**■ Home Office: Staff****Grahame Morris:**[\[119225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, following the recent findings of the Independent Adviser on the Ministerial Code on her conduct, what steps she has taken to ensure Home Office staff have a working environment that is (a) safe and (b) free from bullying and harassment.

Priti Patel:

The Permanent Secretary and I are committed to a Home Office where there is the strongest possible partnership between Ministers and officials, based on support, candour, challenge, mutual respect and professionalism.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals**Olivia Blake:**[\[119431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will ensure that EU citizens who, through no fault of their own, miss the 30 June 2021 deadline to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme will have no interruption to their rights until they apply for, and are granted, settled status.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Withdrawal Agreement, the Government has made clear, where a person has reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme by EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

If they do so and are granted status under the scheme, they will, consistent with the Withdrawal Agreement, enjoy the same rights from the time they are granted status as someone who applied before the deadline.

■ Immigration: Health Services**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[119191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing refunds for payments of the immigration health surcharge made by people working in the (a) health and (b) care sector prior to 31 March 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Health and care workers who paid the health surcharge to cover the period from 31 March 2020 onwards, may be eligible for a refund. This includes those who were working in the health and care sector before that date.

More information on this policy can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/refunds>

Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:**[\[111996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 21 August, 21 September and 15 October on his constituent Mr Wait.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Hon. Member's correspondence. The Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts responded on 9 November.

Seema Malhotra:[\[117268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many items of MPs' correspondence have not received a reply within the 20-day target in the last six months.

Kevin Foster:

The Department work to a target of responding to 95% of MPs written correspondence within 20 working days.

On policy related correspondence the Department has replied to 4,023 letters from hon. Members in the last six months. Of these 2,600 have been replied to in over 20 days.

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard is held at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-august-2020>

This includes data from quarter 2 - 2017 up to and including the end of quarter 2-2020/21. We are proposing the release of data for quarter 3, in due course.

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

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Evictions: Shared Housing****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[117285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support and regulations he has put in place nationwide to protect and rehouse relatives who have been sharing accommodation but then become ineligible for that size property when a resident family member passes away; and if he will take steps to assess the effectiveness of legislation on evicting remaining resident family members to ensure that they do not become homeless.

Christopher Pincher:

The Localism Act 2011 has made changes to the rules on succession to social tenancies. From April 2012, rather than being limited by law to providing only one statutory succession, social landlords are able to give to new tenants whatever additional succession rights they deem to be appropriate in the tenancy agreement. This means that, for example, adult children who have lived in a property for many years can be provided with the assurance of a right to succeed to the tenancy regardless of whether a previous succession has already taken place.

In addition social landlords are able to grant, to those who remain in the home after the death of the tenant but have no succession rights, a new tenancy on the same or another more suitable property, provided that is in line with their own policies for allocating tenancies.

On 18 November I wrote to all local housing authorities to encourage them to consider how they can make best use of these existing flexibilities and to ask them to provide examples of good practice so that these can be shared more widely.

In addition, where family members other than a spouse or partner have a statutory right to succeed to a local authority tenancy, the landlord may seek to evict them if the property is or will become under-occupied. However, the landlord must ensure that suitable alternative accommodation is made available.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[117980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure all people who were homeless before the covid-19 outbreak and subsequently accommodated continue to receive housing support.

Kelly Tolhurst:

By September our ongoing 'Everyone In' campaign 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. Launched in the summer, the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme makes available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to prevent those accommodated during the pandemic from returning to the streets. We announced allocations of £91.5 million to local authorities on 17 September to pay for immediate support to ensure that as many people as possible do not return to the streets. On 29 October, we announced allocations of more than £150 million to local partners to deliver more than 3,300 new long-term homes for rough sleepers across the country.

Backed by a further £15 million, the 'Protect Programme' forms part of the ongoing targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from COVID-19. This is on top of the previously announced £10 million Cold Weather Fund for all councils to help keep rough sleepers safe this winter. This takes the total

we are spending to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in 2020/21 to over £700 million.

■ Local Government Services: Coronavirus

Navendu Mishra:

[\[116686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans the Government has to support local authorities to meet their statutory duties in (a) road maintenance, (b) library services and (c) waste collection in the event that the covid-19 outbreak continues to adversely affect local authorities' finances.

Luke Hall:

Spending Review 2020 has been drawn up in unique circumstances. Our primary aim has been to ensure local government has the resources and stability it needs to continue to provide vital public services and tackle the pandemic. The Spending Review has confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.5 per cent in cash terms next year. This real terms increase follows the largest real terms increase in Core Spending Power for a decade at Spending Review 2019. This means local authorities will be able to access an additional £2.2 billion in resources to support Adult and Children's Social Care and maintain universal services. We will bring forward proposals for the annual local government finance settlement for 2021-22 as soon as we can.

This is all in addition to an unprecedented package of support for local authorities to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. At the Spending Review the Chancellor announced more than £3 billion of additional support for Covid-19 pressures next year. This is on top of the support committed this financial year, including over £7.2 billion for local authorities, even before the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for those authorities under the highest level of restriction – potentially worth over £200 million a month – announced as part of the Covid-19 Winter Plan. This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of Covid-19 to over £10 billion.

■ Regeneration: Dudley

Marco Longhi:

[\[118117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to (a) encourage the allocation of (i) the £25 million Towns Fund funding and (ii) other recent funding for Dudley to the redevelopment of the town centre and (b) ensure that the widest possible consultation is carried out so that local people help decide what is right for their town.

Luke Hall:

As set out in the Towns Fund further guidance, we know town centres and high streets are facing particular challenges. We are leaving flexibility for towns to prioritise investment across the town – for example, in gateway areas, key education or employment sites.

The Town Deal Board is responsible for producing the final Town Investment Plan, including putting forward suitable projects which align with the objectives of the Towns Fund. It is crucial that interventions supported through the Towns Fund should have the support of the community, through early and ongoing engagement and genuine partnership arrangements.

■ **Regeneration: Stoke on Trent**

Jonathan Gullis:

[118127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support regeneration (a) Burslem and (b) Tunstall.

Luke Hall:

This Government is committed to driving the regeneration of towns across the country and particularly so in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have an ongoing programme of interventions. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is already benefiting from £121 million of Local Growth Funding which is funding projects such as Etruria Valley.

In July we announced that Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP would receive £23.7 million from the Getting Building Fund. This will support a number of projects, including £120,000 for a Digital and Construction Skills Project at Stoke College and £2.8 million for the Powering Up Enterprise project, which will see the creation of modern, digitally enhanced workspace in Stoke-on-Trent through re-purposing and refurbishing underused and vacant floor space.

The Government-backed Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone is making a big impact, enabling redundant and long-neglected brownfield sites to be re-developed, including Chatterley Valley East, Highgate / Ravensdale and Tunstall Arrow, in Tunstall.

We have provided £10 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund Marginal Viability Funding to transform nine long-standing vacant sites in the Burslem and Middleport areas, helping to breathe new life in the town.

The £3.6 billion Towns Fund aims to deliver long-term economic and productivity growth to towns and high streets. In September 2019, we announced the initial 101 towns Government would work with to agree Town Deals. A further Towns Fund competitive round will be announced in due course.

In addition, the High Streets Task Force has launched a range of online resources to provide support to places across the country, which can be found here:

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/products-and-services/support-for-all-high-streets/>.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership**

Daisy Cooper: [\[119400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential for trade disputes on data flows to arise from Article 14.11 of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Greg Hands:

We are confident that the UK would be able to uphold its commitments for Article 14.11 under the Electronic Commerce chapter of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) if the UK is successful in acceding to this agreement.

Article 14.11 of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership includes an exception to cross-border data flows for the purpose of achieving a legitimate public policy objective. This provides sufficient policy flexibility for the UK to act in future in our national interest and ensure continued high levels of personal data protection.

■ Data Protection: Japan

Daisy Cooper: [\[119399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of (a) what additional data may flow and (b) what existing data restrictions may be lifted as a result of Article 8.84 of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) ensures that data can flow between the countries while maintaining high data protection standards. The deal does not mandate that data must flow, but rather the provisions clear the way for the flow of data between both countries for business purposes; when data needs to flow across a border it can do so without coming up against unjustified barriers. CEPA does not interfere with the high level of protection afforded to personal data when it is transferred out of the UK under the UK's data protections laws.

■ Overseas Trade: Horn of Africa

Alexander Stafford: [\[120191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the value is to the UK economy of trade with (a) Somalia and (b) Somaliland.

Graham Stuart:

The value of UK Trade with Somalia in 2019 was £81 million. This comprised £48 million UK exports to Somalia and £33 million UK imports from Somalia.

UK trade with Somaliland is captured within the figures for Somalia and cannot be separately identified.

■ Rules of Origin: Japan

Emily Thornberry: [\[119201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has promoted any external communications for traders on the updated rules of origin between the UK and Japan taking effect after the transition period.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade has published clear, accurate, and up-to-date information on every signed continuity agreement to give businesses the support they need to enter new markets across the globe. We have recently published information on Gov.uk on the Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), including information on the rules of origin provisions. This information includes free-to-use online tools ('Trade with the UK' and 'Check How to Export Goods') so that businesses can check product-specific and country-specific information on tariffs and regulations that currently apply to UK trade in goods.

■ Trade Agreements: Israel

Alexander Stafford: [\[117398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she has made in discussions with Israel on an agreement for further trade co-operation beyond the trade continuity deal.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my Hon. Friend, the Member for Rother Valley, to the answer that my Rt. Honourable Friend, Minister Jayawardena, gave to the Honourable Member for Buckingham on 19 November 2020 to Question UIN 909006.

■ Trade Agreements: Rules of Origin

Emily Thornberry: [\[119202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has promoted any external communications for traders on updated rules of origin arising from continuity trade agreements taking effect after the transition period.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has published clear, accurate, and up-to-date information on every signed continuity agreement to give businesses the support they need to enter new markets across the globe. This includes information on the rules of origin provisions within those agreements.

DIT has also created free-to-use online tools (' [Trade with the UK](#)' and ' [Check How to Export Goods](#)') so that businesses can access product-specific and country-

specific information on tariffs and regulations that currently apply to UK trade in goods.

These tools provide information for traders on updated rules of origin arising from continuity trade agreements taking effect after the transition period and are regularly updated to reflect any changes.

■ Type 31 Frigates

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[118496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government has fulfilled any export orders for the Type 31e Frigate to date.

Graham Stuart:

There have been no export orders for the Arrowhead 140 (T31) yet. UK Defence and Security Exports is supporting Babcock in its campaigns to export UK built ships, as well as the sale of the design to overseas customers.

TRANSPORT

■ Airspace

Andrew Selous:

[\[117950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to implement the Airspace Modernisation strategy.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises that airspace modernisation is an important enabler to allowing us to build back better and to meet our carbon commitment

Airspace modernisation is vital to the future of aviation, to delivering net zero and create opportunities for airports to manage how noise impacts local communities. It is a critical infrastructure programme of national importance that will supporting the aviation sector's recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, in light of the pandemic, we recognise that the timescales in which airspace modernisation will take place will change. We are working with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to review the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, to consider the recommendations from Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG's) recent report 'Remobilising the Airspace Change Programme', and will advise stakeholders of our preferred approach shortly.

My officials have and will continue to work closely with all stakeholders to identify ways forward for the programme, considering all options for the future.

■ Engines

Jeff Smith:

[\[118031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to ban the use of internal combustion engine vehicles by a target date.

Rachel Maclean:

The government has no plans to ban internal combustion engine vehicles. On 18 November, as part of his Ten Point Plan, the Prime Minister announced that we will end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, with all new cars and vans being fully zero emission from 2035.

This will not affect the second-hand car market.

■ Jet Zero Council

Andrew Selous:

[\[117951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Jet Zero Council has for airspace modernisation.

Robert Courts:

At the request of DfT and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the Airspace Change Organisation Group (ACOG) was established in 2019 to coordinate the delivery of key aspects of the Government's Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS), namely the national programme of airspace change amongst major UK airports.

The Jet Zero Council (JZC) will take into account all of the decarbonisation levers available to ensure the sector reaches its net zero goals, including Airspace Modernisation. However, it will be primarily focused on driving forward areas that require further coordination where previously, cross-sectoral collaboration was missing; such as zero emission aerospace technology and sustainable aviation fuels (SAF). Critically, the JZC is not seeking to duplicate areas already progressing, such as an agreement on international emissions, or aviation modernisation which has an existing governance/delivery structures in ACOG.

■ Roads: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[119435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the condition of roads in West Sussex.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is providing West Sussex County Council with over £23 million through the Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund for highway maintenance this financial year. It is for the Council to decide on how this funding is utilised based on their highway asset management strategy, needs and priorities.

TREASURY**■ Banks: Coronavirus****Joy Morrissey:****[119380]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support bank branches at risk of closure during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has worked closely with the financial regulators to ensure that banks, building societies, credit unions and the Post Office continue to maintain branch access for essential banking services while balancing the needs of their customers with the safety and welfare of staff. The vast majority of branches have remained open.

In the longer term, banking service providers will need to balance customer interests, market competition, and other commercial factors when considering its branch strategy. Decisions on opening and closing branches are taken by the management team of each bank on a commercial basis and the Government does not intervene in these decisions.

However, the Government also firmly believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered, and mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have access to over the counter banking services.

Since May 2017, the major high street banks have signed up to the Access to Banking Standard, in which they commit to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services.

In September 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published guidance setting out their expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and other relevant branch services and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is done in a way that treats customers fairly.

Alternative options for access might include the Post Office, where 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers are able to carry out their everyday banking at over 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

■ Business: Insurance**Charlotte Nichols:****[118122]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to encourage insurers to pay out to customers with business interruption policies.

John Glen:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector regarding its response to this unprecedented situation.

The Financial Conduct Authority rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly and in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

On 1 May the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) outlined its intention to seek a court declaration, on an agreed and urgent basis, and for a selected number of key issues, to resolve uncertainty for many customers making business interruption claims. The High Court published its judgment in the court case on 15 September. On 2 November, the Supreme Court granted permission for the FCA and insurers to appeal if it was not possible to resolve the outstanding issues in the interim period. The hearing took place from 16 to the 19 November and the judgement will be published in December or January next year. The FCA and insurers had agreed that they would seek to have any appeal heard on an expedited basis, given the importance of providing legal clarity to policyholders as soon as possible.

In a letter to the ABI on 25 September, the Government also outlined its firm expectation that grant funds intended to provide emergency support to businesses at this time of crisis are not to be deducted from business interruption insurance claims. Many members have agreed not to make these deductions. The Government will consider further action if this practice continues.

WALES**■ Wales Office: International Men's Day****Philip Davies:**[\[120014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps his Department took to mark International Men's Day on 19 November 2020.

David T C Davies:

International Men's Day offers an opportunity to highlight where we need to do more to improve outcomes for men and boys and to talk about some of the work across Government to tackle those issues.

This work ranges from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities looking at outcomes for the whole population - including ethnic minorities and White British people; preparation for an Employment Bill which, subject to further consultation, will make flexible working the default unless employers have good reason not to; delivering the Suicide Prevention Workplan, which sets out action that is being taken across Government departments and the NHS to reduce suicides, including amongst men.

This Government is committed to levelling up opportunity and ensuring fairness for all - regardless of gender or background.

To celebrate International Men's Day, the Director of the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales spoke at an International Men's Day webinar and raised awareness of the day in a virtual newsletter.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Covid Winter Grant Scheme

Tulip Siddiq: [\[119314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish further details on the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

Will Quince:

Detailed guidance for local authorities was published on gov.uk on 24 November and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-winter-grant-scheme>

■ Housing Benefit

Julian Sturdy: [\[117242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the benefits of excluding (a) savings in lifetime and (b) help-to-buy ISAs from the eligibility calculation for housing benefit.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made. The fundamental purpose of Housing Benefit is to help people on low incomes pay their rent. As it is an income related benefit, regard must be had to all income and capital when assessing entitlement. Whilst it is important to encourage saving, it has never been thought right for substantial amounts of capital to be ignored altogether when deciding entitlement to a benefit based on need.

However, as ISAs are treated as capital, entitlement to Housing Benefit is only affected if the amount held in an ISA exceeds £6,000 for working age people or £10,000 for people over pension age. Housing Benefit claimants who are also receiving a passported benefit such as Income Support or Pension Credit have all their capital disregarded.

■ Universal Credit

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[119302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that universal credit assessment periods that include two wage payments dates do not include both of those payments in the calculation of a claimant's universal credit payment.

Will Quince:

The legislation we introduced to remedy the Court of Appeal Judgment in the case of *Johnson and Others* came into force on 16th November and means that in future, for cases affected by this issue, monthly earnings can be reallocated to another assessment period, which means that only one set of earnings should be taken into account rather than two.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus**Julian Sturdy:**[\[117243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of representations from civil society organisations on the efficacy of extending the £20 universal credit uplift to a permanent level of universal credit payment, in order to tackle financial hardship as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week temporary Universal Credit increase remains in place until April 2021. 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 before making any decisions.