



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 3 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 03 December 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[122691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of covid-19 restrictions on trends in the level of small businesses filing for bankruptcy in January 2021; and what steps he taking to help mitigate that effect.

Paul Scully:

In response to the pandemic, the Government has put in place an unprecedented package of support for businesses, including job support schemes, over £60 billion in grants and loans, and cuts to VAT and business rates relief. The Government has also introduced temporary measures in the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act to support businesses to keep going through the pandemic, including restricting the use of statutory demands and company winding-up petitions, and suspending the wrongful trading provisions.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) judged, in its recent Economic and Fiscal Outlook, that these measures, together with forbearance on the part of creditors, have helped to reduce the number of insolvencies so far this year by almost a third compared to 2019. The Government has recently extended its package of support measures through to March 2021 to continue to support businesses as the economy emerges from the pandemic.

■ **Carbon Emissions: Young People**

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[122684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to provide digital resources for young people to better understand and reduce their own carbon footprint.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

It will be vitally important to engage the public on the challenge of meeting our net zero target, including specifically with young people.

In October 2020, I spoke at the first UK Youth Against Carbon Conference to listen to young people concerned about climate change and highlight to them how the UK will continue to work towards a net zero target for all of society.

In July 2020, we also launched the 'Involved' Instagram page, to invite young people across the country to share their views on key issues such as climate change with the Government by asking questions through the app's polling and stories. Responses will feed directly public consultations and wider policy making.

The Government has welcomed the final report from the Climate Assembly UK and will be looking closely at the report's findings. The members were selected to be broadly representative of the UK population, which means that nearly 1 in 4 of its members were young people sharing their views on how we should reach net zero.

The Government has funded several digital tools that can help people reduce their carbon footprint, including the 'Simple Energy Advice' service on how to reduce energy use in the home, and the 'Go Ultra Low' website, providing information on Electric Cars & Vans.

Together for Our Planet, our revitalised domestic climate campaign, will aim to engage the whole country in the conversation around climate change. In the run up to the summit, we'll be working closely with young people, schools, civil society groups, businesses and people across the UK as part of our conversation on tackling climate change.

■ Climate Change

Patrick Grady:

[\[119271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the calculation of the UK's Nationally Determined Contributions under the terms of the Paris Agreement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

There have been a series of discussions between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and counterparts in the Devolved Administrations at official and ministerial level on the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution, and these discussions will continue.

Patrick Grady:

[\[119272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on the determination of the UK's Nationally Determined Contributions under the terms of the Paris Agreement of the target of 75 per cent emissions reductions in Scotland by 2030 set by the Scottish Government's Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) will represent the highest possible ambition based on a number of factors including the scope and feasibility of emission reductions measures across the entirety of the UK. Delivering on the NDC will require a whole of UK effort and we will continue to work with the Devolved Administrations on this.

■ Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate: Finance

Andy McDonald: [\[122721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the annual budget was for the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate for 2018-19; what the annual budget is for the year 2020-2021; and what the provisional budgets are for (a) 2021-2022 and (b) 2022-2023.

Andy McDonald: [\[122722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many FTE staff there were in the Employment Agencies Standards Inspectorate for (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Andy McDonald: [\[122723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many full-time equivalent Enforcement Officers his Department has employed in the reporting periods (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Andy McDonald: [\[122724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate has not published an annual report for 2018-19.

Andy McDonald: [\[122725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many investigations the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate has undertaken on the conduct of umbrella companies in each of the reporting periods (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) 2020-21.

Paul Scully:

Information on the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorates budget, FTE Staff and FTE Officers is set out below. Budgets for 2021-22 and 2022-23 have not yet been formalised:

YEAR	BUDGET	FTE STAFF	FTE OFFICERS
2018-19	£0.725m	13	10
2019-20	£1.125m	28.8*	18.8
2020-21	£1.525m	28.8	18.8

* Recruitment of staff took place towards the end of the 2019-20 Financial Year

The Employment Agency Standards Annual Report for 2018/19 was due to be published in April 2020. All non-COVID-19 publications were halted at that time to ensure the timely dissemination of business-critical information. The annual report will be published in due course.

Umbrella companies do not currently fall within the remit of the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS) and therefore no investigations have been undertaken. The Government has committed to extending the remit of the EAS to umbrella companies. EAS continues to work closely with the industries Trade Bodies to ensure Agency workers interests are addressed.

■ Energy Supply

Anna McMorris:

[\[122856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the risks to the UK's energy security in the event that a deal is not reached on the future relationship with the EU after the transition period; and what steps his Department is taking to mitigate risks arising from that matter to the UK's energy supply.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The UK has one of the most reliable energy systems in the world. The UK's exit from the EU does not alter the fact that our energy system is resilient and secure, and UK energy is supplied from diverse sources. Electricity and gas will continue to flow over interconnectors between the UK and the EU at the end of the transition period in any scenario. We have planned extensively for the end of the transition period, alongside industry, to ensure electricity demands are met. We are confident that electricity margins will remain adequate and that the electricity system is able to respond to any changes in demand securely and efficiently. The forecast electricity margin for this winter is healthy, at 4.8GW or 8.3% additional generation.

The UK gas market is one of the world's most developed and provides security through supply diversity, most of which is not dependent on the EU. The forecast gas margin for this winter is healthy, at around 79 million cubic metres or 15% more supply than would be required to meet demand on the coldest day in 20 winters.

■ Environment Protection

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[122683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he has taken to reschedule Green GB Week.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

It is vitally important to engage the public on the challenge of meeting our net zero target. 2021 will be a crucial year for climate action, as the UK will host the UN Climate Change Conference -COP26 - with our partner, Italy, to bring together world leaders to commit to urgent global climate action.

Together for Our Planet, our revitalised domestic climate campaign, will aim to engage the whole country in the conversation around climate change. In the run up to the summit, we'll be working closely with businesses, civil society groups, schools and people across the UK as part of our conversation on tackling climate change.

■ Furniture: Manufacturing Industries**Hilary Benn:****[122570]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received on the effect of shortages of foam and particleboard on the UK furniture industry; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The issue on the effect of shortages of foam and particleboard on the UK furniture industry has been raised with the Department through correspondence, as well as engagement with the UK furniture sector.

Various factors have contributed to a severe lack of raw materials for manufacturers, including successive storms in the Gulf of Mexico, annual turnarounds at chemical plants in Europe, and technical issues at another plant. This has subsequently impacted the cost of these materials.

The reported issues with the supply of some chemicals used in foam production is a commercial issue and likely a result of an increased global demand on these materials. We will continue to monitor the situation and engage with the furniture sector to gain a better understanding of the situation and its impact.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Dan Jarvis:****[122707]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of state aid rules under the Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK Authorities on the level of financial support available to (a) pubs, (b) restaurants and (c) the hospitality sector; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Government has put forward a package of support for businesses in the hospitality sector in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. In England, this included the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF). The Government published clear guidance on the grant scheme, and local authorities were responsible for delivering grants to businesses that were in scope. As stated in the guidance, RHLGF grants could be paid to eligible businesses under the Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK Authorities up to a limit of £800,000 and subject to the recipient confirming they were not an undertaking in difficulty (within the definition of Article 2(18) of the General Block Exemption Regulation) on 31 December 2019.

As at 30 September, over £11.12 billion had been paid out to 906,620 business premises across the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF) and the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) schemes. We do not hold grant payment data from local authorities broken down by sector or type of business, however a full breakdown of final grant payment figures by local authority is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local->

[authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses](#) Both schemes have now closed.

Further grant support totalling £2.2 billion has been made available via local authorities to support businesses that had to close during the 5 November and 2 December national restrictions, as well as businesses impacted by localised restrictions. State aid limits apply. On 13 October 2020 the European Commission (CJEC) announced further amendments to its State Aid Temporary Framework. The U.K. Government has notified the CJEC of its intention to use the new provision and must await approval from the CJEC to do so. The Covid-19 Temporary Framework for UK Public Authorities will need to be amended before aid under this new measure may be provided. All Local Restrictions Support Grants guidance documents will be updated to reflect the new provisions if and when they are applied to the LRSG schemes once the UK Government has approval.

■ Iron and Steel

Jane Stevenson:

[\[122886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much aluminised steel was produced in the UK in each of the last five years for which data is available; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The data requested is not available from official statistics.

We have been working with companies across the steel sector to ensure that they can access the unprecedented package of support measures that the Government has made available during this challenging time.

The Government has also helped steel companies to reduce their costs through resource and energy efficiency, including through a package of compensation and exemptions from electricity costs, and has provided more than £560 million in support to the UK steel industry since 2013.

In addition, we have established an Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF), backed by up to £315 million of investment. The IETF will help businesses with high energy use, including steel companies, to cut their bills and transition the UK's industry to a low carbon future.

■ Renewable Energy: Coronavirus

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[122848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the cost to the public purse has been in loans via the (a) British Business Bank and (b) other lenders to (i) developers and (ii) contractors in the renewable energy industry in response to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on (A) revenue streams, (B) capital investment and (C) employment costs.

Paul Scully:

The three Coronavirus Business Interruption loan schemes are administered by the British Business Bank and delivered by accredited lenders.

The cost to Government of the schemes will not be known until the end of the life of the loan schemes. The total cost will also depend on a range of economic factors over the life of the schemes.

The British Business Bank publishes lending figures under the BBBLs and CBILS schemes, including by sector^[1] as follows.

BBLS BY SECTOR	NUMBER OF BBLS FACILITIES	VOLUME OF FINANCE UNDER BBLS (£)	% OF BBLS FACILITIES	% OF BUSINESS POPULATION
Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	7,866	251,165,017	1%	0.6%
CBILS by Sector	Number of CBILS facilities	Volume of Finance under CBILS (£)	% of CBILS facilities	% of business population
Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	476	139,820,670	1%	0.6%

[1] <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/coronavirus-loan-schemes-benefiting-businesses-in-all-corners-of-uk-reveals-new-analysis-from-british-business-bank/>

■ Sanitary Protection: Labelling

Hywel Williams:

[\[122583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring menstrual products to include labels detailing the ingredients in the product.

Paul Scully:

The safety of sanitary products is regulated by the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR), which require a product to be safe in normal or reasonably foreseeable use when placed on the market.

Under the GPSR, manufacturers are not required to list ingredients for their product. But the law is clear that any sanitary products placed on the UK market must be safe for use.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards is currently conducting a review of the Product Safety Framework and Officials will consider relevant international developments to ensure our product safety system remains one of the best in the world.

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[122686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether supermarkets have put in place covid-19 related restrictions on the purchase of baby products by parents who have triplets.

Paul Scully:

Supermarkets have been clear that supply chains remain robust and there is good availability of products in store. The Government encourages all consumers to shop considerately.

The Government is aware that certain supermarkets have previously restricted sales of core items such as: flour, pasta, toilet roll, antibacterial wipes and baby wipes. However, decisions on restricting the number of items consumers can purchase are commercial matters and are best made by individual businesses who understand their operations and customer base.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[122545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing different guest restriction numbers at weddings in different covid-19 tiers; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies with fifteen guests attending are allowed in Tiers 1, 2 and 3. Wedding receptions with fifteen guests can take place in Tiers 1 and 2 in COVID-19 Secure venues. Wedding receptions are not permitted in Tier 3.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Boats: EU Countries****Daisy Cooper:**[\[121024\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the tax implications for UK boat owners whose vessels are currently harboured in EU member states in the trade deal negotiations with the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

Movements of goods from the EU will be treated the same as movements from the rest of the world after the end of the transition period. This means customs duties, including VAT, will be due, unless any relief or further agreement applies.

■ **Cabinet Office: Credit Unions****Gareth Thomas:**[\[121122\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to require his Department and its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if he will make a statement.

Julia Lopez:

The Cabinet Office is continuing to investigate various financial wellbeing options. Announcements will be made in due course.

■ **Death: Coronavirus****Chris Grayling:**[\[122588\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the proportion of deaths recorded as covid-19 deaths which had a different, primary cause of death in each of the past six months.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ122588 [PQ122588.pdf]

■ Government Departments: Standards

Andrew Griffith:

[121055]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on developing regular, clear and transparent reporting of metrics to track the achievement of Government policies.

Julia Lopez:

Spending Review 2020 placed a renewed focus on outcomes and tied spending and performance closely together. To implement this approach, the government has developed provisional priority outcomes for each UK government department, including a number of cross-cutting outcomes. The government has also identified a set of provisional metrics for each outcome against which progress towards delivering the outcomes will be measured.

■ Procurement Transformation Advisory Panel

Dan Carden:

[122869]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on (a) establishing and (b) appointing members of the Procurement Transformation Advisory Panel.

Julia Lopez:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not usually disclosed.

■ Serco

Jon Trickett:

[120791]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value is of Government contracts awarded to Serco since 2010.

Julia Lopez:

This information is not held centrally.

Details of central government contracts above £10,000, including the value of those contracts, are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>

It is also the case that councils including Leeds City, Hounslow, Newham Borough, North Tyneside, Cumbria County and Milton Keynes have entered into contracts with Serco. Further details are available online.

■ UK Relations with EU

Ronnie Cowan:

[122793]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment the Government has made of the economic effect of the negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU; and if the Government will publish that assessment.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ 59762](#) on 23 June 2020.

DEFENCE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Stephen Morgan:

[\[121349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 116502 on Saudi Arabia: Royal Artillery, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of disclosing details of the Army deployment in Saudi Arabia.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) made Parliament aware of this small deployment to Saudi Arabia via its annual report and has then answered subsequent Parliamentary Questions. The MOD is committed to ensuring that Parliament is kept informed of significant major operations and deployments of the Armed Forces, but does not provide advance notice to Parliament of every UK military deployment given the sheer number and variety of deployments, including for exercising and training purposes.

■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Marco Longhi:

[\[121391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the UN in preventing sexual violence in conflict areas.

James Heappey:

Over recent years, we have supported and driven the adoption of several landmark UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) which seek to prevent Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) by demonstrating that these acts will not go unpunished. These resolutions have secured language committing to a survivor-centric approach to CRSV; highlighted the need to support children born of sexual violence, and promoted specific language on sexual violence in sanction regimes.

UK leadership resulted in the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2379 on Daesh Accountability, pushing for justice for the survivors of sexual violence in Iraq, and to ensure that Daesh can be held accountable for their crimes. Since 2011, prevention of CRSV has grown in international prominence, as evidenced by the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict's Team of Experts working closely with 14 countries to strengthen national capacities and expertise to investigate and prosecute acts of CRSV.

■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus

Marco Longhi:

[\[121389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to ensure the armed forces are prepared to support the roll out of covid-19 vaccines as soon as they become available; and what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on using the armed forces to assist in the distribution of the vaccine.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has prepared a Winter Support Force of 13,500 personnel to respond to a range of challenges over the winter including COVID-19. 115 personnel are currently supporting vaccine delivery tasks (as at 30 November) and the MOD is working closely with other Departments on future plans. Relevant Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Defence, discuss this subject routinely.

■ Aviation: Training

Stephen Morgan:

[\[121348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on (a) RAF rapid-response capabilities and (b) national security of the pause in RAF pilot training.

James Heappey:

There has been no impact. Flying training was paused very briefly in March in order to assess how it could continue to be delivered safely and in compliance with Government guidelines, but the RAF has continued to meet its operational commitments, alongside supporting the Government's COVID-response efforts, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Minesweepers: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[122600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what systems the UK has committed to buying under the Anglo-French MCMV programme; and what the cost to the public purse is of the programme to date.

Jeremy Quin:

I have interpreted the right hon. Member's question as referring to the Anglo-French Maritime Mine Counter Measures (MMCM) programme. The UK has committed to buying three sets of equipment under the programme. Each set comprises a portable operation centre, an autonomous surface vessel, towed sonar, and a mine neutralisation system. To date the total cost to the UK has been approximately £82 million.

■ Ministry of Defence: Finance**Mr Kevan Jones:****[120803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he made of his Department's future funding requirements before the allocation of additional funding in the 2020 Spending Review.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has been through a rigorous planning process as part of the Integrated Review and Spending Review. We have reviewed our current commitments and future requirements, and have consulted widely to create the Defence proposition. The settlement will allow us to make strategic decisions including making investments and disinvestments to set up our Armed Forces for the next decade, and to ensure that the defence budget is spent in the most effective way.

■ National Security**Mr Kevan Jones:****[122601]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to update the National Security Strategy.

James Heappey:

In his statement on 19 November, the Prime Minister said the Government will announce the full conclusions of the Integrated Review early in the new year. Through these conclusions we will set out the Government's overarching strategy for national security and foreign policy, including defence, diplomacy, development and national resilience, setting direction for more detailed strategies and departmental activity in the coming years.

■ Shipbuilding**Bob Blackman:****[120851]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the competitiveness of the UK shipbuilding industry; and what steps he is taking to support that sector.

Mr Ben Wallace:

As demonstrated by my appointment as Shipbuilding Tsar, this Government recognises a need to re-energise some parts of the UK shipbuilding industry. A key objective of the National Shipbuilding Strategy is to improve the competitiveness of the UK shipbuilding industry.

I am working with the Maritime Enterprise Working Group to identify measures needed to improve competitiveness and productivity, enabling industry to step up and improve their chances of success when bidding for both UK and international shipbuilding contracts. This is a long-term programme of improvement, but I am firmly committed to delivering on the Government's vision for the sector.

Alan Brown:

[\[120907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has to update the National Shipbuilding Strategy to incorporate commercial shipbuilding and supply chain considerations.

Mr Ben Wallace:

In my role as Shipbuilding Tsar, I am working with my colleagues across Government to deliver on our vision to create a thriving shipbuilding enterprise, including both naval and commercial shipbuilders and their supply chains. Any update to the National Shipbuilding Strategy would also build upon the ongoing review of our defence and security industrial strategy.

Luke Pollard:

[\[121010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to update the National Shipbuilding Strategy to incorporate commercial shipbuilding and supply chain considerations.

Mr Ben Wallace:

In my role as Shipbuilding Tsar, I am working with my colleagues across Government to deliver on our vision to create a thriving shipbuilding enterprise, including both naval and commercial shipbuilders and their supply chains. Any update to the National Shipbuilding Strategy would also build upon the ongoing review of our defence and security industrial strategy.

■ **Type 45 Destroyers: Decommissioning**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[122596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the retirement date is of each Type 45 destroyer.

Jeremy Quin:

On current plans, the Type 45 destroyers will leave service between 2035 and 2038.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Baroness Thatcher**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[120818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has received representations on commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of Margaret Thatcher's term as Prime Minister.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[120819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to support the erection of a statue of Margaret Thatcher in Parliament Square to commemorate her achievements as the UK's first female Prime Minister.

Nigel Huddleston:

DCMS has received one representation to erect a statue of Baroness Thatcher in her home town of Grantham, in recognition of her remarkable contribution to our country.

Following the passing of the Deregulation Act 2015, consent from the Secretary of State is no longer required to erect statues in London. The process is now determined through the planning system only, with a planning application for a statue in Parliament Square, which is the responsibility of the Greater London Authority, being turned down by Westminster City Council in 2018.

Broadband**Sally-Ann Hart:**[\[121041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps are being taken to ensure that neighbours can share any additional cost of delivering broadband under the Universal Service Obligation for broadband once the cost cap for delivery has been reached.

Matt Warman:

Implementation of the Universal Service Obligation is the responsibility of Ofcom. The Universal Service Conditions set out by Ofcom require the Universal Service Providers to divide the 'Total Cost of Provision of Infrastructure which is capable of being shared' by the 'Number of relevant premises'.

As the independent regulator, Ofcom is currently investigating BT's compliance with its obligations as a broadband Universal Service Provider as they are concerned BT may not be complying with the regulatory conditions correctly when it assesses excess costs for a given connection.

We understand that Ofcom expects to determine the next steps before the end of this year.

Stephen Timms:[\[122549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the £5 billion announced in the 2020 Spring Budget to ensure all homes and businesses can access gigabit broadband by 2025 remains available for that purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Timms:[\[122550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his target is for gigabit broadband coverage by 2025.

Matt Warman:

The Government remains committed to delivering nationwide gigabit connectivity as soon as possible. Our programme for gigabit-capable broadband has made dramatic progress. More than a third of UK premises now have access to gigabit-capable connections, up from nine per cent when the government took office in July 2019. By next year, more than half of all premises will have access. We are working with

industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025 but will seek to accelerate rollout further to get as close to 100% as possible.

We remain committed to investing £5bn in bringing gigabit coverage to the hardest to reach areas and will continue to work with suppliers to accelerate this investment.

■ **Commonwealth Games 2022**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[120146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the West Midlands Combined Authority on maximising opportunities for trade, tourism and investment in the region ahead of the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is working in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority to deliver a Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme to run alongside the Commonwealth Games. The Government is investing £21.3m into the programme with an additional £2.6 million provided by the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme aims to attract investment, businesses and visitors to the region. More generally, the Government is working with all delivery partners, including the West Midlands Combined Authority, to ensure the region maximises the national and international economic opportunities of hosting the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

■ **Commonwealth Games 2022: Dudley**

Marco Longhi:

[\[121378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government plans to take to help Dudley benefit from increased trade and tourism from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is working in partnership with the West Midlands Combined Authority to deliver a Tourism, Trade and Investment Programme to run alongside the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. The Government is investing £21.3m, alongside £2.6 million from the West Midlands Combined Authority, into the programme, which will attract investment, businesses and visitors to the region.

This significant investment demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring that we maximise the economic legacy of the Games for the city, the West Midlands and the whole of the UK.

Marco Longhi:

[\[121383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to ensure that long-term unemployed people in Dudley benefit from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth games.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games provide a unique and significant opportunity to accelerate employment and skills opportunities for residents across the West Midlands. The government is working closely with our Games partners to ensure we make the most of these opportunities.

The West Midlands Combined Authority has recently launched a Commonwealth Games Jobs and Skills Academy which seeks to link West Midlands residents to the thousands of training, volunteering and employment opportunities that the Games will create, with a focus on the most vulnerable at risk groups, including the long-term unemployed.

■ Coronavirus: Ice Skating**Andrew Rosindell:****[119980]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the closure of ice skating rinks during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown on the (a) mental health and b) physical wellbeing of people who regularly use ice-skating rinks at (i) amateur or (ii) professional level.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of the first period of enhanced national restrictions and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

As the Prime Minister said on 23 November national restrictions will end on Wednesday 2 December, and gyms and sport facilities will reopen across all tiers. Outdoor skating rinks can stay open across all tiers and indoor skating rinks can open in Tiers 1 and 2. Unfortunately in Tier 3 areas indoor skating rinks will remain closed, because these areas have a very high or rapidly rising level of infections, so tighter restrictions will be in place. However, elite athletes will still be able to access relevant facilities.

■ Culture Recovery Fund**Jonathan Gullis:****[121928]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on delivering support for local authority owned culture and heritage assets through the Culture Recovery Fund.

Nigel Huddleston:

Support for the Arts for Local Authorities in Round 1 was £23,376,244. Support for Heritage for Local Authorities in Round 1 was £1,435,900. This included funding for councils and local government owned assets including museums, theatres, music venues, archives; designed landscapes; buildings; monuments and industrial transport.

In addition to the arts and heritage emergency recovery grants, The CRF Heritage Stimulus Fund 'Covid-19 Emergency Heritage at Risk' stream granted £89,870.

Under the CRF Heritage Stimulus Fund 'Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk Fund' Lincoln City Council received £1,086,629 for Lincoln Castle and Blackpool City Council received £764,000 for the Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to require his Department and its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr John Whittingdale:

We don't currently offer a general payroll deduction service, but we keep our employee offer under review to ensure it continues to meet the needs of staff.

■ Fairgrounds: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris:

[\[120082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance he has issued for travelling fairground operators on when and how peripatetic fairs will be able to resume post-covid-19 restrictions.

Nigel Huddleston:

Whilst outdoor events such as travelling funfairs are not currently able to proceed due to national restrictions in England, the guidance on which we have worked with the Events Industry Forum will support outdoor events to operate safely when we move to the local tier system on 2 December.

From 2 December, as set out in the COVID Winter Plan we will return to a tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions. Funfairs and fairgrounds - which will be permitted to reopen in all three tiers as they were prior to this period of national restrictions - will need to go through the normal process of requesting permission and any relevant licences from the relevant authority and have the relevant health and safety protocols in place, including a Covid-19 risk assessment. Local Authorities are responsible for deciding whether to permit outdoor events in their area. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given to both the risks and the mitigations in place.

In the government's Covid-19 Secure guidance for the Visitor Economy, we have provided guidance for Local Authorities on how to assess applications for outdoor events and how Local Authorities should support event organisers to hold outdoor events safely. We will continue to work closely with Local Authorities and the sector to get outdoor events running safely and successfully once they are permitted.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) holds regular engagement calls with local government sector groups to highlight significant

policy updates and holds regular Ministerial calls with local authority leaders and chief executives.

■ **Ice Skating and Ice Hockey: Coronavirus**

Mr Clive Betts:

[122561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the English Ice Hockey Association and British Ice Skating's joint campaign to reopen ice rinks in tier 3 covid-19 local alert level areas for (a) elite sport, (b) under-18 sport, (c) disability sport, (d) educational programmes and (e) organised sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of the first period of enhanced national restrictions and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

Under Tier 3, Ice Rinks are able to open for disability sport, sports as part of the curriculum in education and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s (including those who were under 18 on 31 August 2020). Elite and professional athletes may continue to use facilities including ice rinks to train and to compete Behind Closed Doors.

■ **Ice Skating: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[119982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to allow (a) professional and (b) amateur ice skaters to continue training on ice rinks as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of the first period of enhanced national restrictions and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

As the Prime Minister said on 23 November national restrictions will end on Wednesday 2 December, and gyms and sport facilities will reopen across all tiers. Outdoor skating rinks can stay open across all tiers and indoor skating rinks can open in Tiers 1 and 2. Unfortunately in Tier 3 areas indoor skating rinks will remain closed, because these areas have a very high or rapidly rising level of infections, so tighter restrictions will be in place. However, elite athletes will still be able to access relevant facilities.

Nick Fletcher: [\[122925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if his Department will reopen ice rinks in areas with Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions so that professional athletes can resume their training at those venues.

Nigel Huddleston:

Elite and professional athletes may train and compete at ice rinks in all tiers.

■ National Railway Museum

Rachael Maskell: [\[121293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding his Department allocated to the National Railway Museum in the financial year (a) 2018-19 and (b) 2019-20.

Rachael Maskell: [\[121294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding his Department allocated to the National Railway Museum for stock purchases by its library Search Engine in the financial year (a) 2018-19 and (b) 2019-20.

Rachael Maskell: [\[121295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the projected funding allocation is from his Department to the National Railway Museum for the financial year (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Rachael Maskell: [\[121296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding he plans to allocate to the National Railway Museum for stock purchases by the library Search Engine in the financial year (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Caroline Dinenage:

The National Railway Museum (NRM) is part of the Science Museum Group (SMG). DCMS allocates Grant-in-Aid (GIA) to the SMG who distribute the funding across all their sites.

GIA funding information for 2018/19 and 2019/20 is published in SMG's Annual Report and Accounts. Estimates for this financial year are published in Central Government Supply Estimates 2020/21. SMG is allowed to access additional resource GIA funding over the financial year 2020/21 in order to mitigate possible deficits as a result of the impacts of COVID-19 over the financial year. Funding is not yet fully confirmed for 2021/22.

In addition NRM has been awarded £18.5m over three years, from 2020/21 to 2022/23, from the Culture Investment Fund to support NRM's Vision 2025 transformation project.

Search Engine, which launched in 2008, has dramatically opened up access to the museum's archive collection and library. Since opening, 400,000 people have used the facility, which now includes more than 1,000 paintings, 2,350 prints and drawings and 1.75m photographs. DCMS does not hold information on the funding allocated to Search Engine stock purchases but the SMG has confirmed that it is adequate to meet all current and anticipated needs.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[121350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason pubs cannot also be allowed to host rehearsals and streaming of events, with no audience, alongside theatres and arts venues whilst under covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Caroline Dinanage:

The Health Protection Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations 2020, passed by Parliament on 1st December, allows theatres and concert halls to host rehearsals or performances without an audience for broadcast or recording purposes. This regulation does not extend to pubs or other hospitality settings.

■ Recreation Spaces: Children

Marco Longhi:

[121382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the accessibility of (a) community and (i) green-space amenities for children in (i) Dudley and (ii) England with special education needs and/or disabilities.

Nigel Huddleston:

The provision of community and green space amenities, including their design and equipment is the responsibility of the Local Authority. The Local Authority has a duty of care under the Equality Act of 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to prevent those protected characteristics, including disability, experiencing a disadvantage. Section 149 of the Act places an over-arching duty on Local Authorities to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The duty expressly includes taking steps to meet the needs of disabled persons. Further detail can be found in the Act which can be accessed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>. The responsibility for local authorities falls to MCHLG.

The Children and Nature Programme is a major programme funded by Department for Education which aims to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds to have better access to natural environments. The programme prioritises pupils' mental

health and wellbeing, and engagement with school. The main target audience for the programme are schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils, Alternative Provision Institutions (API) including but not limited to Pupil Referral Units, and importantly special schools, so many of the children who are impacted by the programme will have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The Programme comprises three delivery projects and an evaluation project. The largest project in the programme is the Nature Friendly Schools Project, which is delivering greener grounds and pupil visits to green spaces for schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The Government is planning to start delivery to two schools in the Dudley area from April; Hawbush Primary School in Brierley Hill and Crestwood Secondary School in Kingswinford. We are also supporting the Community Forest and Woodland Outreach Project, which aims to increase and help sustain community forest and woodland outreach activities being delivered to school children, particularly those in disadvantaged areas. In addition to this the Growing Care Farming Project aims to achieve a transformational change in the scale, scope and uptake of care farming services in England for children and adults facing disadvantage or social exclusion, to benefit their health and wellbeing and their social and educational development. The evaluation project will deepen our understanding of the effectiveness of nature-based interventions and how activities in nature impact pupils' health and wellbeing. We are also supporting national landscapes in their aim of helping everyone, including children and young people, discover and engage with protected landscapes to benefit the health and wellbeing of the whole nation. The responsibility for these programmes falls under DEFRA.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[122626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to Tier Three covid-19 restrictions that will be in place from the 2 December 2020, whether an indoor sports facility that would be required to cease group activity and classes are permitted to (a) teach a one-on-one class and (b) hire out their facility for self-directed and socially distant practice.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health, and are a vital weapon against coronavirus. That's why we made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of the first period of enhanced national restrictions and why we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

As the Prime Minister said on 23 November national restrictions will end on Wednesday 2 December, and gyms and sport facilities will reopen across all tiers. Under Tier 3 you must not meet socially indoors or in most outdoor places with anybody you do not live with, or who is not in your support bubble, this includes in any private garden or at most outdoor venues. Gyms and sports facilities will be open for individual exercise and exercise in single households or support bubbles only.

Indoor group activities and exercise classes should not take place. You can continue to do unlimited exercise alone, or in an outdoor public place in groups up to 6.

There are exceptions for the following, which can take place in any number:

- disability sport
- sports as part of the curriculum in education
- supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s (including those who were under 18 on 31 August 2020)

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[119255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of tourism in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of (i) national and (ii) regional tourism.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department regularly assesses economic trends in the tourism sector, including those relating to Government support for tourism in regions across England.

We are working with regional partners to maximise the tourism benefits of hosting the UK City of Culture in Coventry and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. The Government has invested over £15 million to support Coventry's year as UK City of Culture, and my Department is working closely with Coventry City of Culture Trust and partners to continue to ensure Coventry's success as host city.

Between April and July, VisitEngland's £1.3 million Destination Management Organisation Resilience Fund supported local tourism organisations in the West Midlands. The West Midlands Growth Company received £29,866 from the DMO Resilience Fund.

Launched in 2016, the £45m Discover England Fund has supported the development of internationally focused tourism products across England, including the 'England's Waterways' project in the West Midlands.

We are regularly assessing the impact of Government measures to control the spread of Covid-19's on the tourism sector at both a national and regional level. VisitEngland and my officials remain in close contact with regional tourism stakeholders to monitor the situation.

■ Tourism: Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[121050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help support the rural tourism sector in Sussex.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department is taking a number of steps to support the rural tourism sector through COVID-19 and beyond, including in Sussex.

Tourism businesses in Sussex will have benefited from the unprecedented pan-economic measures we have put in place during COVID, including the VAT cut for tourism and hospitality activities, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, various grant and loan schemes, as well as business rates relief for the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.

Launched in 2016, the £45m Discover England Fund has supported the development of internationally focused tourism products across England, including many with a rural focus. The 'England's Coast' project highlights the South East's coastal tourism offer, while the National Park Experience Collection contains rural itineraries for the South Downs National Park.

Between April and July, VisitEngland's £1.3 million Destination Management Organisation Resilience Fund supported local tourism organisations in the West Midlands. Tourism South East received £25,914 from through this fund.

VisitEngland and my officials remain in close contact with regional tourism stakeholders to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and related restrictions. We also continue to work closely with the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs on how we can most effectively support rural tourism's recovery.

■ Young People: Coronavirus**Alberto Costa:**[\[122772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support youth charities and associated services for young people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Government recognises the significant impact of Covid-19 on young people, particularly the most vulnerable, and on the youth services that support them. A £16.5m Youth Covid-19 Support Fund has been announced which will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country.

This funding will be allocated from the Government's unprecedented £750 million package of support which is benefiting tens of thousands of frontline charities, so they can continue their vital work. More than £60 million of this package has already been provided to organisations working with vulnerable children and young people. This is in addition to sports and arts youth groups receiving funding as part of Sport England's (£27m) and the Art Council's (£50m) covid-19 emergency funding packages.

The Youth Investment Fund remains a manifesto commitment for transformative levelling up across the country over the course of the parliament. In the recently announced Spending Review, £30m of this was committed as capital investment for

2021-22. This will provide a transformational investment in new and refurbished safe spaces for young people, so they can access support youth workers, and positive activities out of school, including sport and culture. Further details of the timetable for allocation will be announced in due course.■ Youth Investment Fund

Chris Grayling:

[\[122585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to commence applications for grants under the Youth Investment Fund.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Government recognises the significant impact of Covid-19 on young people, particularly the most vulnerable, and on the youth services that support them. A £16.5m Youth Covid-19 Support Fund has been announced which will protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country.

This funding will be allocated from the Government's unprecedented £750 million package of support which is benefiting tens of thousands of frontline charities, so they can continue their vital work. More than £60 million of this package has already been provided to organisations working with vulnerable children and young people.

The Youth Investment Fund remains a manifesto commitment for transformative levelling up across the country over the course of the parliament. In the recently announced Spending Review, £30m of this was committed as capital investment for 2021-22. This will provide a transformational investment in new and refurbished safe spaces for young people, so they can access support youth workers, and positive activities out of school, including sport and culture. Further details of the timetable for allocation will be announced in due course.

EDUCATION

■ Education: Internet

Wes Streeting:

[\[122807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the major telecoms companies have zero-rated educational websites other than Hungry Little Minds; and what steps he has taken to persuade those companies to do so.

Nick Gibb:

The major telecoms companies have zero-rated the Hungry Little Minds website. This means that users will not incur data charges when accessing this website, except where the content is hosted on a third party site (e.g. an embedded Youtube video). Zero-rating has been put in place on an operator-by-operator basis. Zero rating is a helpful way to provide families with support to access critical resources where the majority of content is held on one website.

To further support disadvantaged households who rely on a mobile internet connection, the Department is working with mobile network operators to help ensure

that disadvantaged and vulnerable families have the data they need to access online educational resources while COVID-19 requires children to learn from home.

In partnership with mobile network operators, the Department is providing a service for schools if they experience disruption to face-to-face education and have identified disadvantaged families who would benefit from free mobile data uplifts to engage in remote education. More providers will be supporting the service before the end of the year and we continue to invite a range of mobile network providers to support the offer.

■ Higher Education: Finance

Jon Trickett:

[\[120789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the value was of the block grant to England's higher education institutions in 2019-20.

Michelle Donelan:

In the academic year 2019/20, the Office for Students distributed £1.3 billion of funding to higher education providers via the teaching grant. The majority of this was allocated via the recurrent teaching grant to fund high-cost courses and specialist providers and to support student access and success for particular student groups. A further £100 million was provided as capital funding in the academic year 2019/20.

■ Literacy: Teaching Methods

Simon Jupp:

[\[112132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Year 2 phonics screening test will be taken during the autumn term.

Nick Gibb:

In the 2020/21 academic year, it is a statutory requirement for schools to administer a past version of the phonics screening check for Year 2 pupils during the second half of the 2020 autumn term.

The autumn assessment will ensure that pupils who need extra support to decode phonics are identified. Those who meet the expected phonics standard will not be required to repeat the assessment. Those who do not meet the expected standard will be expected to retake the statutory check in June 2021, alongside current Year 1 pupils.

Ministry of Education: International Men's Day

Philip Davies:

[\[120000\]](#)

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

Nick Gibb:

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

Work includes preparation for an Employment Bill which, subject to further consultation, will make flexible working the default unless employers have good reason not to; and 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.

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

Civil Service Local events to mark the day were promoted by our staff networks. A virtual panel event was organised by the Black Asian Minority Ethnic Network in Coventry, to commemorate International Men's Day on the importance of role models and men's mental health issues.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Wes Streeting:

[122808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the school attendance figures released under the title Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak: 23 March to 19 November 2020 for each (a) region and (b) local authority area.

Nick Gibb:

The Department intends to publish regional and local authority level data covering the period from September 2020 on 15 December. This data will be included as part of the publication 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak'.

The frequency of the publication 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak' will be reviewed in the new year.

The Department is constantly reviewing the content of its publications. Announcements about future content will be made through the official statistics release page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>.

■ Remote Education

Royston Smith:

[122794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of mandating online school teaching for one week before Christmas holidays to minimise the need for school students and teaching staff to self-isolate over Christmas.

Nick Gibb:

It continues to be the Department's aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time. Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and

academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education and children's future ability to learn.

As set out in the Government's COVID-19 Winter Plan, nurseries, schools and colleges should not change their Christmas holidays or close early this term: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-winter-plan>. Parents should continue to send their children to school during term time. The leaders and staff of education settings have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open, keep settings safe, and provide education.

Schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise risk of COVID-19 transmission. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. Senior clinicians, including the Chief Medical Officers of all four nations, still advise that school is the very best place for children to be.

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

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[116523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) pupils and (b) teachers absent from (i) primary, (ii) secondary and (iii) special schools in each (A) region and (B) local authority area for the weeks beginning (1) 5 October, (2) 12 October, (3) 2 November and (4) 9 November 2020 for which information is available; and if he will publish weekly breakdowns on a monthly basis.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[116524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) special schools are closed due to the covid-19 outbreak in each (i) region and (ii) local authority area for the weeks beginning (A) 5 October, (B) 12 October, (C) 2 November and (D) 9 November 2020; and if he will publish that weekly information on a monthly basis.

Nick Gibb:

We collect data on both the open status of schools, the number of schools that have indicated they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment on a daily basis, and the total number of pupils in attendance. This data is published from this collection at a national level as part of the official statistics series. The publication can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Data is published from 9 September 2020, but prior to 12 October 2020 information on pupils isolating was not collected.

The department intends to publish regional and local authority level data on 15 December. Also, the department intends to publish school workforce attendance data

from the new year. This data will be included as part of the publication 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak'.

The frequency of the publication 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (Covid 19) outbreak' will be reviewed in the new year.

The department is constantly reviewing the content of its publications.

Announcements about future content will be made through the official statistics release page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Mr Steve Baker:

[122675]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to deliver of covid-secure teaching without the use of (a) facemasks and (b) social distancing at special educational needs and disability schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The guidance entitled 'full opening: special schools and other specialist settings' includes details on how settings should put in place proportionate 'System of Control' measures to minimise the risk of transmission, including advice on the use of face masks and managing social distancing. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>. Relevant for all specialist settings, this guidance is informed by advice from Public Health England and is updated, as necessary, to reflect current advice. Based on current evidence and the measures that settings have already put in place, such as the system of controls and consistent bubbles, face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom even where full social distancing is not possible. Face coverings could have a negative impact on teaching and their use in the classroom should currently be avoided.

Mainstream and special schools that teach children in years 7 and above, and which are under tier 1 local restrictions, may decide to recommend the wearing of face coverings for pupils and adults in indoor communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. When an area moves to tier 2 or 3 local restrictions, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils in year 7 and above in communal areas, and when moving around the premises outside of classrooms. This does not apply to those of any age who are exempt, such as those who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties.

Primary school head teachers have the discretion to require adults to wear face coverings in indoor situations where social distancing is difficult to maintain. Primary-aged school children do not need to wear a face covering.

We recognise that maintaining distance or forming bubbles could be particularly difficult in special schools, particularly given the need for staff to administer care and

provide therapies to children and young people. However, the average number of pupils or students attending a special school is much lower than the average number in a mainstream school, and this, in itself, will help to limit the number of contacts for any individual.

Our guidance, entitled 'Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)' provides further support on preventing and controlling infection, including the use of PPE in education, childcare and children's social care settings during the COVID-19 outbreak. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe#what-care-should-be-taken-in-residential-settings-including-residential-schools-residential-special-schools-and-childrens-care-homes>.

■ Speech and Language Therapy: Dudley

Marco Longhi:

[121381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure children in Dudley who require Speech and Language Therapy receive the support they need in schools.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting the most vulnerable children and young people, including those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), is a priority for us, especially at this time. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, educational settings have been asked to ensure that vulnerable children and young people can attend where appropriate.

Through our contract with nasen, we have funded the Whole School SEND consortium to produce information for families and resources for schools, including training to support teachers to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. A range of resources to equip the workforce to deliver high-quality teaching for all types of SEND, including SLCN, can be found at <https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources>. A number of speech and language organisations are members of the Whole School SEND Consortium, including I CAN, Afasic and The Communication Trust.

Speech and language therapists working with children are employed by local authorities, the health service or directly by schools in response to children's and young people's needs in each area, rather than being employed or funded centrally by the department. For this reason, the department does not map services centrally.

Individual local authorities are responsible for their own strategic planning and have statutory requirements to offer SLCN provision where a child or young person requires it as part of their education, health and care plan.

This year we are providing local authorities with £7.2 billion in high needs funding, including an additional £780 million in the 2020-21 financial year.

■ Supply Teachers: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Dan Jarvis:

[122708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring employment agencies representing supply teachers to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) until 31 March 2021 to support individuals and businesses who are impacted by disruption caused by COVID-19 this winter: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#when-furlough>.

The CJRS is open to all employers that meet the eligibility criteria, with no differences in the scheme from sector to sector: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-which-employees-you-can-put-on-furlough-to-use-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

If supply teachers employed via employment agencies are unable to find work due to COVID-19, unable to work as they are clinically extremely vulnerable, or unable to work due to caring responsibilities resulting from COVID-19, their employment agency can claim for 80% of their wages, including during school holiday periods, provided that the usual eligibility criteria are met.

Whether or not an employer wishes to furlough their employees via the CJRS is entirely at the employer's discretion.

Schools in England reopened in full to all pupils in September 2020, with the demand for supply teachers returning to normal levels. The Department has also announced a new COVID-19 workforce fund to support schools that are eligible for the fund with some of the costs of covering staff absences in schools, this can include employing supply staff to cover these absences: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-to-support-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-pandemic>.

■ Teachers: Pay

Kate Green:

[122687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers in earn at least £21,000 per year as at 30 November 2020.

Nick Gibb:

Data relating to November 2020 is currently being collected and will be published in the annual "School workforce in England" statistical release in June 2021. Data for November 2019 showing the number of teachers for each pay band is published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/bdb1f916-27ad-4565-be31-38d397153f2f>.

■ Teachers: Training

Fleur Anderson:

[\[122909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reversing the reduction in teacher training bursaries announced in October 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department reviews the bursaries that we offer for initial teacher training (ITT) before the start of the annual recruitment cycle. In doing this, we take account of a number of factors including forecast economic conditions, previous recruitment, and teacher supply need in each subject. Being able to change bursary amounts gives us the flexibility to respond to the need to attract new teachers and means the Department is spending money where it is needed most.

The Department will next review the bursaries that we offer ahead of the annual recruitment cycle for ITT courses starting in academic year 2022/23.

■ Training: Unemployed People

Jon Trickett:

[\[121146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that recently unemployed individuals are able to acquire new skills.

Gillian Keegan:

The department wants to ensure that a wide range of opportunities are available to people of all ages to meet their future skills needs.

The department has introduced a number of additional measures this year as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, such as through the Plan for Jobs announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in July 2020, and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee announced by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, in September.

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee is aimed at eligible adults, including those that have become unemployed. As part of this, adults who do not currently have a level 3 qualification will be fully funded for their first full level 3 course, enabling participants to access the valuable courses that will help them get ahead in the labour market. This offer will be funded from the National Skills Funding, established to help people learn new skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

The Prime Minister has also announced skills bootcamps, which will be available in 6 areas across the country. The bootcamp training courses will provide valuable skills based on employer demand and are linked to real job opportunities, helping participants to find jobs, and employers to fill much-needed vacancies. We are planning to expand the bootcamps to more of the country from spring 2021, and we want to extend this model to include other technical skills training.

In addition, the government launched The Skills Toolkit in April 2020. This offers a wide range of digital and numeracy courses for all skills levels. Courses are available for free to the public, offering an opportunity for individuals to upskill and build on their

CV. We have recently expanded The Skills Toolkit to increase the range of courses so that people can now choose from over 70 courses, covering digital, adult numeracy, employability and work readiness skills, which have been identified as the skills employers need the most. These courses will help people stay in work or take up new jobs and opportunities.

We are also investing £17 million in the sector-based work academy programme (SWAP) to triple the number of SWAP placements in 2020/21, enough funding to support an extra 40,000 job seekers with additional training opportunities and the chance of a job.

We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), worth £1.34 billion in the 2020/21 financial year. The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship, or further learning.

Our apprenticeship reforms are driving up quality and delivering the skills that employers need. As an incentive to employers to take on new apprentices we are providing a new payment of £2,000 to employers (in England) for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and a payment of £1,500 for each new apprentice an employer hires aged 25 and over, before 31 January 2021. We have also introduced incentive payments, enabling employers to apply for £1000 per learner, for employers who offer traineeship work placement opportunities between 1 September 2020 and 31 July 2021.

■ Uni Connect Programme: Finance

Karin Smyth:

[122780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding Phase 3 of the Uni Connect programme.

Michelle Donelan:

Uni Connect is a 4-year programme which has established 29 regional partnerships between universities, colleges, employers, and other local partners to provide sustained outreach to young people in schools and colleges in areas of low or unexplained gaps in higher education (HE) participation.

The programme is funded at a level of £60 million per academic year, until July 2021, and has enabled local partners to galvanise action around HE outreach, as a supplement to the significant funding that is already spent by HE providers on outreach, as part of their access and participation plans.

The department is considering the approach to future funding of outreach. Decisions about the longer term remain under review.

■ Union Learning Fund

Marsha De Cordova:

[121007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason his Department decided not to make funding available for the Union Learning Fund after March 2020.

Gillian Keegan:

The decision was taken to increase the scale and reach of our offer in response to the challenges facing our changing economy, by consolidating our support in larger, more comprehensive offers.

The Unionlearn model has its limitations. It is reliant on a trade union presence in the workplace, which is more focused on larger employers and does not necessarily reach the unemployed, self-employed, start-ups and many more small and medium-sized businesses that do not have union representation. The 2018 evaluation by Exeter University found only 2% of people supported through Unionlearn were unemployed and 5% were self-employed.

We are focussing on a much larger and more comprehensive package of training support, including the establishment of a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund to help adults get the skills they need, including the Lifetime Skills Guarantee – to support any adult who does not yet have an A-level equivalent qualification to obtain one. This is in addition to the existing entitlement for adults without English and Maths level 2 qualifications or Basic Digital Skills level 1 to get fully funded support to gain these essential qualifications.

As a result, it was decided not to continue to fund the smaller Unionlearn offer but I can confirm all the money will be invested in skills and retraining that will be fully accessible to everyone.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Dogs: Imports

Jonathan Edwards:

[122660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer 25 November 2020 to Question 118511 on Dogs: Imports, what discussions he has had with Eurotunnel on their decision to reduce the number of animals allowed to travel in each vehicle from 20 to five.

Victoria Prentis:

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

consignment sizes in ways not required by the regulations are commercial decisions to which the Government is not party.

It is for carriers, in this case Eurotunnel, to decide whether to introduce any additional conditions on passengers that go beyond the legal requirements in the regulations, including those that relate to travelling with pets.

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

■ Farms: Livestock

Hilary Benn:

[122571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many grazing livestock farms in lowland areas had only (a) sheep and (b) beef cattle, in England in 2019.

Victoria Prentis:

In June 2019, the number of lowland grazing holdings in England with sheep but no beef cattle was 11,766, while the number of holdings with beef cattle but no sheep was 8,553.

■ Fertilisers: Ammonia

Sir Greg Knight:

[122578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to notify and encourage farmers and agronomists to respond to the consultation on reducing ammonia emissions from urea fertilisers; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The consultation on reducing ammonia emissions from solid urea fertilisers was published on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website on 3 November 2020 and runs until 26 January 2021.

Defra issued a press release announcing the consultation launch to national, trade and regional media and covered the news on the [Defra in the Media blog](#). The news was covered in key farming trade journals in early November - Farmers Guardian and Farmers Weekly. I was also interviewed on [Farming Today](#) on 23 November to further encourage participation in the consultation.

We also posted an explainer video across Defra's [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Our content to launch the consultation gained a total of 80,200 impressions, 24,500 video views, and 2,400 engagements, which included 350 clicks to the consultation webpage.

Further communications activity is planned for January ahead of the consultation closing to remind would-be respondents the deadline is approaching. Finally, we will

be holding a series of stakeholder workshops over December and January to ensure we get responses to our consultation on urea fertilisers from those that might be affected most. This will include a separate workshop with farmers, agronomists and other users of solid urea fertilisers planned for later this month.

■ Food: Labelling

Sir Greg Knight:

[122576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to improve food labelling regulations to ensure that the public are adequately informed when salt has been added to products destined for human consumption, wherever and however such products are sold.

Victoria Prentis:

In the UK we maintain high standards on the information that is provided to consumers, including on food labels, through our legislation on the provision of food information to consumers. The fundamental principles of our food labelling rules are that information provided to the consumer must not mislead, must enable consumers to make informed decisions and must enable the safe use of food.

The rules lay out what information must be given to consumers and how it must be provided, including that all ingredients present in food must be indicated in the food's list of ingredients. This means that, other than in very limited circumstances such as unprocessed cheese, the presence of salt as an ingredient in a food must be indicated on a food's list of ingredients. It is also required that the amount of salt in a food is declared in the mandatory nutrition declaration.

In addition to these mandatory requirements indication of salt content is also given on the voluntary front of pack nutritional information panel where one is provided.

After the Transition Period we will also have an opportunity to review food labelling so that consumers have the information they need to have full confidence in the food they buy.

■ Hunting

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[122887]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to prevent trail hunting being used as a cover for fox hunting on public land.

Rebecca Pow:

The Hunting Act 2004 makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal with dogs except where it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act. The full details of the Hunting Act 2004 exemptions are available online at:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/37/schedule/1.

Whether to permit trail hunting is an operational matter for individual landowners.

Those found guilty under the Act are subject to the full force of the law.

This Government will not amend the Hunting Act.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Charities: Development Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[122837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in each year since the formation of the Small Charities Challenge Fund (a) how many applications have been (i) received, (ii) approved or (iii) provisionally approved and (b) how much money has been dispersed.

James Cleverly:

Since the formation of the Small Charities Challenge Fund in July 2017, 771 applications have been submitted, of which 661 applications were eligible for review. To date, 67 applications have been approved with a further 64 applications provisionally approved pending the successful completion of due diligence assessments. The total level of funding disbursed is £2.78 million.

■ China: Organs

Alyn Smith:

[\[121359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the China Tribunal's report entitled Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China Final Judgement and Summary Report, published on 17 June 2020.

Nigel Adams:

We have carefully considered the report produced by the "China Tribunal" initiated by the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (ETAC). The report contains numerous, disturbing allegations of serious human rights abuses, including sexual violence, torture, forced DNA testing, and false imprisonment. The testimonies also add to the growing body of evidence about the disturbing situation that Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs and other minorities are facing in China. The Government's position remains that, if true, the practice of systematic, state-sponsored organ harvesting would constitute a serious violation of human rights. Officials attended public hearings organised by the International Coalition, as well as its final session in which its preliminary findings were announced. The report is one of a number of sources of information that we are taking into account when considering this issue.

Alyn Smith:

[\[121360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on the findings of the China Tribunal's report entitled Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from

Prisoners of Conscience in China Final Judgement and Summary Report, published on 17 June 2020.

Nigel Adams:

We have discussed the allegations of organ harvesting with the World Health Organization, international partners, and international human rights NGOs. The Minister for Human Rights met with the Chair of the Tribunal in November 2019. The Minister has also written to the WHO in Geneva to encourage them to give careful consideration to the findings of the China Tribunal report. We regularly raise our human rights concerns with China, including on the treatment of religious and ethnic minorities. The Foreign Secretary has personally raised our serious concerns around human rights with his Chinese counterpart on a number of occasions.

■ **Commonwealth: Veterans**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[122839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate the Government has made of the number of commonwealth veterans and their families who worked for UK armed forces before their countries gained independence who are now living in poverty.

Nigel Adams:

It is estimated that there are just over 11,600 older people from Commonwealth or former Commonwealth countries who served in the British Armed Forces prior to their countries gaining independence. Of this number, it is known that around 7,000 are living in absolute poverty.

Of these, 6,054 are eligible for the FCDO's Commonwealth Veteran's Programme. Through this programme, the FCDO provides regular cash transfers to Commonwealth veterans and their widows and widowers in 29 countries to ensure they receive the equivalent of two healthy meals a day to prevent them from going hungry.

■ **Commonwealth: Veterans and War Widows**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[122838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) veterans and (b) widows of veterans have been supported through the Commonwealth Veterans Programme to date this financial year.

Nigel Adams:

Through the Commonwealth Veteran's Programme, FCDO provides regular cash transfers to Commonwealth veterans and their widows and widowers in 29 countries to ensure they receive the equivalent of two healthy meals a day to prevent them from going hungry.

Disbursements are currently underway for this financial year (April 2020 to March 2021). To date, 2,293 veterans and 2,279 widows of veterans have received support.

We do not track the number of households benefitting from this programme, because support is made on an individual basis.

■ **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

Lisa Nandy: [\[122676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2020 to Question 91634 on Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, what progress has been made by the Government in its assessment of its position on ratification of Protocol V.

James Cleverly:

The comprehensive cross-Government review of Protocol V ratification continues. We hope to conclude shortly, after which we will be in a position to update more fully. The UK already abides by the spirit of the protocol and existing UK Armed Forces operational policy and practice are in line with obligations. We remain committed to its humanitarian aims.

■ **Coronavirus: Overseas Aid**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[122841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £1.3 billion of new UK aid committed in response to covid-19 since the start of the pandemic has been dispersed.

James Cleverly:

The UK is one of the largest donors to the international response to the COVID-19 crisis. Of our commitment of up to £1.3 billion, over £700 million has already been dispersed to address the health, humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in the world's poorest countries.

Almost half of our £1.3 billion is the UK's commitment of up to £500 million for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which will help supply 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 92 developing countries in 2021.

■ **Development Aid**

Sarah Champion: [\[122710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the UK's financial obligations to the EU are, after 31 December 2020, in relation to transfers of funding classified as Official Development Assistance, by financial year.

Wendy Morton:

In the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK committed to contribute its share of the current EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 - including Heading IV ODA, and the off-budget European Development Fund (EDF), the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) and the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

The EDF contributions include the UK's share of the EDF 11 (grants) and allocations to the European Investment Bank's investment facility through its external mandate (outside EU).

The actual total spend of the UK ODA commitment to the Heading IV and the EDF will be calculated, audited and officially reported on once those programmes are implemented and finalised and the total UK commitments fulfilled. The annual spend will depend on the speed of implementation for the EU led programming as well as overall exchange rate fluctuations.

Sarah Champion:

[122711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding classified as Official Development Assistance will remain to be transferred after 31 December 2020 to the (a) the Multi-annual Financial Framework, (b) European Investment Bank, (c) European Central Bank, (d) Facility for Refugees in Turkey, (e) EU Trust Funds, (f) European Development Fund via the (i) Grant Facility and (ii) Investment Facility and (g) other EU managed or administered funds or instruments, by the financial year of those future transfers.

Wendy Morton:

In the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK committed to contribute its share of the current EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 - including Heading IV ODA, and the off-budget European Development Fund (EDF), the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) and the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

The EDF contributions include the UK's share of the EDF 11 (grants) and allocations to the European Investment Bank's investment facility through its external mandate (outside EU).

The actual total spend of the UK ODA commitment to the Heading IV and the EDF will be calculated, audited and officially reported on once those programmes are implemented and finalised and the total UK commitments fulfilled. The annual spend will depend on the speed of implementation for the EU led programming as well as overall exchange rate fluctuations.

Helen Hayes:

[122810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's spend on international development has been in each month since August 2019, by country in receipt.

James Cleverly:

The Statistics on International Development National Statistics report, published on the GOV.UK website, provides an overview of all official UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

ODA is an international measure and is collected and reported on a calendar year basis. The latest data available (for 2019) is available in Table A4f - "Total UK Bilateral ODA by Country and Government Department and Other Contributor of UK ODA":

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920053/Table-A4f.ods

It is not possible to disaggregate these figures by month. UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021, via Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office publishes regular open data through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). This operational data covers current live programmes and will include 2020 spend. The raw data can be accessed at IATI Registry and is shown on the Development Tracker website: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/>

Helen Hayes:

[122811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department spent on (a) healthcare, (b) education, (c) climate and (d) other international development programmes in each month since August 2019, by type of project in receipt of that funding.

James Cleverly:

The Statistics on International Development (SID) National Statistics report, published on the gov.uk website, provides an overview of all official UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

ODA is an international measure and is collected and reported on a calendar year basis. It is not possible to disaggregate these figures by month. UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021, via Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020.

SID is collected and reported in line with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reporting directives, therefore using the OECD sector categories. There are distinct sector categories for Health and Education. The table below presents Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) bilateral ODA for 2019:

FCDO Bilateral ODA: 2019

	BILATERAL ODA SPEND
Education	£751m
Health	£1,103m
Other Bilateral ODA	£5,853m
Total FCDO Bilateral ODA	£7,706m

Source: Statistics on International Development: UK Aid spend 2019

FCDO's International Climate Finance (ICF) spend is published annually via the Department's Annual Report and Accounts. In 2019/20, FCDO ICF spend was £761 million.

FCDO publishes regular open data through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). This operational data covers current live programmes and will include 2020 spend. The raw data can be accessed at IATI Registry and is shown on the Development Tracker website: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/>

Helen Hayes:

[122812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the reduction in official development assistance in 2020-21 to date compared with the same date in (a) 2018-19 and (b) 2019-20.

James Cleverly:

As the Chancellor has set out, like many other nations across the world the UK is experiencing a severe economic downturn as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the expected fall in Gross National Income this year, a package of £2.9 billion in reductions to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget was agreed by the Prime Minister on 20 July. As normal, there will continue to be adjustments in-year to individual departmental ODA spend to meet the 0.7 per cent target this year. We are taking the tough decision to spend 0.5 per cent of our national income next year on ODA, rather than the usual 0.7 per cent. The Government intends to return to the 0.7 per cent target when the fiscal situation allows. The Statistics for International Development will, as usual, provide a full breakdown of the UK's ODA spend in 2020.

■ Development Aid: Disclosure of Information

Preet Kaur Gill:

[122840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his oral contribution of 26 November 2020, Official Report column 1020, that he will strengthen accountability and value for money, what steps he is taking to ensure that official development assistance is spent only through Government Departments achieving a (a) good and (b) very good on the Aid Transparency Index.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government recognises that transparency can help deliver better value for money, and we will continue to be accountable to Parliament and to taxpayers for how we spend UK aid. To support this, following the Chancellor's statement announcing the outcome of the Spending Review, the Foreign Secretary announced he will run a cross-government review to agree Official Development Assistance allocations across Whitehall, by the end of the calendar year, to ensure a coherent approach. Alongside this, the HMG Transparency Community of Practice has established a good exchange of learning between aid-spending departments to improve aid transparency and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) will continue to build on this. FCDO is committed to improving transparency

of aid globally and maintaining our high standards for overseas spending and will continue to promote this across HMG.

■ **Development Aid: EU Action**

Sarah Champion:

[\[122713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) assessment he has made of and (b) representations he has received on the potential merits of an off-budget joint EU/UK contractual facility established via the EU's external assigned revenue procedure (under Article 21 of the Financial Regulation) to enable the allocation of official development assistance to common strategic priorities; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

Beyond our commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK has no plans to contribute financially to EU international development programmes under the next EU budget (2021-27) via external assigned revenue or any other procedure. Now that the UK has left the EU, and as we meet our commitments under the Withdrawal Agreement, we will take decisions on where to direct UK ODA based on the conclusions of the upcoming Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

■ **Ethiopia: Armed Conflict**

Duncan Baker:

[\[122901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to encourage the Ethiopian Government to cease hostilities, especially in Tigray Province to prevent an escalation of the conflict and civil war and; what support his Department has offered to help guarantee unhindered humanitarian access and the restoration of basic services in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned by the violence between federal and regional forces in the Tigray region. The Foreign Secretary called Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November to raise our concerns and stress the urgent need for de-escalation and for unfettered humanitarian access. He reiterated these messages when he met Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 25 November. I also reiterated this in my tweets of 24 and 19 November and when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador in London on 18 November. We will continue to track the situation and to raise with the Government of Ethiopia and regional leaders these concerns, our concerns about civilian deaths and casualties, and the importance of respect for human rights.

We are contributing to UN-led planning efforts for Tigray. It is important that agreement between the UN and the Ethiopian Government, which permits access to government controlled areas of Tigray, also quickly paves the way for unfettered access to those areas that remain contested. We are in close contact with UK-funded humanitarian agencies there to understand humanitarian needs and what programme

adaptations are required, as well as monitoring the regional situation. In Ethiopia, the UK provides funds to the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) Ethiopian Humanitarian Fund, to provide food assistance, shelter, water and sanitation, health, nutrition and protection support. In Sudan, flexible UK funding to WFP and the UNHCR is already helping new refugees from Ethiopia to receive emergency assistance, including shelter and food. These agencies have proven themselves capable of working in high risk contexts, in Ethiopia and elsewhere, and for managing UK funds adeptly.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Credit Unions**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to require his Department and its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office does not have a facility to allow staff to join a credit union through payroll deductions and it is not a service that our staff have requested we consider.

■ **Frontiir: CDC**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[122730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his recent correspondence with Burma Campaign UK, whether the Commonwealth Development Commission has been instructed to withdraw its financial support for Frontiir.

Nigel Adams:

CDC Group's (CDC) investment in Frontiir has helped connect over one million people in Myanmar to the internet at affordable prices, thereby increasing access to information, boosting businesses, supporting education and tackling poverty. We support CDC's ongoing commitment to this investment.

CDC carries out due diligence in every investment it makes, including Frontiir. Frontiir has at all times adhered to international best practice and the company has become an observer of the Global Network Initiative at CDC's request. The UK remains committed to our efforts with partners to strengthen due diligence processes and raise any concerns, whilst continuing to support investment to benefit the people of Myanmar.

■ Gibraltar: UK Relations with EU**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[121184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development, whether any agreement on the future relationship between the UK and the EU will include Gibraltar.

Wendy Morton:

The UK continues to negotiate for the whole UK family, which includes Gibraltar. We remain fully committed to finding a solution that supports Gibraltar, its people and its economy.

The UK and the Government of Gibraltar have held a number of constructive discussions with Spain on this issue. It is clearly in all parties' interests to find a solution, to ensure ongoing well-being and prosperity in the region.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power**Stephen Morgan:**[\[121347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the outcome of the US presidential elections in November 2020 on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

James Cleverly:

President-elect Biden has said that if Iran returns to compliance with the deal the US would re-enter the agreement and seek to both strengthen it and extend it. This is an important opportunity to look again at the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) under the new Biden administration. We remain clear that Iran must reverse its systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA and want to address this through the Dispute Resolution Mechanism and at a Joint Commission of JCPOA participants.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Caroline Ansell:**[\[121871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of (a) the Israeli NGO Save a Child's Heart and (b) other peaceful coexistence projects on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK does not provide financial assistance to Save a Child's Heart and has not made a recent assessment of the charity's effectiveness. The UK supports work in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to improve the lives of Palestinians and is supportive of peaceful coexistence projects as a way to improve understanding between people on both sides of the conflict and help build support for a peaceful, negotiated resolution. Ultimately, the only way to achieve coexistence is through a negotiated two-state solution that delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

■ **Palestinians: Development Aid**

Sarah Champion:

[\[122714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what access the UK will have to the EU PEGASE mechanism for providing assurance in relation to overseas development assistance allocated to the Palestinian Authority for paying salaries in the Authority's health and education services after the end of the transition period.

James Cleverly:

The UK has been supporting the Palestinian Authority's health and education sectors through the EU PEGASE mechanism. Salary payments have been transferred to a dedicated bank account and are then paid to carefully vetted individuals. Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient.

At the end of the transition period, the UK will be able to continue to access the PEGASE mechanism as this is available for use by both EU and non-EU member states.

■ **Syria: Overseas Aid**

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[121856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in the overseas aid budget on aid spending in Syria.

James Cleverly:

Tackling the humanitarian impact of the Syria Crisis, in Syria itself and neighbouring countries hosting refugees, remains a priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The FCDO is currently running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes, to ensure that every pound we spend goes as far as possible and makes a world-leading difference. As this process is in its early stages, we are unable to assess the impact on the UK's aid spending in Syria.

The UK has been one of the largest donors to the humanitarian response to the Syria Crisis. Since 2012, we have committed over £3.3 billion to help Syrians displaced and vulnerable within their country, and Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. This includes a pledge of at least £300 million for 2020 at this year's Brussels conference. In his statement to the House of Commons on 26 November, the Foreign Secretary stated that resolving conflicts and alleviating humanitarian crises will be focus areas for Official Development Assistance.

■ Ukraine: Famine

Theresa Villiers:

[\[122623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will support the Government of Ukraine to raise international awareness of the deaths that occurred during the Holodomor of 1932-33.

Wendy Morton:

The Holodomor was a horrific, man-made disaster of unimaginable scale. We recognise the human tragedy that occurred and its importance in the history of Ukraine and Europe. The UK remembers this tragic event each year. In the absence of a large-scale commemoration this year due to COVID-19, the British Ambassador to Ukraine paid her respects and laid flowers at the Holodomor memorial in Kyiv.

On 28 November 2020, I tweeted a message in remembrance of the victims of Holodomor, and paid tribute to those keeping their memories alive. We will continue to raise international awareness of the appalling famine brought about by Soviet policies 87 years ago.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Drugs

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[\[117179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many meetings the Government has had with the Care Quality Commission to monitor the evidence on the safety of abortion pills taken at home since 30 March 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Government has had four meetings with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to monitor the evidence on the safety of abortion pills taken at home since 30 March 2020.

The Department continues to closely monitor the impact of the temporary approval for women's homes to be classed as a place where both sets of medication for early medical abortion can be taken up to 10 weeks gestation. Officials have regular meetings on abortion issues more generally at which the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the CQC and abortion service providers are present and the evidence on the safety of abortion pills taken at home may have been discussed at these meeting in addition to the meetings outlined.

■ Addictions: Health Services

Ben Bradley:

[\[121003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve addiction support services in the most disadvantaged communities.

Jo Churchill:

The Government will provide additional funding over 2020/21 to 2021/22 to drug and alcohol treatment in targeted local authorities to individuals experiencing rough sleeping, including those currently in emergency accommodation following the COVID-19 response. The second phase of Dame Carol Black's independent review on drugs focusing on prevention, treatment services and recovery, will be made available to Ministers later this year and will feed into wider Government work to tackle the serious harms caused by substance misuse.

■ Baby Care Units: Coronavirus**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[94484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 June 2020 to Question 64381 on Baby Care Units: Coronavirus, if he will make it his policy for rapid testing for parents of babies in neonatal care to be prioritised in line with the recommendations of the First Report of the Petitions Committee of Session 2019-21, entitled The impact of Covid-19 on maternity and parental leave, HC 526, published on 6 July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It is essential that the mother and her partner are never considered to be visitors within the neonatal unit – they are partners in their baby's care and their presence should be encouraged. The mother and her newborn should have unrestricted contact when admission to a neonatal unit is unavoidable. The same arrangements for COVID-19 testing should be offered to parents as are applied to staff, in order to minimise unnecessary separation. This includes testing of symptomatic parents and testing of suspected contacts. An asymptomatic mother who is awaiting the result of routine COVID-19 admission screening should usually be allowed to attend her baby in the neonatal unit and to provide skin to skin care.

■ Bingo: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[119979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the risk of covid-19 spreading in bingo halls when hygiene and social distancing measures are followed.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Hygiene and social distancing measures are vitally important for reducing the transmission risk of COVID-19. We know that the virus spreads readily in any indoor environment where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together, so the transmission risk in indoor settings, such as bingo halls, remains high.

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

■ British Medical Journal: Publications**Sir Christopher Chope:****[111409]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Minister for Patient Safety, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention's oral contribution of 22 October 2020, Official Report, Col 1337, if he will place in the House of Commons Library a copy of the British Medical Journal article to which the Minister referred; and what the date of the evidence was on which that article was based.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Further to the debate on 22 October, we have arranged for the record to be corrected.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Martyn Day:****[118544]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 108268 on Cannabis: Medical Treatment, what work his Department is undertaking with (a) NHS England, (b) NHS Improvement and (c) the National Institute of Health Research to develop a greater evidence base for cannabis-based medicinal products; and what the planned timeframe is for making progress in that area of medicine.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) has identified research on cannabis-based medicinal products as a priority and has issued two calls for research applications in this area.

NHS England and NHS Improvement and the NIHR are developing a programme of two randomised controlled trials into early onset and genetic generalised epilepsy.

These will compare Cannabidiol (CBD) only and CBD plus delta-9-

Tetrahydrocannabinol containing medicines to placebo. The aim is to design safe and scientifically robust trials for adults and children with severe epilepsy, including those patients currently using cannabis-based medicinal products.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Liz Twist:****[106453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the mental health effects of restrictions on care home visits during the covid-19 outbreak on care home residents suffering from (a) Alzheimers and (b) dementia-related diseases.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the hardship visiting restrictions pose for people with Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases.

We want to enable residents in care homes to have visits, while protecting them, other residents, staff and visitors from COVID-19. Clinical advice is clear that extra

footfall in care homes increases risk. That is why we have published guidance to advise care homes on visiting during this period of new national restrictions, and how to reduce the risk. This guidance is intended to enable visiting, recognising the benefits to health and wellbeing of both residents and their loved ones.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[109191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has issued guidance to care homes on prohibiting window visits by relatives.

Helen Whately:

Receiving visitors is a very important part of care home life. Maintaining some opportunities for visiting to take place is critical for supporting the health and wellbeing of residents and their relationships with friends and family.

On 5 November we published guidance to enable COVID-19-secure visits to take place for care home residents while national restrictions are in force. This guidance encourages providers, supported by local professionals, families and the wider community, to provide appropriate visiting opportunities, that balance these important benefits against the continued priority of preventing infections to protect staff and residents.

This guidance states that window visits can take place.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[110107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of potential merits of introducing a safe visiting scheme in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: We recognise how important it is for care home residents to see their loved ones, especially for those at the end of their lives.

On Thursday 5 November we published guidance to enable COVID-19 secure visits to take place for care home residents while national restrictions are in place.

This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus>

Plans are currently being developed to allow specific family and friends to visit care homes supported by testing. We have begun rollout of visitor testing, and aim to have nationwide visitor testing by Christmas.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[99148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he has made available to unpaid carers to alleviate the added financial pressure of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognise the vital role unpaid carers play, and the pressures they are facing due to COVID-19. The Department for Work and Pensions introduced two important temporary measures in the spring to help unpaid carers through the COVID19 pandemic:

- unpaid carers are able to continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they have a temporary break in caring, because they or the person they care for gets coronavirus or if either have to isolate because of it.

- providing 'emotional support' rather than just more traditional forms of care to a disabled person will also now count towards the Carer's Allowance threshold of 35 hours of care a week.

These provisions have been extended until 12 May 2021. This will allow unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance who need some extra flexibility in the way they provide care during the current emergency, so as to continue to protect themselves and the people they are caring for. We continue to work with carer organisations and others to identify and respond to the needs of carers during the pandemic.

■ Carers: Recruitment**Jim Shannon:**[\[91972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to recruit additional carer staff to care homes and care services.

Helen Whately:

In order to attract more people to the sector we ran a national recruitment campaign across broadcast, digital and social media highlighting the vital work care workers do. We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions to promote adult social care careers to jobseekers, including those who may have lost their jobs during the pandemic from other sectors that have been hard hit, such as tourism, hospitality and retail. Additionally, to support providers to recruit, we have launched an online recruitment tool, Join Social Care, to simplify and fast track the recruitment process, and are offering free and rapid induction training via Skills for Care for new and existing staff and volunteers.

■ Coronavirus: Birmingham Edgbaston**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[121331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, where people in Birmingham, Edgbaston constituency will be able to access a long covid clinic.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have provided £10 million to fund over 40 pioneering 'long COVID-19' specialist clinics including ten in the North Midlands region. The plans for these clinics were published on 15 November and commissioning guidance was made available on 6 November.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have committed to ensuring post-COVID-19 syndrome assessment clinics will be made available from early December 2020. In response, each integrated care system is working towards the provision of at least one such service in each system, though the exact location for each system is yet to be detailed.

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

■ **Coronavirus: Car Washes**

Giles Watling:

[\[113634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to exempt car washes from future covid-19 restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: Car washes are not considered as an essential service. From 2 December, essential and non-essential retail, including indoor and outdoor markets and car boot sales, can remain open in all tiers. All businesses and venues that are open are expected to follow COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect customers, visitors and workers.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[100885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his oral contribution of 1 October 2020, Official Report, Column 503, if he will publish the evidence in support of his statement that hundreds of thousands of deaths would follow if the Government just let the virus rip; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 October 2020]: In March 2020, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and the Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team published their paper, 'Impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to reduce COVID-19 mortality and healthcare demand.' This conducted research and analysis into a variety of public health measures, including so-called non-pharmaceutical interventions, aimed at reducing contact rates in the population and thereby reducing transmission of the virus. This research, which was the best assessment of the evidence at the time of writing of a reasonable worst-case scenario, was crucial in the decision to implement NPIs.

Sarah Owen:

[\[118114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's preparations between June and September 2020 for a second wave of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: Since the initial pandemic peak, the Government has assessed and managed the impact of COVID-19 on the wider health and care agenda. This included agreeing approaches to managing service backlogs whilst also planning for winter and a successful European Union exit transition period.

During the summer the Government continued to work on the response to COVID-19 by developing the health and social care plan to ensure readiness. This has included £3 billion of additional funding to support the National Health Service announced on the 17 July and a further £450 million of capital funding.

Justin Madders:[\[121858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) scientific and (b) medical advice he has received in respect of families meeting over the Christmas period.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 2 December 2020]: Throughout this crisis, senior medical and scientific advisors have provided robust scientific evidence and advice to guide decisions regarding the measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has also undertaken significant wider analysis and evaluation to inform decisions. This includes consideration of the Christmas period.

The measures taken have been effective at slowing the virus while balancing the need to protect the economy. Ahead of what will be a challenging winter, the Government will continue to take swift action to combat the spread of the virus.

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

■ Coronavirus: Greater Manchester**Jim McMahon:**[\[102137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 source transmissions have been associated with attendance at funerals in each Greater Manchester authority area since 1 March 2020; what proportion of all transmissions in each Greater Manchester authority area in that time period those transmissions represented; and what the proportions were of those transmissions in other settings in each Greater Manchester authority area in that time period.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 October 2020]: The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Hospitality Industry

Jon Trickett: [\[121148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance issued by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England which informed the decision to reopen gyms, pools and leisure centres across all covid-19 tiered areas from 3 December 2020.

Jon Trickett: [\[121149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance issued by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England which informed the decision to reopen all non-essential retail settings across all covid-19 tiered areas from 3 December 2020.

Jon Trickett: [\[121150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance issued by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England which informed the decision to keep pubs and restaurants closed in those parts of the UK placed in tier 3 covid-19 restrictions from 3 December 2020.

Jon Trickett: [\[121151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance issued by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England which informed the decision to allow crowds of up to 4,000 and 2,000 in tier 1 and tier 2 areas respectively to return to sporting events from 3 December 2020.

Jon Trickett: [\[121152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) advice and (b) guidance provided by (i) the Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England which informed the decision to allow pubs and restaurants to open only as a takeaway service under tier 2 covid-19 restrictions from 3 December 2020.

Caroline Lucas: [\[121227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the modelling his Department holds on the effect of the relaxation of covid-19 restrictions over Christmas on covid-19 transmission rates in each of the three local restriction tiers.

Jane Stevenson: [\[121362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the rate of transmission is of covid-19 in hospitality settings.

Jane Stevenson: [\[121363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the scientific basis is for closing hospitality venues in areas with Tier 3 restrictions for covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: The Government is committed to publishing data that has informed its decision making, including the tier allocations. The Department publishes a weekly watchlist giving epidemiological COVID-19 data for each lower tier local authority in England. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-cases-by-local-authority-epidemiological-data>

Detailed data on hospital activity is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/>

Our public dashboard on the progress of the virus across a range of metrics is updated every day at the following link:

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

The Contain framework sets out how national and local partners work with the public at a local level to prevent, contain and manage outbreaks, this includes through allocation of areas to the appropriate tier which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

Epidemiological data and projection models on local restriction tiers, including commentary on individual tier allocation decisions, which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938964/Coronavirus_England_briefing_26_November.pdf

This provides further information and context beyond the headline metrics as to why areas are in particular tiers currently. We have also published supporting documents, to accompany the most recent regulations laid before Parliament. These are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-economic-and-social-effects-of-covid-19-and-the-tiered-approach>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1374/contents/made>

■ Coronavirus: Lung Diseases**Jim Shannon:****[120871]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is being provided to people who have suffered lung damage as a result of contracting covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Breathlessness is one of the main symptoms of post-COVID-19 syndrome. In October, NHS England announced that more than 40 clinics will be set up in England

to offer a specialist response to the issues faced by patients experiencing post-COVID-19 syndrome.

Respiratory Networks are already involved in the response to COVID-19 and these networks may be used to assist with help being offered at the new post-COVID-19 clinics.

■ **Dementia: Swimming**

Jim Shannon:

[\[91971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) Royal College of Nursing and (b) other bodies on the potential merits of cold-water swimming in reducing dementia.

Helen Whately:

The Department has had no discussions with the Royal College of Nursing or other bodies on the potential merits of cold-water swimming in reducing dementia.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**

Justin Madders:

[\[122758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 113131, tabled on 6 November 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Justin Madders:

[\[122759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 109428, tabled on 28 October 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Edward Argar:

We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's questions will be answered as soon as possible.

■ **Diabetes: Coronavirus**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[106949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of people with diabetes meeting the NICE recommended HbA1c treatment target during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Extra measures have been put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic so that people living with diabetes can continue to access

support, including commissioning services to help people with diabetes of all ages self-manage their condition using online digital structured education programmes.

From 2020/21 through to 2023/24, a further £75 million of targeted funding is planned for allocation to sustainability and transformation partnerships and integrated care systems to support delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan commitments relating to the treatment and care of people living with diabetes which includes activities to improve achievement of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's recommended treatment targets.

■ **Drugs: UK Trade with EU**

Alex Norris:

[\[121341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on the pharmaceutical industry of a mutual recognition agreement on (a) good manufacturing practice and (b) batch certification not being agreed by EU and the UK.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: Both the European Union and the United Kingdom are committed to agreeing a future partnership by the end of 2020 and are working to achieve this.

In the event of an agreement not being reached with the EU, the UK will continue to recognise certification issued from European Economic Area (EEA) countries confirming compliance with the standards of good manufacturing practice and also accept batch testing done from EEA countries for a period of two years after the end of the transition period, until 1 January 2023. This will provide time for industry to adapt supply chains to future UK regulatory requirements.

■ **Health Services: Coronavirus**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[119971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it the policy of the Government to reimburse patients who have to incur costs in accessing procedures which are currently unavailable through the NHS as a result of covid-19 restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: There are no plans to reimburse patients who have incurred costs in accessing procedures unavailable through the National Health Service as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

The NHS is working in partnership with private hospitals in the United Kingdom to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the Independent Healthcare Providers Network and with independent sector providers themselves to secure all appropriate inpatient capacity and other resource across England. These services are provided to NHS

patients free at the point of delivery with private hospitals being reimbursed on a cost recovery basis.

■ **Hospital Beds: Private Sector**

Karin Smyth: [\[119273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October to Question 97626 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, what payments have been made under each of the 26 Contracts placed through the Contract Award 492193-2020.

Karin Smyth: [\[119274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October to Question 97626 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, what payment mechanisms were agreed under the 26 Contracts placed through the Contract Award 492193-2020.

Karin Smyth: [\[119275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October to Question 97626 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, whether the payment arrangements under the 26 Contracts placed through the Contract Award 492193-2020 used the NHS Contract.

Karin Smyth: [\[119276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October to Question 97626 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, whether the payment arrangements under the 26 Contracts placed through the Contract Award 492193-2020 met the requirements for Commissioners to pay Providers in accordance with the National Tariff.

Karin Smyth: [\[119277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October to Question 97626 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, how many of the Contracts placed through the Contract Award 492193-2020 have been extended beyond the date of conclusion of the contract as stated in the Contract Award Notice.

Karin Smyth: [\[119278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 October to Question 97626 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, what the total amounts paid to the Contractors under the 26 Contracts placed through the Contract Award 492193-2020 are to date.

Edward Argar:

A Contract Award Notice in respect of each of the 26 individual contracts entered into by NHS England with independent sector hospital providers was published on 16 October 2020 by the Official Journal of the European Union.

It provides an estimate of the payments to each provider until their termination from the national contract or until the contract ends on 31 December 2020. These

payments are estimates based on agreed criteria as they are subject to final additional review and validation. These do not take place until after the contracts are terminated

All of the 26 contracts are in the form of the NHS Standard Contract, with certain amendments and derogations to reflect concessions being applied to National Health Service providers of the same types of services and to reflect the specifics of the agreed payment and other arrangements and the circumstances in which and for which the contracts were awarded

The contracts placed through the award do meet the requirements for commissioners to pay providers in accordance with the National Tariff. To the extent they relate to payment for services delivered they constitute a combination of local variations and local prices within the rules and principles as set out in the National Tariff.

No contracts have been extended. When the contracts were entered into their expiry dates were uncertain but they provide for termination, at NHS England's option, on one month's notice. A number have since been terminated through that mechanism.

The total paid up to 23 November 2020 is £1,404,512,878. This only includes those payments that have been made through the central process and does not include anything paid under local contracts through clinical commissioning groups, regions or providers.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Tim Loughton:

[120764]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that measures to limit the transmission of covid-19 in hospitals does not lead to the separation of mothers and babies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: Measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in hospitals should not lead to unnecessary separation of mother and babies.

The Department expects clinicians to provide care in keeping with clinical guidelines. Guidance on COVID-19 infection in pregnancy published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of Midwives states that women and their healthy babies should be kept together in the immediate postpartum period if they do not otherwise require maternal critical care or neonatal care. Women with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be supported to remain together with their baby and to practice skin-to-skin/kangaroo care, if the newborn does not require additional medical care.

Guidance produced by the British Association of Perinatal Medicine sets out that a mother and her newborn should have unrestricted contact when admission to a neonatal unit is unavoidable.

■ Kidney Diseases: British Nationals Abroad

Julie Elliott:

[\[121250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of (a) situation for travellers to the EU with kidney disease after 31 December 2020 and (b) level of health insurance coverage regarding the reimbursement of the cost of dialysis.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: People in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement will continue to have reciprocal healthcare entitlements, including a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This means existing healthcare arrangements will not change for those United Kingdom nationals who are resident in the European Union and EU citizens in the UK before 31 December 2020.

The future of reciprocal healthcare arrangements between the UK and EU are subject to negotiations, which are currently ongoing. As part of its published approach to the negotiations with the EU, the UK has indicated that it is open to working with the EU to establish arrangements that provide healthcare cover for tourists, short-term business visitors and service providers. Such arrangements would support those requiring treatments such as dialysis.

■ Members: Correspondence

Geraint Davies:

[\[117163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letter from the AGP Alliance, dated 25 September 2020, on definitions of aerosol-generating procedures and personal protective equipment for healthcare professionals.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: We are working rapidly to provide all Members and external correspondants with accurate answers to their correspondence, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The AGP Alliance's letter will be answered as soon as possible.

■ Mental Health: Children and Young People

Tim Loughton:

[\[120766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department collects data on access to specialist children and young people's mental health provision disaggregated by users' ages; and what steps he has taken to ensure equality of access for children of different ages.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: This information is collected by NHS Digital via the mental health services dataset. However, data cannot be provided in the format requested until an agreed methodology is in place based on recent changes to the way the data is collected.

■ **NHS: Drugs****Alex Norris:**[\[121340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to maintain the regulatory system for pharmaceutical medicines at the end of the transition period.

Ms Nadine Dorries:*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:*

At the end of the transition period, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) will be the United Kingdom's medicines regulator while acknowledging the special provisions that will apply in Northern Ireland for as long as the Northern Ireland Protocol is in force.

On 27 October 2020 the MHRA published guidance on the licensing regulatory system for pharmaceutical medicines that will apply after the transition period. A statutory instrument, setting out the regulatory environment for medicines from 1 January 2020, is currently before Parliament.

■ **NHS: Land****Jon Trickett:**[\[120795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the value of NHS land sold since 2010.

Edward Argar:

The data held by the Department on the value of National Health Service land sold prior to 2015-16 is taken from relevant annual report and accounts. Since 2015-16, the NHS Surplus Land Collection has reported the value of land sold. The 2019-20 edition of this collection is due to be published on NHS Digital's website on 10 December 2020. The available information since 2010 is shown in the following table.

YEAR	NBV ¹ OF LAND AND BUILDINGS SOLD (£ MILLION)	SOURCE
2010-11	69.8	Department of Health Annual Report and Accounts NHS (England) Summarised Accounts NHS Foundation Trusts: Consolidated Accounts
2011-12	76.7	Department of Health Annual Report and Accounts NHS (England) Summarised Accounts
2012-13	55.0	Department of Health Annual Report and Accounts

YEAR	NBV ¹ OF LAND AND BUILDINGS SOLD (£ MILLION)	SOURCE
2013-14	62.5	Department of Health Annual Report and Accounts
2014-15	68.6	Department of Health Annual Report and Accounts
2015-16	172.0	NHS Surplus Land Collection 2015-16
2016-17	116.4	NHS Surplus Land Collection 2016-17
2017-18	163.3	NHS Surplus Land Collection 2017-18
2018-19	499.0	NHS Surplus Land Collection 2018-19
Total	1,283.3	

Note:

¹ the value of an asset, taking into account, diminutions, depreciations, and other accounting charges, as recorded in the accounts of its owner.

■ NHS: Midwives

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[116451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his department has made of the number of full time equivalent NHS midwives there were in England per head of population in each year from 2009.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[116452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent NHS midwives there were in England in each year from 2009.

Helen Whately:

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

The following table below shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) HCHS midwives per 100,000 of the population as at September each year since 2009, along with the latest data, July 2020.

	ENGLAND POPULATION ESTIMATE	HCHS MIDWIVES FTE	HCHS MIDWIVES PER 100,000 OF POPULATION
September 2009	52,196,381	18,959	36.3
September 2010	52,642,452	19,487	37.0
September 2011	53,107,169	19,878	37.4
September 2012	53,493,729	20,214	37.8
September 2013	53,865,817	20,537	38.1
September 2014	54,316,618	20,838	38.4
September 2015	54,786,327	20,934	38.2
September 2016	55,268,067	21,038	38.1
September 2017	55,619,430	21,206	38.1
September 2018	55,977,178	21,323	38.1
September 2019	56,286,961	21,636	38.4
July 2020	56,678,000	22,049	38.9

Source: NHS Digital, National Health Service HCHS workforce statistics

Note:

Midwife to population ratios are derived from population estimates made by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The figure given for 2020 is a 2018-based national population projection produced by ONS.

■ NHS: Pay

Justin Madders:

[\[115713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ensuring that pay increases for NHS staff under the Agenda for Change system are funded through additional resources set out in the forthcoming spending review.

Justin Madders:

[\[115714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of providing funding for an earlier than planned pay rise for staff subject to the Agenda for Change system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: Agenda for Change Staff are in their third and final year of a multi-year pay and contract reform deal (2018/19-2020-21) agreed with National Health Service trade unions and employer representatives. The deal has seen the pay of those below the top of their pay band increase by at least 9% and pay for most staff at the top of their pay band increase by 6.5%.

For recommendations on pay for Agenda for Change staff for 2021/22, when the deal ends, the Government intends to look to the independent NHS Pay Review Body as the established mechanism for determining pay increases in the NHS.

■ Photography: Coronavirus**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[113018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether one-to-one professional photography is allowed (a) indoors and (b) outdoors during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England.

Daisy Cooper:[\[113230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether professional photographers can continue to operate their businesses during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown in England by performing work (a) outdoors, (b) indoors in a socially distanced way with (i) individuals, (ii) a single household and (iii) people in a bubble and (c) with businesses (A) inside and (B) outside that are allowed to remain open in a covid-secure way.

Tom Tugendhat:[\[119289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether photographers are permitted to work (a) indoors and (b) outdoors during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: In the national restrictions, which are due to expire on 2 December 2020, photography studios are not considered to be essential services and should not be open to members of the public, although a photographer may continue to leave the house to go to their own studio for work purposes. While photographers could meet one other person outside for the purposes of work, there is not an exemption allowing someone to leave the house to meet a photographer. Photographers may legally visit someone's home if necessary for work purposes. However, we would advise this is kept to a minimum or for essential purposes.

■ Respite Care: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:**[\[92002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that families with additional needs can access the respite support they require during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown period.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises respite care services are crucial to the wellbeing of individuals who attend them and their usual carers. We have worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance to help providers restart services. The Government's Infection Control Fund can be used to support day services adopt infection control measures.

In addition, we want to identify where these services are under particular strain and what further can be done to support local authorities to continue with their important statutory duty to support family carers to continue providing care. We are now working with local authorities through Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to better understand the current provision of day services and respite care and how local provision can be adapted to continue during the pandemic.

In addition, the regulations on the new national restrictions continue to allow for:

- a vulnerable person to go to someone's house in order to give the main carer respite;
- someone to enter the vulnerable persons house to give the main carer respite, and
- recognise the need for support groups to continue and as such formally organised groups of up to 15 can continue to meet. Day services are covered by the term 'support group'.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[121200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans NHS England has to maintain the suspension on the use of surgical mesh.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are monitoring progress on meeting the conditions of the national pause on vaginal mesh insertion procedures.

The 'pause' on use of vaginal mesh remains in operation and changes will only be made following consultation with stakeholders including patients, professional bodies and other National Health Service organisations.

■ Virgin Care**Jon Trickett:**[\[120790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the value is contracts awarded to Virgin Care since 2010.

Edward Argar:

The Department does not collate the information centrally.

HOME OFFICE**■ Emergency Services Network****Sarah Jones:**[\[122854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timetable is for a new business plan for the Emergency Services Network to be signed off by the Treasury.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office's Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) will be presenting its updated full business case to the Major Projects Review Authority in May 2021. The plan is that the business case will then be presented to Her Majesty's Treasury in June 2021 for approval.

■ Police: Emergency Services Network**Sarah Jones:**[\[122855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that police forces are reimbursed for any additional costs arising as a result of the time taken to implement the Emergency Services Network programme.

Kit Malthouse:

Changes to the delivery schedules for the Emergency Services Network (ESN) mean that the majority of costs budgeted for local police forces for ESN implementation will be delayed in line with the revised programme plan, but significant additional costs are not envisaged. The costs to the police of the Airwave system (that ESN will ultimately replace) continue to be split between direct costs (borne centrally before Police Allocations are made) and indirect costs that fall to the forces, and this arrangement is not changing. Once implemented, ESN will result in significant savings in the overall costs of providing emergency services communications to the police and all other services.

■ Sexual Offences**Nadia Whittome:**[\[112146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the police forces' handling of cases where a person has been reported for sexual offences by multiple individuals.

Victoria Atkins:

Rape and sexual assault are devastating crimes and we want victims to have the confidence to report them, knowing that every investigation will be conducted thoroughly, and everything will be done to bring offenders to justice.

The Government is currently conducting an end-to-end review of the criminal justice response to rape, which includes identifying issues and areas for improvement in the police handling of cases. We expect the review to report with actions for cross-

system improvement later this year. These actions will improve outcomes for victims of sexual assault as well as those of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

■ Slavery: Victim Support Schemes

Sarah Champion:

[122709]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the change in the number of (a) British children and (b) Albanian adults being referred to the National Referral Mechanism in the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery; ensuring that victims are provided with the support they need to begin rebuilding their lives and that those responsible are prosecuted. The number of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals has increased every year since the NRM was introduced in 2009.

The increase in referrals is likely to be indicative of greater awareness of the NRM and improved law enforcement activity, as well as an increase in the recorded NRM referrals related to young people involved in county lines activity. The Home Office have published statistics on the nationality of NRM referrals for adults and children on a quarterly basis from Quarter 2 2019. Prior to this the NCA published this data. On 19 October we published the 2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery which sets out an assessment of trends in modern slavery in the UK.

Home Office statistics can be found: here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>

Statistic published by the NCA can be found here:

<https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications>

Modern Slavery Annual report can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2020-uk-annual-report-on-modern-slavery>

■ Windrush Generation: Compensation

Kate Osamor:

[122818]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to reduce the evidential requirements for eligibility for compensation from the Windrush Compensation Scheme from beyond reasonable doubt to the balance of probabilities.

Kate Osamor:

[122819]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made the effect of the requirement to provide evidence beyond reasonable doubt for the Windrush Compensation Scheme on the proportion of successful claimants.

Priti Patel:

The Windrush Compensation Scheme awards compensation according to both actual losses and tariff-based awards. Where awards are for actual losses it is right we seek to obtain an appropriate level of assurance these losses were incurred in order to fulfil our duty to properly manage taxpayers' money.

However, we do not expect people to meet the criminal standard of proof. We therefore published revised Windrush Compensation Scheme rules and guidance in October which clarify that the scheme operates on the balance of probabilities. This means caseworkers must be satisfied it is more likely than not that the losses and impacts being claimed for were suffered due to difficulties evidencing lawful status. We are working through more detailed changes to the 'Loss of Access to Employment' category to enable the actual losses section to be operated on the balance of probabilities as well.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review**Ed Davey:**[\[122553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to implement the comprehensive improvement plan, published in September 2020 in response to the Windrush lessons learned review.

Priti Patel:

I am committed to delivering lasting and meaningful change across the entire department to make sure that the Home Office better represents all the communities it serves, and to ensure that nothing like this happens again.

Work continues at pace to implement the comprehensive improvement plan and I will update Parliament on progress in the new year, ahead of Wendy Williams returning to assess our progress in September 2021.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ Parliamentary Estate: Carbon Emissions****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[122612\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2020 to Question 117952 on Parliamentary Estate: Carbon Emissions, what information the Commission holds on the estimated average amount and proportion of emissions from the Estate that are from (a) food and (b) food waste.

Pete Wishart:

(a) The House does not currently hold information on carbon emissions associated with its food and beverage procurement. We are developing a method to measure and manage carbon emissions from all our Scope 3 supply chain activities, including those from our food suppliers.

(b) The amount of food waste collected from the Parliamentary Estate is not broken down between the two Houses, so it is not possible to provide a carbon emission figure for food waste from Commons outlets only. However, in the 12 months to the end of October 2020, the House authorities have calculated a total of the equivalent of 1.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions from the process for anaerobic digestion of the food waste from the Estate. This figure has been calculated using UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting. This compares with 11,985 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent as part of Scope 1 and 2 emissions from the Estate in the same 12-month period.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds

Hilary Benn:

[\[122569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to make a decision on the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of the Saxton Drive Building, Leeds LS9.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund. Application progress is communicated to registrants who we expect will ensure that their residents are kept fully informed.

■ Coastal Communities Fund

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[122727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which organisations have received funding from the Coastal Communities Fund; how much funding they each received; and what the criteria was for its allocation, in each year since the fund's creation.

Luke Hall:

This Government believes in the considerable potential of the Great British Coast and is determined to strengthen its appeal as a place to live, work and visit and to see it thrive all year round.

Please be aware that a full list of successful Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) applicants or projects, their funding allocations and guidance outlining the priority funding criteria is publicly available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coastal-communities>

Through this link you can browse information relating to all five rounds of CCF since its launch in 2012.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[122768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the updated guidance, Understanding the possession action process: A guide for private landlords in England and Wales, published on 27 November 2020, what plans he has to continue to ensure that bailiffs do not enforce evictions in areas under tier 2 and tier 3 restrictions after 11 January 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

During this unprecedented time, the Government has taken steps to ensure housing possession enforcement activity is conducted safely and in accordance with the public health measures in place, to reduce the spread of Covid-19. On 16 November, the Government laid the Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction and Taking Control of Goods) (England) Regulations 2020. These regulations prevent enforcement agents from enforcing residential evictions, other than in limited circumstances, until 11 January 2021. Given that a minimum of 14 days' notice is required, no evictions are expected to be enforced until 25 January 2021 at the earliest. We continue to keep the position regarding enforcement of evictions following 11 January under review.

We also legislated in August to increase notice periods to 6 months in all but the most serious circumstances so that most tenants served notice now, would not be asked to leave their home until at least June 2021. This applies across all local tiers.

These new measures provide a balanced approach to protecting public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters whilst ensuring landlords can access and exercise their right to justice.

■ Future High Streets Fund

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[122729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which organisations have received funding from the Future High Streets Fund; how much funding they received; and what the criteria was for its allocation, in each year since its creation.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Capital funding has not yet been allocated to successful local authorities for the Future High Streets Fund competitive process. However, we are in the final stages of the assessment and we expect to announce the outcome of the competition soon. £107 million (CDEL) of the Future High Streets Fund is allocated to DCMS to support the regeneration of heritage high streets through 'Heritage Action Zones'.

Some revenue funding (RDEL) from the fund has been allocated to the [High Streets Task Force](#), [Business Improvement Districts](#) and to develop a [new parking code](#).

Capacity funding grants of up to £150,000 were paid to 101 local authorities selected to prepare full business cases for the Future High Streets Fund Competition. Please

see more details here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-billion-future-high-streets-fund-expanded-to-50-more-areas>.

■ Housing: Construction

Sir Charles Walker:

[121198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what statutory guidance has been provided to Local Planning Authorities on seeking water companies' advice on risks to water resources from proposed major housing developments; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Water companies are already statutory consultees on local plans under The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Water supply and quality are considerations in strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal. Sustainability appraisal objectives could include preventing deterioration of current water body status, and seeking opportunities to improve water bodies. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that local planning policies and decisions should prevent new or existing development from contributing to unacceptable levels of water pollution. Development should wherever possible help to improve local environmental conditions such as water quality. The Framework is supported by our on-line planning guidance, revised in July last year, available on GOV.UK. This sets out how planning can ensure water quality and the delivery of adequate water and wastewater infrastructure. The guidance explains how development plans can steer potentially polluting development away from the most sensitive areas, particularly those in the vicinity of drinking water supplies.

Caroline Nokes:

[121238]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of family homes that have not been built as a result of problems with nitrate neutrality in the Solent.

Christopher Pincher:

We have not made a direct assessment of the number of homes that have not been built due to the problems with nitrate pollution in the Solent. Information provided by the affected local authorities has indicated at least 4,500 units are backlogged principally due to this issue. This is an estimate of delayed planning applications, and not an estimate of homes not built, as not all planning permissions would have been built within this time. These are indicative numbers and some of these planning applications may also be delayed due to other issues and planning considerations as well.

Some of the affected local authorities have now launched or are in the process of agreeing mitigation schemes, ranging from offsetting through changes to council owned agricultural landholdings, offsetting through improvements to the water efficiency of council owned housing stock, and offsetting using green infrastructure

secured through local plans, which will enable planning applications to be determined.

The Government is also making a loan offer of up to £5.7 million to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to deliver mitigation to unlock the stalled applications across the affected area.

■ **Housing: Insulation**

Alberto Costa:

[\[121285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to support leaseholders who will be required to pay costs towards new building cladding under proposals in the draft Building Safety Bill.

Christopher Pincher:

The new building safety regime will systematically address historical structural defects to buildings by requiring safety case reviews and reasonable improvements. It is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the cost of fixing these historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause. Government has repeatedly said that building owners should step up and not pass these costs on to leaseholders, where possible.

Where developers or building owners have been unable or unwilling to pay, we have introduced funding schemes providing £1.6 billion to accelerate the pace of work and meet the costs of remediating the highest risk and most expensive defects – Aluminium Composite Material cladding and other unsafe cladding systems like High Pressure Laminates.

The department is working on proposals to protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs caused by historic building safety defects. We will provide an update before the Building Safety Bill returns to Parliament.

■ **Leasehold: Reform**

Hilary Benn:

[\[122568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the Law Commission's recommendations on leasehold reform; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: We are working with the Law Commission to make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and cheaper, and to reinvigorate Commonhold to provide consumers with a choice of tenure, and to reform the Right to Manage to help empower those that wish to, to take on management responsibilities for their properties.

In January this year the Law Commission published their first of four reports, on the valuation aspects of enfranchisement, followed on 21 July by their further three reports on the remaining aspects of enfranchisement, Commonhold, and Right to

Manage. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/residential-leasehold-and-commonhold/>. We will be publishing further details of how Government will take forward reform across these key policy issues as soon as possible. This is a long-term reform programme; it is complex and controversial with many interdependencies and will take time to get the detail right. Once it is enacted the effect will be felt for generations and so we are determined this work considers all the implications with care.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Steve Reed:

[122717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Levelling Up Fund announced in the Spending Review 2020, what weight he plans to attribute to the support that each tier of elected official gives to a bid when he makes a decision on the allocation of funding.

Luke Hall:

The Government is launching a new Levelling Up Fund worth £4 billion for England that will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery.

Projects should be genuine local priorities, prepared in collaboration with local stakeholders that have clear benefits to the local community and are aligned with a broader local economic strategy. We will provide further details in the prospectus, which will be published in the new year.

■ Local Government Finance

Steve Reed:

[122718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to publish the provisional local government finance settlement for 2021-22.

Luke Hall:

We will bring forward proposals for the annual local government finance settlement for 2021-22 as soon as we can.

■ Local Plans: Dudley North

Marco Longhi:

[121376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what representations he has received on the adequacy of public consultation on future local planning decisions in Dudley North constituency.

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities are required to undertake a formal period of public consultation for most planning applications, of no less than 21 days. By law, planning applications are determined in accordance with the local development plan, unless

material considerations indicate otherwise. Each application is judged on its own individual merit and the weight given to these considerations is a matter for the local planning authority as the decision taker.

The planning reforms set out in the Planning for the Future White paper will make it simpler, quicker and more accessible for local people to engage with the planning system. The best way to bring forward new, significant development is by improving community engagement and input at an earlier stage in the planning process. At the plan making stage, people will have the opportunity to comment on local plans and deciding where proposed development should go. There will still be the opportunity for people to comment on planning applications where these are required.

We have received no recent representations concerning the adequacy of public consultation for current planning applications in Dudley North.

■ **Night Shelters: Coronavirus**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[122766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November to question 118518 on night shelters: coronavirus, what evidential basis Public Health England provided to him to during the production of the operating principles for night shelters on the decision to allow communal night shelters to open as a last resort.

Kelly Tolhurst:

I refer the Hon. Member to my previous answer to question 105417 on 5 November 2020.

■ **Nitrates: Solent**

Caroline Nokes:

[\[121237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made in tackling nitrate neutrality in the Solent.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has been working to understand the nitrogen pollution problems in the Solent, the impacts on housing delivery and the options for enabling growth whilst avoiding harm to important protected sites. In September, we announced £3.9 million of funding to pilot a nutrient trading process to secure nature-based solutions to nitrate pollution across the Solent area. We have also made a loan offer of up to £5.7 million to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to deliver mitigation to unlock stalled planning applications.

We are aware of the challenges faced through nutrient pollution and are seeking to address the most common sources of polluting nutrients to water. Agriculture is now the most significant source of pollution in our rivers, lakes and seas. This Government is using a package of measures to combat this, including Catchment Sensitive Farming, regulation and incentives. We will use the flexibility achieved by leaving the EU to replace Common Agricultural Policy subsidies (CAP) with an

Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme through the Agriculture Act 2020 which will pay farmers for taking action to reduce pollution and restore habitats which go beyond regulatory requirements. This Government remains committed to bringing at least three quarters of our waters to as close as possible to their natural state as soon as is practicable. In support of this, a further legally binding target is being brought forward as part of the target setting processes set out in DEFRA's Environment Bill. The Environment Bill will place a statutory requirement on water companies to produce drainage and sewerage management plans, and we will continue to press water companies to protect both people and the environment.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[\[122692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether small businesses that fail to pay business rents due in December 2020 can be evicted by their landlord during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: Government recognises that this is a very challenging time for everyone, and Covid-19 is having a significant impact on our businesses. That is why we have introduced temporary new measures to further safeguard the high street and millions of jobs.

Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides for a moratorium on forfeitures of commercial leases due to the non-payment of rent accrued during the pandemic. This means that landlords of commercial properties will not have the option to evict tenants for not paying the rent that was due after 23 March 2020. Government has announced that it will extend the moratorium on forfeiture until the end of the year. The extension provides landlords and tenants with a further opportunity to come together to have these discussions and reach agreements on outstanding rent.

Government has also restricted landlords' ability to seize goods in lieu of rent and protected tenants from insolvency measures including statutory demands and winding up petitions. All these measures are currently in place until 31 December 2020. Government has published a voluntary Code of Practice to encourage constructive dialogue between tenants and landlords; and is clear that those tenants who can pay in full should do so, those who cannot should pay what they can, and those landlords who can grant concessions should do so.

■ Planning Permission

Steve Reed:

[\[122719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many holding directions he has issued under section 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015; how long on average those holding directions have lasted; and in which local authority areas those holding directions have been issued.

Christopher Pincher:

Holding directions are issued – in most cases by officials without ministerial involvement – to allow planning ministers to consider requests to call in planning applications. Holding directions usually expire when a decision is made on whether to call the application in. The department does not maintain records of expired holding directions and therefore cannot provide the information as requested.

■ Planning Permission: Hillingdon**Steve Reed:****[122720]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to call in the planning application 4266/APP/2019/3088 in Hillingdon.

Christopher Pincher:

The Secretary of State has received requests to call-in the planning application for redevelopment of the Former Master Brewer Site in Hillingdon. A decision has not yet been issued and therefore it would not be appropriate to comment.

■ Reopening High Streets Safely Fund**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:****[122726]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which organisations have received funding from the Reopening High Streets Fund; how much funding they received; and what the criteria was for its allocation.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: Our £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) is playing an important role in getting people back to work, supporting our businesses and helping to reinvigorate our local communities.

This funding has been allocated to 314 local authorities in England on a per capita basis, with a minimum limit of £30,000. Each local authority is responsible for deciding how the grant should be spent whilst ensuring that the activity is eligible under the terms of the grant.

The full RHSSF criteria, including an Annex detailing local authority funding allocations, can be found in the fund guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reopening-high-streets-safely-fund-guidance>.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Construction**Caroline Nokes:****[121239]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of granting an exemption from nitrate mitigation measures for any type of overnight accommodation proposed within the Solent region.

Christopher Pincher:

It is not possible to grant an exemption for a specific class of development from the requirements of the Habitat Regulations. Any development which might have an effect on a protected habitats site must demonstrate that mitigation is in place to avoid that damage. Under the Habitats Regulations, local authorities as 'competent authority' need to undertake an appropriate assessment to determine whether development is likely to result in significant effects on protected habitats sites, and whether adequate mitigation can be secured to enable development to proceed. Where a protected habitat site has fallen into an unfavourable condition, nutrient neutrality may be the mitigation necessary to ensure further damage is not caused by additional development.

Caroline Nokes:[\[121240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether temporary overnight accommodation proposed in the Solent region requires the installation of nitrate mitigation measures before development can commence.

Christopher Pincher:

Under the Habitats Regulations, it is for the competent authority to decide, through undertaking an appropriate assessment and considering advice from Natural England, whether a particular application requires mitigation measures and the adequacy of these proposals. It may be possible for individual proposals to advance mitigation schemes other than nitrate neutrality that are sufficient to demonstrate to the competent authority that an individual scheme would not have an adverse effect on the protected habitats sites.

Caroline Nokes:[\[121241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on reducing the requirements for nitrate mitigation measures for overnight accommodation in the Solent region.

Christopher Pincher:

I will be meeting the Minister for the Environment to discuss the effect that nutrient pollution is having on development. Officials from across government and its agencies are working closely together to identify practical ways forward across the country. In the Solent, we have committed £3.9 million of funding to pilot a nutrient trading process to secure nature-based solutions to nitrate pollution across the Solent area, and a loan offer of up to £5.7 million to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to deliver mitigation to unlock stalled planning applications.

Towns Fund**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[122728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which organisations have received funding from the Town Deals Fund; how much funding they received; and what the criteria was for its allocation, in each year since its creation.

Luke Hall:

The £3.6 billion Towns Fund includes £1 billion for the Future High Streets Fund, as well as funding for 101 places that have been selected to develop proposals for Town Deals.

In 2019, we paid all places shortlisted for the Future High Streets Fund grants of up to £150,000 revenue funding to develop full business cases. In December 2019 we paid out £16.4 million in capacity funding to local authorities from the initial 100 towns selected for Town Deals to establish Town Deal Boards and develop their proposals. In both cases the money was paid to the lead local authority.

In May 2020, following a competitive tender and pre-market engagement exercises, we appointed an Arup-led consortium to provide commercial support to all 101 towns selected for Town Deals to help develop their plans and proposals to bid into the fund. Further details about the contract can be found at:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/18a3b1d6-1624-42c4-a0fb-70311c335584>.

In September 2020, we paid £81.5 million in accelerated funding to the lead local authorities for the 101 towns selected for Town Deals. Each town received between £500,000 and £1 million to help them respond to the immediate challenges of Covid-19.

On 27 October 2020, Government announced the first seven places in England set to benefit from up to £178.7 million in new Town Deals: Barrow-in-Furness, Blackpool, Darlington, Norwich, Peterborough, Torquay and Warrington. Work has begun to confirm final funding for these places. Further announcements on more Town Deals will be made in due course.

Full details of these payments are on gov.uk.

■ Travellers: Caravan Sites**Andrew Selous:****[120821]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether an inspector can approve a council policy allowing for traveller site development when the council has concluded that there is no unmet accommodation need in the planning period.

Christopher Pincher:

The Inspector's role is to examine whether a submitted plan meets the Tests of Soundness set out in paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and legislative requirements.

The Inspector's conclusions will be based on a consideration of all the evidence and on the application of professional expertise and judgement.

With regard to traveller sites, as part of this consideration an Inspector will consider plan proposals against policy in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and NPPF. The PPTS encourages authorities to identify a 5-year supply of specific,

deliverable sites and other developable sites to accommodate growth for years 6-10 and, where possible, years 11-15.

■ Warehouses: Solar Power

Alberto Costa:

[\[120890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of requiring new commercial warehousing to be fitted with solar panels.

Luke Hall:

Mandating a particular renewable technology, such as solar panels, may not be appropriate for all commercial warehousing in all areas. This for reasons such as building orientation and other reasons such as structural strength of the roof. National planning policy encourages the use of renewables without requiring any particular technology. In the case of the Building Regulations, the Government sets minimum energy performance standards for non-domestic buildings and new homes. These are expressed in performance terms and do not prescribe the technologies, materials or fuels to be used. This allows builders and warehouse owners the flexibility to innovate and select the most practical and cost-effective solutions appropriate in a development. A new permitted development right was introduced in April 2015 to encourage solar panel take-up on non-domestic buildings. This right allows solar PV developments of up to 1 megawatt. This replaces a previous right and provides for a 20-fold increase in the amount of solar technology that can go onto the roofs of buildings such as warehouses without having to submit a full planning application, subject to strict safeguards to protect local amenity.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Iron and Steel: Import Duties

Jane Stevenson:

[\[122883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will exempt aluminised steel from the UK steel import quotas that are due to come into effect on 1 January 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The priority of HM Government is to make sure that British industry retains appropriate trade remedy protections at the end of the transition period.

We have committed to carrying across existing measures where there is a British producer interest, including steel safeguard measures; of the 26 steel product categories currently covered by EU safeguard measures, we have worked with industry to identify 19 product categories that are relevant to Britain. Some aluminised products are amongst these categories.

The Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) is currently conducting a transition review to consider whether it is appropriate to vary the United Kingdom's

safeguard measures, extend them or revoke them. Interested parties can provide evidence to factor into TRID's assessment.

■ Iron and Steel: Import Duties and Quotas

Jane Stevenson:

[\[122884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her policy is on the inclusion of non-UK produced steel products in steel safeguarding tariffs and quotas; and if she will make a statement.

Jane Stevenson:

[\[122885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the UK steel industry on the inclusion of aluminised steel in tariffs and quotas after the end of the transition period.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The priority of HM Government is to make sure that British industry retains appropriate trade remedy protections at the end of the transition period.

We have committed to carrying across existing measures where there is a British producer interest, including steel safeguard measures; of the 26 steel product categories currently covered by EU safeguard measures, we have worked with industry to identify 19 product categories that are relevant to Britain. Some include aluminised products are amongst these categories.

The Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) is currently conducting a transition review to consider whether it is appropriate to vary Britain's safeguard measures, extend them or revoke them. Interested parties can provide evidence to factor into TRID's assessment.

■ Music: Exports

Kevin Brennan:

[\[122932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what funding she has allocated to the Music Export Growth Scheme for (a) the remainder of the financial year 2020-21 and (b) future financial years.

Graham Stuart:

My department has allocated £100,000 of new funding to the Music Export Growth Scheme for the financial year 2020-21. We are now starting to plan for 2021-22, including any export support for the UK music sector.

JUSTICE■ **Prisoners on Remand**

Alex Cunningham: [122688]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were on remand in each of the last 24 months.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on the total numbers of prisoners held on remand at the end of each month from June 2010 to September 2020.

Data showing the total numbers of prisoners held on remand in each month from 30 September 2018 to 30 June 2020 can be found in Table A1.1 at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904869/Population_30June2020_Annual.ods, and the total numbers of prisoners held on remand on 31 July 2020, 31 August 2020 and 30 September 2020 can be found in Table 1.1 at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930646/Population_30Sep2020.ods

PRIME MINISTER■ **Ministers: Codes of Practice**

Dan Carden: [122870]

To ask the Prime Minister, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the procedures for investigating and responding to breaches of the Ministerial Code; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson:

The Ministerial Code makes clear the high standards of behaviour that Ministers are expected to maintain. Ministers are personally responsible for deciding how to act and conduct themselves in the light of the Ministerial Code and for justifying their actions and conduct to Parliament and the public to whom they are ultimately accountable. As Prime Minister I take any allegations about misconduct seriously and, as the ultimate arbiter of conduct under the Code, can follow the process set out in paragraph 1.4 of the Code.

SCOTLAND■ **Scotland Office: Credit Unions**

Gareth Thomas: [121138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he plans to require his Department and its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland does not employ staff directly; all staff that join do so on an assignment, loan or secondment from other government bodies which remain responsible for payroll arrangements.

TRANSPORT**■ Buses: Procurement****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[122613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the timeframe for the (a) order and (b) delivery of the 800 new zero-emission buses announced in the 2020 Spending Review.

Kerry McCarthy:[\[122614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what the next steps are for the allocation of the £120m set aside for new zero emission buses.

Rachel Maclean:

As set out in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the Spending Review 2020 the Government will invest £120 million in 2021-22 to start the delivery of the 4,000 zero emission buses announced by the Prime Minister in February.

Together with existing funding for the All Electric Bus Town, Government funding could support the purchase of 800 zero emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

Further details on how funding will be distributed will be announced in due course.

■ Electric Scooters: Pilot Schemes**Rob Butler:**[\[909733\]](#)

What progress his Department has made in trialling e-scooters.

Rachel Maclean:

E-scooter trials are progressing well. Legal changes were made in June, twenty trials are now live and supporting the green recovery across the country.

■ Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance**Sarah Olney:**[\[122836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his tweet of 27 November 2020 stating that stabilisation works on Hammersmith Bridge will begin in the week commencing 30 November 2020, whether it is his policy that those works will commence in the week commencing 30 November 2020; and what source will be providing the funding for those works.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is pleased that, following the latest Taskforce meeting, contractors have commenced working on-site at Hammersmith Bridge from this week on mitigation and stabilisation work to get it re-opened for pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic.

The funding for this work comes from the fixed contribution that TfL committed to make this Financial Year towards the stabilisation and repair of the Bridge, as per the extraordinary funding and financing package agreed with Government on 31 October 2020.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Trees**Dame Cheryl Gillan:****[122546]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what authority the 300 year old oak tree was felled at HS2 Plan 11; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

The High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Act 2017 allows the nominated undertaker to carry-out a broad range of ancillary works within Act limits and provides the powers to undertake such felling works anywhere within those limits.

HS2 Ltd takes its environmental responsibilities seriously, and felling is only undertaken where necessary. The schedules of the 2017 Act provide further information, particularly Schedule 2 (works) and Schedule 30 (trees). All Schedules associated with the 2017 Act can be found here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/7/contents/enacted>

HS2 Ltd's aim is to protect the environment wherever possible, and to do more than just mitigate in the areas where it is constructing the railway. Along the route HS2 will leave behind richer, more diverse and better connected wildlife habitats. Up to 7 million trees will eventually be planted along Phase One, with many new recreational areas for communities to enjoy. Of the 43 ancient woodlands affected by HS2's route between London and Crewe, 80% of the total area will remain intact and not impacted.

■ High Speed Two: Civil Proceedings**Andrea Leadsom:****[122682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many High Court writs there are against High Speed Two (a) across the UK and (b) in South Northamptonshire.

Andrew Stephenson:

There are currently no High Court writs against HS2 Ltd.

■ Railway Stations: Access

Sarah Olney:

[\[122835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will (a) outline the criteria his Department used to determine which stations were chosen for funding under the Access for All scheme and (b) publish the assessment of the extent to which Kew Gardens Rail Station meets those criteria.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Selection criteria included taking into account the priorities of the rail industry, and targeting stations with no existing step free access. The programme was heavily over-subscribed and as Kew Gardens was not nominated by the train operating company, and has some step free access, it was not selected for the programme.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[121864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of rail routes being closed as a result of covid-19 restrictions between 23 - 27 December 2020 on people's ability to visit family in that period.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is working with transport operators to help people see their loved ones safely. We are asking everyone to consider their journey carefully, plan and book ahead, and be patient and considerate of fellow passengers – particularly staff who have worked so hard all year – by following the guidance, including keeping space and wearing a face covering on public transport.

We are postponing rail upgrade works to ease congestion, minimise disruption and allow extra services to run. We are also removing the admin fees for changing advance rail tickets and ensuring a strong staff presence to help people on their way.

The Chair of Network Rail, Sir Peter Hendy, is carrying out a rigorous assessment of transport network preparedness to ensure everything possible is being done to help.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Suzanne Webb:

[\[909731\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to improve the condition of England's roads.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is providing over £2.7 billion for the maintenance of England's local highway network, outside of London, over 2020/21 and 2021/22, and £4.1 billion for capital renewals on the strategic road network in England over the next 5 years.

Christian Wakeford:

[\[909734\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to improve the condition of England's roads.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is providing over £2.7 billion for the maintenance of England's local highway network, outside of London, over 2020/21 and 2021/22, and £4.1 billion for capital renewals on the strategic road network in England over the next 5 years.

Jamie Stone:[\[909744\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring long-distance road transport companies using heavy vehicles to contribute towards the maintenance of rural roads.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Levy, paid by vehicles weighing over 12 tonnes for the use of any UK road since 2014, raised £204.4 million in 2019/20. The Levy is suspended for 12 months to 1 August 2021.

Travel: Coronavirus**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[122577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to ensure that travel by air, road and rail networks run as smoothly as possible over the 2020 seasonal period; what steps he is taking to ensure that the public are adequately informed of any potential travel issues before they plan or commence their journeys; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Today (3 December) the Government announced that it will be deploying a series of measures over the Christmas period to help people travel safely and minimise disruption as far as possible, including:

- clearing 778 miles of roadworks,
- ensuring over 95% of the rail network will be unaffected by engineering works,
- lengthening trains and adding extra rail services,
- and cutting ticket charges to help travellers with their journeys.

All transport operators have been asked to increase the clarity and regularity of communications with passengers/ users to help them plan their journeys, warn of any disruption and offer support.

We have also asked Sir Peter Hendy, Chair of Network Rail, to work alongside operators and officials to provide rigorous scrutiny of these plans.

We have submitted these plans to all colleagues in writing.

I am grateful to the entire transport sector, which has stepped up enormously throughout the course of this pandemic, and once again will rise to the challenge this Christmas

Greg Clark:

[\[122651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether results from SAMBA II Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 test systems in private ownership will be considered valid under the forthcoming test to release for international travel scheme.

Robert Courts:

The 'test to release for international travel scheme' allows any private testing provider that can meet the minimum standards required as set in legislation to provide tests for this purpose. The minimum standards can be viewed at this site:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/testing-to-release-for-international-travel-minimum-standards-for-testing/minimum-standards-for-private-sector-providers-of-covid-19-testing-for-testing-to-release-for-international-travel>

TREASURY

■ Capital Gains Tax: Tax Allowances

Patricia Gibson:

[\[122769\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to review the recent reduction of Private Residence Relief to take into account (a) regional variations in the length of time it can take to sell a residence and (b) the complexity of divorce and separation in respect of selling a residence.

Jesse Norman:

Within the Capital Gains Tax (CGT) system, private residence relief (PRR) exempts from CGT the gain a person may make when they sell a residential property that they have lived in as their main home.

In April, changes were made to reduce the final period exemption, in which a previous main residence always qualifies for CGT PRR, from 18 months to 9 months. The final period exemption is an ancillary relief intended to allow individuals who own another residence time to sell their property after they are no longer using their old main residence. This change was to target the relief better at owner occupiers and reduce the instances where people can accrue relief on two properties simultaneously.

The Government has no plans to change the length of the CGT Private Residence Relief (PRR) final period exemption.

Patricia Gibson:

[\[122770\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to review the recent reduction of Private Residence Relief to take into account the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) home viewings and sales and (b) the time taken for the conveyancing process.

Jesse Norman:

Within the Capital Gains Tax (CGT) system, private residence relief (PRR) exempts from CGT the gain a person may make when they sell a residential property that they have lived in as their main home.

In April, changes were made to reduce the final period exemption, in which a previous main residence always qualifies for CGT PRR, from 18 months to 9 months. This change was to better target the relief at owner occupiers and reduce the instances where people can accrue relief on two properties simultaneously.

The Government has no plans to change the length of the CGT Private Residence Relief (PRR) final period exemption.

■ Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund**Owen Thompson:**[\[121310\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of local authorities distributing discretionary grants based on a business' number of employees rather than its non-domestic rates.

Kemi Badenoch:

COVID-19 business grant funding is a fully devolved matter.

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) and the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) have been tied to the business rates system because these schemes are intended to support businesses which face high fixed property-related costs, such as rent. Rateable values are a proxy for annual rent.

The LRSG (Closed) grants, which are available to businesses in England which are legally required to close, cover in full the assumed monthly rents of nearly 90% of all small and medium retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England. Businesses can receive up to £3,000 per month from this scheme, depending on their rateable value.

The LRSG (Open) grants, operating in England, are worth 70% of the value of the LRSG (Closed) grants, in recognition of the fact that hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses which are able to remain open but which are located in areas subject to restrictions on socialising (in particular a ban on household mixing), are likely to suffer a significant reduction in demand. Local authorities which were subject to these restrictions between 1 August and 5 November received additional funding to make backdated grants to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses, in recognition of the severe reduction in demand which they likely faced over that period.

Through the Additional Restrictions Grant, English local authorities have received additional funding for business support worth £20 per head of population, a total of £1.1 billion across England. This funding is intended to complement the Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes. It will be up to local authorities to distribute the

ARG funding, and they have the discretion to make grants to businesses outside of the business rates system.

Eligible businesses across the UK can claim for the CJRS for their furloughed employees – including in Scotland – enabling them to support employees during this difficult time. This complements the grant funding in England which is intended to help with fixed costs.

■ **Driving Instruction: Coronavirus**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[121044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of offering the same grants that are available to taxi companies to driving schools.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government appreciates this is a challenging time for many sectors and individuals, including driving schools and instructors. With the resurgence of the virus and tightening of restrictions to protect people's health, we have taken further steps to protect jobs and businesses.

Driving schools will benefit from an extension of the furlough scheme to the end of March. Self-employed driving instructors will benefit from an extension of the income support grant. This support has increased to 80% of average profits, up to £7,500, covering November to January.

This support for individuals sits alongside support for businesses of all sizes including grant funding distributed through Local Authorities. During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups and other government departments to understand the long-term effects of COVID-19 and specific challenges to the wider economy.

■ **Occupational Pensions: Uprating**

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[122661\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed changes to the formula for calculating the Retail Price Index, set out in his Department's response to the Consultation on the Reform of RPI Methodology, on the risk of insolvency for employers, as a result of the need to address the shortfall in funding of their workplace pension schemes.

John Glen:

On 25 November, the Government and UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published their response to the consultation on the timing of reform to the Retail Prices Index (RPI). Owing to shortcomings in its calculation, UKSA intends to bring the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI.

The consultation launched at the Budget on 11 March 2020. Originally, the consultation was set to run for six weeks, closing on 22 April 2020. However, due to the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Chancellor and UKSA Board decided to extend the consultation to 21 August 2020. At the close of the consultation, the Government and UKSA had received 831 written responses. As Economic Secretary to the Treasury, in July 2020 I chaired two roundtables comprising representatives of index-linked gilt holders, to hear their views on the impact of the timing of reform. The details of these meetings can be found in Annex D of the response document.

As detailed in the response document, the holders of a majority of index-linked gilts are seeking to match inflation-linked liabilities. This means that they use the returns from index-linked gilts to hedge against inflation-linked liabilities. Such investors include some defined benefit (DB) pension schemes. How such schemes' funding positions will be impacted by reform will depend on the extent to which they are hedged and the nature of their liabilities. For some DB pension schemes, a deterioration in their funding position means that existing deficits may increase, or that surpluses may be reduced. The vast majority of index-linked gilt investors who responded to the consultation noted a strong preference for UKSA's proposal to be implemented as late as possible, i.e. in 2030, in order to allow index-linked gilt holders as much time as possible to adjust to the reform of the RPI and to minimise any potential negative impacts they may face.

As part of the response, the Chancellor announced that while he sees the statistical arguments of UKSA's intended approach to reform, in order to minimise the impact of reform on the holders of index-linked gilts, he will be unable to offer his consent to the implementation of such a proposal before the maturity of the final specific index-linked gilt in 2030. As it stated in the response, it is UKSA policy to address the shortcomings of RPI in full at the earliest practical time. The change proposed can legally and practically be made by UKSA in February 2030.

For further information please see the consultation response at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>.

■ Overseas Aid

Dan Carden:

[122872]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2020 to Question 120991, what fiscal criteria he plans to use to determine when the Government will reinstate the UK's commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on overseas aid.

Steve Barclay:

The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. We cannot at this moment predict with certainty when the current fiscal circumstances will have sufficiently improved.

■ Pensions: Upating

Jonathan Edwards:

[122662]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people entering into new index-linked deals are made aware of the proposed changes to the formula for calculating the Retail Price Index, set out in his Department's response to the Consultation on the Reform of RPI Methodology.

John Glen:

On 25 November, the Government and UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published their response to the consultation on the timing of reform to the Retail Prices Index (RPI). Owing to shortcomings in its calculation, UKSA intends to bring the methods and data sources of the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) into RPI.

The Government and UKSA engaged directly with a number of users and stakeholders to discuss the consultation. The consultation response document has been published and is available on the Government and UKSA's websites, as below:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-the-reform-to-retail-prices-index-rpi-methodology>

- <https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/response-to-the-joint-consultation-on-reforming-the-methodology-of-the-retail-prices-index/>

Under legislation, how RPI is changed is a matter for UKSA alone. This reflects the important principle established in the Act that UKSA's judgement on statistics should be independent of Government. After expert advice from the National Statistician and following public consultation, UKSA intends to address the shortcomings in RPI by bringing in the methods and data sources of CPIH. This intended approach was made public in September 2019. Following consultation, UKSA confirmed publicly that the change proposed can legally and practically be made by UKSA in February 2030. It is the role of UKSA – as set out in legislation - to promote and safeguard official statistics.

■ Renewable Energy: Coronavirus

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[122847]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse has been in (a) grants and (b) payments to (i) developers and (ii) contractors in the renewable energy industry in response to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on (A) revenue streams, (B) capital investment and (C) employment costs.

Kemi Badenoch:

There has been no sector-wide support offered by Government through grants or payments to the renewable energy industry in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, many companies within the renewable energy industry have been eligible to access the various UK-wide support schemes introduced to protect the economy,

including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans Scheme.

The Government also continues to support the deployment of large-scale renewable energy through the Contracts for Difference scheme.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[122825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of backdating the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to include March and April 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been, and continues to be, one of the most generous self-employed COVID-19 support schemes in the world.

The SEISS is not intended to provide a month-by-month replacement of income. Due to the volatility of self-employed income and the lack of granular data that HMRC hold on self-employed trading profits, precise mapping of income replacement month by month is not possible. Instead, the SEISS provides a lump sum payment to support eligible self-employed individuals whose businesses have been affected by coronavirus.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[120832\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of the 2020-21 education budget that resulted from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy will be passed on to departmental budgets for investment in children's health initiatives as part of the 2021-22 Spending Round.

Kemi Badenoch:

In 2016 the government announced investment in a number of children's health initiatives alongside the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, including doubling the primary sports premium to £320m a year from September 2017, and introducing the National Schools Breakfast Programme from March 2018.

Spending Review 2020 has now concluded and confirmed the Department for Education's overall budget for 2021-22. The DfE will confirm funding from within that settlement allocated to these schools programmes in 21-22 in due course.

■ Treasury: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121132\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to require his Department and its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

There are currently no plans to implement a payroll deduction service or require the Departments agencies to implement such a service.p ■ Wholesale Trade: Coronavirus

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[122827\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating additional funding to the devolved Administrations to support wholesalers who are ineligible for Business Rates Relief.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[122828\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of current levels of funding to the devolved Administrations on their ability to administer Business Rates Relief to wholesalers.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[122829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the financial security of wholesalers in Wales of their ineligibility for Business Rates Relief.

Steve Barclay:

The UK government has supported businesses across the UK through a range of schemes this year, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILs).

As business rates is a devolved tax it is for the devolved administrations to determine reliefs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, the UK government has already guaranteed the devolved administrations an additional £16 billion of resource funding to provide support to people, businesses and public services this year. This comprises £8.2 billion for the Scottish Government, £5.0 billion for the Welsh Government and £2.8 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive.

■ Wholesale Trade: Liverpool City Region

Conor McGinn: [\[122791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the financial effect of the restrictions on hospitality businesses in the covid-19 tier system on the wholesale sector in (a) St Helens North constituency and (b) Liverpool City Region during the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

The Government has provided unprecedented levels of support for workers and businesses to protect, as much as possible, against the current economic emergency. Food and drink wholesalers have been eligible for a number of these support schemes, with the most relevant likely to include:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help keep millions of people in employment;

- £10,000 cash grants for all business properties in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief and Rural Rates Relief;
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000, with no interest payments or fees for the first 12 months.

Food and drink wholesalers have also benefited from the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme which provided over 100 million half price meals during August and helped to protect the livelihoods of the 1.8 million people working in the hospitality sector.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus

Vicky Foxcroft:

[120928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure the Access to Work fast track scheme is available to all disabled workers who need reasonable adjustments to be able to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Member for Ceredigion on 30 November 2020, UIN [120973](#).

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[122755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Access to Work scheme is available to all disabled workers who need reasonable adjustments to be able to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

During Covid-19, Access to Work has continued to provide funding for people with a disability or health condition whether they have been working in the workplace or working from home. The changing working environment has meant some disabled people have adapted their support, for example switching from face-to-face British Sign Language Interpreting to Video Remote Interpreting services or making greater use of assistive technology and software. Access to Work has actively worked with employers during the pandemic. For example, Access to Work worked with employers to transport assistive technology from the workplace to the home to enable home working. And where the support cannot be removed from the workplace, Access to Work has put in place alternative adjustments or supported adaptations to standard equipment.

Covid-19 has impacted the way we work and where we work. Recognising the additional challenges the Covid-19 lockdown has produced for disabled people, Access to Work has put in place a series of measures to ensure disabled people were not adversely affected and were able to continue to receive support. The measures included:

- Accepting email claim forms from customers who request this as a reasonable adjustment;
- Accepting employer and support worker signatures via email;
- Extending Support Worker awards that are coming to an end by 6 months;
- Extending the timeframe customers have to submit payment claim forms to 9 months;
- Adapting the way assessments are undertaken to support customers who don't know what support they need; and
- Prioritising new applications from key workers and those with jobs starting within the next 4 weeks.

As Covid-19 has continued to change working environments, employers have asked employees to work flexibly and work from home where possible. To enable disabled people to have the flexibility to adapt to new working arrangements Access to Work has introduced a new flexible offer to address concerns raised by Stakeholders. The new offer complements support provided by employers and contains a flexible mix of support that can be adapted to meet the needs of new Covid-19 working arrangements. The offer includes:

- support to work from more than one location;
- a package of home working support which can be blended with workplace support;
- mental health wellbeing support for people returning to work after a period of furlough or shielding;
- travel-to-work support for those who may no longer be able to safely travel by public transport due to the nature of their disability; and
- prioritising Access to Work applications from disabled people in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group.

Background

Access to Work (ATW) is a demand-led, **discretionary grant** to de-risk the recruitment and retention of disabled people for employers. The grant contributes to the disability related extra costs of working faced by disabled people and those with a health condition that are beyond reasonable adjustment, but it **does not** replace an employer's duty under the Equality Act to make reasonable adjustments. The grant provides **personalised support** and can provide workplace assessments, travel to/in work, support workers, specialist aids and equipment for individuals to enable disabled people and those with a health condition to move into or retain employment. And can fund up to **£60,700** worth of flexible, personalised support per person per year.

Access to Work provides assurance for disabled people that they can access the support they need to overcome their barriers to employment. Knowing that support is available empowers disabled people, it provides confidence for both the disabled

person and potential employers and works to remove any disadvantage in the labour market.

■ Access to Work Programme: New Businesses

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[122756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that disabled entrepreneurs who have used the Access to Work scheme in (a) 2020 and (b) 2019 are not negatively affected by plans to use evidence of business viability and turnover to determine whether this support is renewed.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work has put in place measures to support disabled people who are working from home or are continuing to work during the Covid-19 outbreak. These measures include disabled people who are self-employed and have seen impacts on their business, meaning that for the tax year 2020/2021 the lower earnings limit will be waived due to the impacts of Covid-19.

Background

Access to Work (ATW) is a demand-led, **discretionary grant** to de-risk the recruitment and retention of disabled people for employers. The grant contributes to the disability related extra costs of working faced by disabled people and those with a health condition that are beyond reasonable adjustment, but it **does not** replace an employer's duty under the Equality Act to make reasonable adjustments. The grant provides **personalised support** and can provide workplace assessments, travel to/in work, support workers, specialist aids and equipment for individuals to enable disabled people and those with a health condition to move into or retain employment. And can fund up to **£60,700** worth of flexible, personalised support per person per year.

Access to Work provides assurance for disabled people that they can access the support they need to overcome their barriers to employment. Knowing that support is available empowers disabled people, it provides confidence for both the disabled person and potential employers and works to remove any disadvantage in the labour market.

■ Children: Maintenance

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[122842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle parents whose child maintenance liability is inconsistent with their lifestyle and financial resources.

Guy Opperman:

The income information for a child maintenance calculation is obtained directly from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This figure includes earnings from self-employment. Either parent may request a variation to a maintenance calculation to allow the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) to consider some circumstances which

are not covered by the basic calculation. This includes unearned income such as rental income from property or land, or dividends and interest from savings and investments. If a variation succeeds, the maintenance liability may be adjusted.

Cases involving complex income or suspected fraudulent behaviour are referred to the CMS's Financial Investigation Unit (FIU), a specialist team who can request information from financial institutions to check the maintenance calculation is accurate. If an investigation finds evidence of criminality the FIU may seek to prosecute or forward to HMRC for fraud action.

■ Covid Winter Grant Scheme

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[121201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what mechanism was used to determine how much each local authority will receive from the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

Will Quince:

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme is a new £170m fund which will enable local authorities to support vulnerable households this winter with food and key utilities. Grants to local authorities will be made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and will carry conditions to ensure the primary focus of the scheme is on supporting vulnerable families with children affected by the pandemic. Within the conditions, local authorities will have flexibility to decide how best to identify and support those most in need in their local area.

In line with the £63m grant fund made available to local authorities earlier in the year, funding will be dispersed according to an authority's population, weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Funding allocations for each upper tier Local Authority were published on gov.uk on 24 November: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-winter-grant-scheme/indicative-funding-levels-per-county-council-or-unitary-authority>

■ Employment: EU Nationals

Hywel Williams:

[122579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of EU citizens in the UK who have been unable to begin work due to employers refusing to employ workers without a national insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

The department does not hold information on the number of EU nationals being turned down for work as a result of not having a National Insurance Number (NINo).

An individual can apply for a job or take up employment without a NINo. EU Nationals can evidence their Right to Work in the UK by providing their National Passport or Identity Card to any prospective employer.

All employers are required to conduct mandatory Right to Work checks on all prospective employees, however these checks do not include the provision of a NINo.

■ Food Banks

Jon Trickett: [121155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many food banks there were in (a) March 2020 and (b) November 2020.

Will Quince:

There are no official statistics on the number of food banks, which are independent, charitable organisations.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Alex Norris: [121338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of mandating a specific workplace risk assessment for clinically extremely vulnerable employees.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: Employers' health and safety responsibilities include taking reasonable steps to protect all workers and others from the risk of transmission of coronavirus in connection with their work activities. The Covid-19 Risk Assessment identifies the control measures employers have identified that they need to take to manage the risk of transmission of coronavirus in the workplace.

As these control measures are comprehensive and apply to all workers, additional control measures for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) workers are not required.

However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advises employers to have individual discussions with their CEV employees in order to understand and resolve any workplace concerns. There is specific guidance on the HSE website to help employers protect people who are at higher risk:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/protect-people.htm> Anyone who does not feel that adequate protections are in place can contact HSE either online using their [working safely enquiry form](#) or by telephone: 0300 790 6787 lines are open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5pm.

■ Job Entry Targeted Support

Suzanne Webb: [121032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobseekers have been referred to the Job Entry Targeted Support Programme since referrals began.

Mims Davies:

To date, there have been around 41,100 referrals made to the Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) programme. This data is derived from unpublished management

information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics publication standards.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Caroline Nokes: [\[118516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many registered gateway organisations are waiting for approval from her Department before being able to commence the Kickstart scheme.

Caroline Nokes: [\[118517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of vacancies available as part of the Kickstart scheme that are currently unfilled as a result of registered gateway organisations not yet having received approval from her Department.

Mims Davies:

As of 30/11/2020, there are 292 applications from potential gateway organisations waiting for assessment. These applications represent 28,783 potential job placements. So far, applications from Gateways and employers covering 23'934 vacancies have been approved.

John Lamont: [\[121332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress has been made on rolling out the Kickstart Scheme; and what discussions he has with the devolved Administrations on that scheme.

Mims Davies:

As of 20/11/2020, the DWP's Kickstart scheme has received 4'783 total applications, 1'752 of these being from prospective gateway organisations (this includes bids made across a number of application forms from some organisations each containing different Kickstart placements). So far, applications from Gateways and employers covering 23'934 vacancies have been approved.

Officials meet colleagues in the devolved administrations regularly to discuss Kickstart and to ensure that the benefits of the scheme can be maximised and can complement existing and planned local provision for young people.

Alison McGovern: [\[122680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been received for the Kickstart scheme to date.

Mims Davies:

As of 26/11 there have been 5040 applications for funding through the DWP's Kickstart Scheme. So far, applications from Gateways and employers covering 23'934 vacancies have been approved.

Alison McGovern:

[\[122681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much has been spent on the Kickstart scheme to date; and what her projection is of expenditure on that scheme up until Spring 2021.

Mims Davies:

The Kickstart scheme is a £2bn programme to create thousands of 6-month job placements for young people aged 16-24, to improve their long term employability. Kickstart placements commenced in November 2020.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Claire Hanna:

[\[122922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether a freeze on local housing allowance levels will result in the value of housing benefit falling below the 30th percentile of local rents in the months ahead.

Will Quince:

The increase in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in April 2020 provided 1.5 million claimants with, on average, around £600 more housing support per year than they would otherwise have received. In 2021/22 all LHA rates will be maintained at their increased level, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase in the rates applied this year, providing claimants with stability during this period of uncertainty.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[122641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that the Child Maintenance Group replies to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, of 2 September 2020, on a constituent's child maintenance account, ref za53161.

Guy Opperman:

A substantive reply was sent to the hon. Member by the Child Maintenance Service on 1 December; I apologise for the long delay.

■ National Insurance

Hywel Williams:

[\[122582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to inform employers that national insurance numbers are not used as (a) proof of identity and (b) right to work in the UK.

Guy Opperman:

The National Insurance Number (NINo) is an administrative reference number used by employers to record National Insurance contributions for their employees.

Employees are advised when they receive their NINo that it is not proof of identity but that they must share it with their employer.

Possession of a National Insurance number does not demonstrate that an individual has a right to work in the UK, this is determined by Home Office legislation. A list of acceptable documents that enables an individual to demonstrate they have the right work is set out in the Employers Guide to Right to Work Checks.

<https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work>

Mary Glendon:

[122695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of British citizens who are waiting for a national insurance number to be allocated.

Guy Opperman:

The department does not hold information on the numbers of British Citizens who are waiting for a National Insurance Number (NINo) to be allocated.

The vast majority of British Citizens receive a NINo from HMRC shortly before their 16th birthday if they have been part of a Child Benefit Claim.

Mary Glendon:

[122696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what work restrictions apply to a person who does not have a national insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Work and Pensions is responsible for the allocation of National Insurance Numbers (NINos) to adults in the UK. The NINo is an administrative reference number, unique to each individual and used by both DWP and HMRC to link an individual to their National Insurance Contributions and record the payment of Social Security Benefits.

Possession of a National Insurance number does not demonstrate that an individual has a right to work in the UK, this is determined by Home Office legislation. A list of acceptable documents that enables an individual to demonstrate they have the right work is set out in the Employers Guide to Right to Work Checks.

<https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work>

■ National Insurance: Coronavirus

Hywel Williams:

[122580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress has been made on introducing a digital solution to the process of issuing national insurance numbers which will provide (a) alternative identity verification solutions and (b) reduce the need for a face-to-face identity checks.

Guy Opperman:

The department aims to reduce the reliance on a single Identity Verification Service by Quarter 2 in 2021. Part of this work is to introduce a new flexible reusable online service which will meet the needs of a wider range of customers that is not possible using a single solution. DWP will conduct the work to identify an online solution for those customers who have not been processed through the Home Office visa application process, to apply for National Insurance Numbers in the next Financial Year.

We are currently testing alternative identity verification solutions for some customer groups. This process will expand our ability to service a greater number of applicants whose identity has already been verified by another UK Government Department, primarily the Home Office, enabling us to offer an alternative to the need for face to face document examination. This will reduce the number of applicants that will be required to attend a face to face appointment following their digital application through the Apply for a NINO service.

Hywel Williams:[\[122581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the timescale of rolling out digital provision for issuing national insurance numbers to (a) Wales and (b) the rest of the UK.

Guy Opperman:

The digital system 'Apply for a NINo' is for citizens to make an on-line application for a National Insurance number. The limited trial started in mid-October 2020 and is scheduled to run until January 2021. Once we receive confirmation that the service meets Government Digital Standards, we will then be able to extend the service to all applicants. The timescales for extending this service in Wales and UK is the same.

When applying for a National Insurance number, all applicants are required to have their identity verified. This verification is completed through attendance at a face to face interview with DWP unless we are able to confirm another Government Department has already done this.

Mary Glendon:[\[122694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the planned length is of the trial of the digital system for issuing national insurance numbers; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The digital system 'Apply for a NINo' is for citizens to make an on-line application for a National Insurance number. The limited trial started in mid-October 2020 and is scheduled to run until January 2021. Once we receive confirmation that the service meets Government Digital Standards, we will then be able to extend the service to all applicants.

When applying for a National Insurance number, all applicants are required to have their identity verified. This verification is completed through attendance at a face to

face interview with DWP unless we are able to confirm another Government Department has already done this.

■ **Pension Wise: Clacton**

Giles Watling:

[122878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living in Clacton have had a Pension Wise guidance appointment by telephone or in person in the last 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

The Money and Pensions Service published annual data on pension wise appointments for 2019-2020 here:

<https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Pension-Wise-Service-Evaluation-report-2019-2020.pdf>(opens in a new tab).

This records that there were over 97k face to face and around 62k telephone appointments in 2019-20. This is the latest available annual published data.

■ **Pension Wise: North West**

Ms Angela Eagle:

[122573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people living in (a) the North West, (b) Liverpool City region, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey have had a Pension Wise guidance appointment by telephone or in person in each of the last 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

The Money and Pensions Service published annual data on pension wise appointments for 2019-2020 here:

<https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Pension-Wise-Service-Evaluation-report-2019-2020.pdf>(opens in a new tab).

This records that there were over 97k face to face and around 62k telephone appointments in 2019-20. This is the latest available annual published data.

■ **Pensions: Canada**

Chris Elmore:

[121328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government of Canada has made representations to the Government on negotiating a reciprocal social security agreement that covers the uprating of pensions.

Chris Elmore:

[121330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government of Australia has made representations to the Government on negotiating a reciprocal social security agreement that covers the uprating of pensions.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has recently received representations from the Government of Canada to negotiate a reciprocal social security agreement covering the uprating of pensions.

We have not received any recent similar representations from Australia on this issue.

Restart Programme

Alison McGovern: [\[122677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when details of the Government's Restart programme announced in the Spending Review 2020 will be published.

Alison McGovern: [\[122678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the £2.9 billion for the Government's Restart programme will be allocated.

Alison McGovern: [\[122679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of unemployed people who will receive funding from the Government's Restart programme, announced in the Spending Review 2020.

Mims Davies:

The chancellor announced at Spending Review £2.9bn for three years of referrals to Restart.

Restart will provide intensive, tailored employment support to help over 1 million people back towards sustained employment.

The commercial process will start in December, contracts will be awarded in Spring 2021, with go live Summer 2021. Further detail on the scheme will be announced in due course.

Social Security Benefits

Chris Elmore: [\[120955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the longer term potential merits of suspending the Benefit Cap.

Mims Davies:

No Assessment has been made.

Social Security Benefits: Airdrie and Shotts

Neil Gray: [\[122733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total reduction was for all benefit awards resulting from sanctions in Airdrie and Shotts constituency in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Neil Gray:

[\[122734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the total reduction was for all benefit awards resulting from sanctions in Scotland in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Stephen Timms:

[\[117930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with representatives (a) among the self-employed and (b) workers in the creative arts sector on the operation of the social security system during the covid-19 outbreak.

Stephen Timms:

[\[122547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions her Department is having with representatives of (a) Equity and (b) other similar organisations on social security support for self-employed workers in the creative industries during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 24 November 2020]: The department has met with representatives for the self-employed, such as the Federation of Small businesses (FSB) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to discuss the impact of covid-19 on independent businesses and self-employed people and the support available. We have also met with representatives from organisations including Pinewood Studios and ScreenSkills to discuss employment opportunities in the arts sector.

For those who can't work or suffer a loss of earnings due to the pandemic the government announced an unprecedented package of measures to protect millions of people's jobs and incomes, including the temporary relaxation of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for all self-employed UC claimants affected by covid-19, for the duration of the outbreak.

This means a drop in earnings due to sickness or self-isolation or as a result of the economic impact of the outbreak is reflected in claimants' awards. It ensures that the self-employed are supported by the benefit system so that they can follow Public Health England guidance on social distancing and self-isolation.

Stephen Timms:

[\[122548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance she has given to jobcentre staff on relaxing normal work search requirements for benefit claimants who are self-employed and highly experienced but temporarily unable to find work in their usual field during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The frequency of interventions that Universal Credit Work Coaches undertake with claimants is determined by the individual circumstances of the claimant, the duration of their claim, and the level of support required at that particular time. Work Coaches are not routinely undertaking Work Search Reviews with claimants who have declared themselves as Self-Employed; but are instead available to support them in seeking alternative work/careers if they require it.

State Retirement Pensions**Neil Gray:**[\[122732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all UK state pensioners have financial security in (a) the UK and (b) overseas.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to ensuring that older people are able to live with the dignity and respect they deserve. The State Pension is the foundation of state support for older people.

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide to those who meet the qualifying conditions. It is based on a person's National Insurance record without regard to nationality.

State Retirement Pensions: Australia and Canada**Chris Elmore:**[\[121329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on the policy not to uprate the UK state pensions of UK pensioners living in (a) Canada and (b) Australia; and if she will a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has no plans to change its policy on overseas pension uprating.

This is a longstanding policy which has been supported by successive Governments for over 70 years.

State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**Neil Gray:**[\[122731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions his Department has had with foreign Governments on the merits of uprating the state retirement pensions of UK pensioners living in countries where that pension is frozen.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has no plans to change its policy on uprating UK State Pensions overseas. This is a longstanding policy which has been supported by successive Governments for over 70 years.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

Afzal Khan:

[122875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2020 to Question 114313 on State Retirement Pensions: Females, if her Department will make that assessment.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to make an assessment.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Liz Saville Roberts:

[122826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to ensure that universal credit claimants know (a) during which months they should note Self-Employment Income Support Scheme income as income in their universal credit diaries and (b) how to record other SEISS information in those diaries.

Mims Davies:

We have provided guidance for claimants, including useful step-by-step process maps, on the Understanding Universal Credit website at

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/self-employment/>.

It is also made very clear in a claimant's journal that they should report SEISS payments as self-employed income when they are received, as normal, and an additional field in their journal has been provided for claimants to do this easily.

Additionally, internal guidance has been drafted and circulated to ensure our work coaches are aware of how to treat SEISS payments, along with other Coronavirus grants and schemes.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Uprating of Election Spending Limits

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):

[\[HCWS618\]](#)

Elections rely upon political parties and candidates' ability to communicate their views and commitments so that voters can make an informed decision. To this end, it is right that registered parties and nominated candidates can incur campaign expenditure, but it is also right that there are limits on this expenditure to ensure a level playing field. Many of the current statutory spending limits have not been changed since they were set out twenty years ago, with a small number raised more recently in 2014. This is a significant length of time, and has the effect of reducing the ability to campaign given inflationary costs of printing and communication.

With elections scheduled for 6 May 2021, I am making this statement to outline the Government's intention to raise the spending limits by inflation for candidates at local council elections in England in time for those May elections. This uplift would take into account the change in the value of money since these amounts were last changed and ensure that limits remain consistent with the initial intent of spending limits when considered by previous Parliaments. It makes no other substantive or real-terms change. I am keen to ensure that, where possible, parties are given notice of potential updates to electoral law well in advance of those elections. The Government is also mindful that the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic may result in a greater emphasis on postal and digital campaigning ahead of May's elections; this adds to the case for limits to be updated and uprated.

It is the Government's intention to review party and candidate spending limits for all other polls (within the legislative competence of the UK Government) next year, with a view to uprating them in line with inflation since they were originally set. This will create a baseline for regular and consistent reviews of all limits in future. We will work with stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission and the Parliamentary Parties Panel, on this process.

DEFENCE

■ Call-Out Order in Support of HMG's Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (James Heapey):

[\[HCWS619\]](#)

A new order has been made under section 56(1B) of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 to enable reservists to be called into permanent service to support HM Forces in connection to HMG's cyber and electromagnetic activities (CEMA).

CEMA involves the carrying out, synchronisation and coordination of offensive, defensive, inform and enabling activities, across the electromagnetic environment and cyberspace. Defence is committed to assisting HMG by the provision of experts in these domains from HM Forces.

As part of this support, Reserve Forces will be on standby, as part of a Whole Force approach with Regular Forces and Partners Across Government, to deliver a range of Defence outputs such as (but not limited to): the reinforcement of Regular units by providing specialist and rare knowledge, skills and experience.

The order shall take effect from the day on which it is made and shall cease to have effect 12 months from the date on which it is made.

■ Update on Mali Deployment

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS622\]](#)

I would like to provide an update to the statement made by my predecessor, the Right Honourable Member for Portsmouth North, on 22 July 2019 (HCWS1779) in which we announced the Government's intention to deploy a contribution from our Armed Forces to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

I can confirm that 300 UK personnel will have deployed to MINUSMA and completed required in-country quarantine by 22 December. The deployment comprises 250 troops from the Light Dragoons, the Royal Anglian Regiment and other attached personnel, and a further 50 forming a National Support Element.

The UK has committed to a three-year deployment to MINUSMA, with a review to be held at the 18-month point. UK personnel will deploy on six-month operational tours with a two-week rest and recuperation break. Accordingly, the first deployment of Light Dragoons will be replaced by a second contingent led by the Royal Anglian Regiment and Queens Dragoon Guards in summer 2021.

As the Foreign Secretary recently said, working alongside our development and diplomatic efforts, the UK's military contribution to UN peacekeeping is a clear illustration of how our defence and security capabilities can contribute to the UK's role as a force for good in the world. This deployment reflects our continued commitment to multilateralism and international peace and security, a responsibility we take seriously as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. It is part of a wider Government response in support of progress towards long-term and sustainable stability in Mali and the Sahel. It will help to minimise the impact of violent conflict on UK interests and strengthen partnerships between the international community and Sahel governments to improve the overall response to the crisis.

Mali is at the forefront of countries in West Africa affected by instability, with terrorist violence and conflict between communities sharply on the rise. The violence is costing lives, hindering development across one of the poorest countries in the world, and spreading to the wider region. Our contribution will provide critical capabilities to the UN mission at a vital time. We can have genuine impact on the mission's overall approach, to

help reduce the spread of conflict and insecurity, contribute to the protection of civilians, and build a sustainable peace.

Led by the Swedish UN Mission Force Commander, Lt Gen Dennis Gyllensporre, we will be working alongside over 60 nations all contributing to MINUSMA. It is a truly global collaboration with contributions being made by West African nations in the region and our traditional western allies including Sweden, Germany, Canada, France and Ireland. The largest contingents of soldiers on MINUSMA will be coming from Guinea, Chad, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, and Egypt.

The UK task force will be under the command of the Light Dragoons' Commanding Officer, Lt Col Thomas Robinson. The task force is configured for reconnaissance with their initial objective to understand the operating environment in the area around Gao so that they are well placed to support the UN Mission. This will allow MINUSMA to better plan operations and deter and respond to threats.

Our MINUSMA commitment complements existing distinct and separate commitments we have in the region, including helicopter support to the Operation BARKHANE (the French-led counter-terrorism initiative in Africa's Sahel Region), and sits within wider UK Government seeking to build stability, and support the most vulnerable populations in the region.

This is dangerous mission. We have done all we can to mitigate the risk. Our forces are among the best in the world and they have the right training, equipment and preparation to succeed. I am confident that they will have a strong impact on the ground in Mali, will bolster our standing in the United Nations and will help us in our endeavours to make the UN and its peacekeeping missions as effective as possible.

EDUCATION

■ Higher Education Covid-19 update

Minister of State for Universities (Michelle Donelan):

[[HCWS620](#)]

As a government we made the commitment that students living at university will be able to go home at the end of term if they need or choose to do so. We also recognise the importance of ensuring that students are able to return to university for the spring term. We understand that students, staff and providers need to be aware of the arrangements that will be in place for the spring term before students travel home so it has been our priority to communicate these plans as early as possible. Today, I am announcing those measures which we are putting in place to enable students to return to higher education following the winter break as safely as possible.

Government, students, staff and our wider communities greatly value the vital work of universities. That is why we are committed to ensuring that in-person teaching and university life can continue as far as possible during these unprecedented times. Universities have remained open throughout this pandemic, continuing to deliver high quality education through a blended learning approach.

The government has prioritised education, including Higher Education, so we have worked to create a plan that supports the safe return of all students who left for the winter break and the resumption of blended learning. We remain committed to ensuring that in-person teaching and university life can continue as far as possible during these unprecedented times. We also recognise the huge amount of work that higher education providers have undertaken to set up asymptomatic test sites, provide Covid-secure teaching and learning to students, and carefully manage any outbreaks, and we welcome the early successes of the asymptomatic testing programme.

That said, the large numbers of students planning to travel in the New Year has been identified by public health experts as a possible risk factor for transmission of infection. The January term start dates are naturally staggered but this staggering is much more compressed than at the start of the autumn term, so we are asking providers to plan for students to return over a longer, five-week period. This will enable universities and higher education providers to test every student upon their return.

HE providers should first plan to welcome back those students on practical courses and placements, with these students returning to campus in line with their planned start dates from 4 January. We expect providers to make assessments of the courses and students that should be brought back first, based on the requirements of the curriculum, taking into account elements of clinical, practical and specialist teaching and learning as well as the needs of their students and staff. Providers may accommodate some other students to return to campus earlier but should only do so where there is a genuine need or extenuating circumstances. These students should be able to access campus facilities but should not commence in-person lessons until face-to-face teaching of their course formally restarts.

Students who do not have a clearly defined practical element to their course will still be able to continue their studies from the start of term remotely but providers should plan for students to return gradually from 25 January 2021 and staggered over a two-week period.

Staggering the return of students to campus over five weeks has three primary purposes:

1. to provide more time and capacity for universities in partnership with National Health Service Test and Trace to continue their rapid work to roll out asymptomatic test sites within university campuses;
2. to help manage the flow of students so that as many students and staff as possible can be tested immediately upon arrival at university; and
3. to help ensure that students who have practical/assessment elements to their learning in the early part of the term can physically return to campus.

In recent months there have been developments on testing which we plan to use to facilitate the safe return of all students. We will work with higher education providers to put in place asymptomatic testing arrangements for all students on arrival to university. However, individual institutions may choose to offer tests using different testing

technologies (e.g. polymerase chain reaction, known as a PCR test), or to partner with neighbouring providers.

We also realise that this year has been incredibly difficult for students and we recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some may face financial hardship. I have now announced that we will be making available up to £20 million on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students. We will work with the Office for Students to do this, and further detail will be set out in due course.

I want to assure students, staff and their families that their welfare is our top priority. I want to thank universities for their tireless dedication in seeking to ensure safe environments for students and staff. The hard work of university staff has meant we are able to keep students and staff as safe as possible during term. We are pleased we can now announce how students can return to university for the spring term, while keeping themselves, their families, and their communities, as safe as possible.

As with all advice, this will be kept under review in light of scientific evidence, and the government will provide further advice if necessary.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Housing Adaptations Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for rough sleeping and housing (Kelly Tolhurst): [\[HCWS617\]](#)

I am delighted to announce that the Government is releasing an additional £68 million for the Disabled Facilities Grant in England. This funding boost for 2020-21 will help local authorities to provide more home adaptations and bolsters the £505 million that Government already paid to local authorities for the Disabled Facilities Grant in May, raising the headline total for the grant to £573 million this financial year.

I recognise that following the outbreak of Covid-19, local authorities have continued to display excellence, innovation, and resilience in maintaining the delivery of essential services under very challenging circumstances. The Disabled Facilities Grant can play a critical role in both preventing hospital and care home admissions and supporting smoother discharge from hospital. This additional £68 million in Disabled Facilities Grant funding will enable local authorities to deliver more home adaptations for those people with disabilities who qualify.

I am pleased to confirm that Spending Review 2020 includes an investment of £573 million in Disabled Facilities Grant funding for 2021-22, bringing Government's investment into the Disabled Facilities Grant to over £4 billion since 2010. This further outlines our continued commitment to help older and disabled people to live independently and safely, and will provide some welcome certainty to local authorities as they plan their budgets for the coming financial year.

The additional funding for 2020-21 is being provided by the Department of Health and Social Care as part of the Better Care Fund and will be paid by my Department to London

Boroughs, Unitary Authorities, and County Councils on 9 December. In two tier areas, Counties must pass the appropriate Disabled Facilities Grant funding to their District councils.

TREASURY

■ Review Implementation

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[[HCWS621](#)]

The Loan Charge was announced at Budget 2016 to tackle disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes, which paid income in the form of loans that were not taxed or subject to National Insurance contributions.

In September 2019, the Government asked the former Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Amyas Morse to lead an independent review of the Loan Charge policy and its implementation. Sir Amyas Morse presented his conclusions in a report published in December 2019 and made twenty recommendations for change. In response the Government accepted all but one of the recommendations (HCWS14).

The Government accepted Sir Amyas's recommendation that HMRC should report to Parliament on their implementation of the Loan Charge once the changes had been implemented and before the end of 2020.

HMRC have today published their report setting out the actions they have taken to deliver the recommendations : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-loan-charge-review-hmrc-report-on-implementation> .

This has been published together with their review of HMRC's future policy on interest rates: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/interest-rate-review>.

A copy of the report has been shared with the Treasury Committee, Public Accounts Committee and Lords Economic Affairs Committee. The report will also be deposited in the Libraries of the House.