



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 4 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:40 P.M., 04 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121121\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether she plans to require her Department and its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if she will make a statement.

Michael Ellis:

The Attorney Generals' Office (AGO), the Government Legal Department (GLD), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) have taken no steps to promote the use of credit unions within their organisations and have no immediate plans to do so.

■ Emergency Services: Staff

Marco Longhi:

[\[121385\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps she has taken to ensure (a) offences against emergency workers are prosecuted and (b) the CPS is effective in prosecuting offenders against emergency workers.

Michael Ellis:

The Law Officers regularly discuss CPS performance across a range of offence types with the DPP, including with relation to offences against emergency workers. This includes scrutiny through the Ministerial Strategic Board.

Our frontline emergency workers provide vital protection to public safety, and it is essential that we also protect them. The CPS works hard to hold perpetrators to account and led on taking 23,628 offences against emergency workers to court in 2019/20.

Protecting emergency workers has also been a focus for the CPS during the pandemic – the DPP has made it clear that when an individual threatens to 'infect' an emergency worker by deliberately coughing or spitting, it will be treated extremely seriously by prosecutors.

The Government welcomed the introduction of the interim Charging Protocol by CPS and the police, which came into effect on 1 April 2020. This protocol prioritises assaults against emergency workers, including COVID-19 related offending.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**■ Artificial Intelligence****Andrew Griffith:**[\[121054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the artificial intelligence industry.

Amanda Solloway:

The Industrial Strategy AI and Data Grand Challenge sets out the Government's vision to make the UK a global centre for AI and data innovation, which includes developing the skills that will contribute to building the best environment for AI development and deployment.

In addition, The AI Sector Deal brings together commitments from Government, Industry and Academia in a near £0.95bn package of support to promote the adoption and use of AI.

The attached Annex lists the achievements so far under the Sector Deal.

We are refreshing the Industrial Strategy to reflect the UK's changing priorities, our new relationship with the European Union and responding to the ongoing global pandemic. It will build on our achievements, enable the UK to maintain its position as a world leader in AI and support ground-breaking innovations, whilst helping to drive economic growth across the country.

Attachments:

1. Annex [Question 121054 - Annex.docx]

■ Computer Software**Andrew Griffith:**[\[121053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the quantum computing industry.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government provides a range of support measures for the digital economy and the tech sector. From its inception in 2014, the UK's ten-year National Quantum Technologies Programme (NQTP) is set to provide £1bn public and private funding for the development of quantum technologies.

The programme funds a range of activities to support the growth of the quantum computing industry, including £61m for collaborative technology development through the quantum technology hubs. The Quantum Computing and Simulation (QCS) Hub has 17 academic and 29 industrial partners across the breadth of the UK. The QCS Hub comprises a partnership resource fund to aid collaborations with new partners and to overcome potential commercialisation problems in the emerging QC landscape.

The Wave 3 Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund Commercialising Quantum Technologies Challenge (ISCF) funds projects to support commercialisation, and supply chain development, or bring consortia together to explore applications (representing c£35m for quantum computing and related components to-date).

Within the recently launched National Quantum Computing Centre (NQCC) £93m has been allocated to help deliver quantum computing capabilities for the UK and support the growth of the industry. The vision is to be a world class centre, where government, academia and industry work collaboratively to develop quantum computing, securing this strategically important technology for the benefit of the UK.

The Centre will support the development of a quantum ready economy; one that can take advantage of the opportunities presented by quantum computing to generate and retain value across the economy, achieve societal benefits and maintain national security.

In addition, two EPSRC Prosperity Partnerships are focussed on growing the quantum computing software industry in the UK and developing quantum computing hardware (between UCL and Google (£1.9m), and between St Andrews and MSquared (£1.4m).

■ **Conditions of Employment: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[120926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to publish guidance on the rights of disabled workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[120927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will meet with (a) disabled people and (b) disability organisations to co-produce guidance for employers on the rights of disabled employees during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government has published extensive guidance on employment and safer working throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. This can be found on GOV.UK and through the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Further guidance on employment rights and aspects of good practice has been published by other bodies such as ACAS and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Government has also produced guidance around some new situations which have arisen from the Covid-19 outbreak, for example for those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable and on self-isolation. This suite of guidance covers the employment rights of disabled people alongside other groups in the workforce.

The Government continues to support disabled employees to access assistive technology and other forms of support they need to remain in work, including during the Covid-19 outbreak. Through the Disability Confident scheme, we are engaging employers and providing them with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to

attract, recruit, retain and develop disabled people in the workplace. Our new Employer Help site provides advice on recruitment and employment of disabled people, explaining how Disability Confident and Access to Work can help businesses to ensure their practices are fair and inclusive.

Ruth Jones: [\[121011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether her Department plans to issue guidance to employers on the rights of disabled workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ruth Jones: [\[121012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will meet with (a) disabled people and (b) representatives of disability organisations to co-produce information for employers on the rights of disabled employees during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government has published extensive guidance on employment and safer working throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. This can be found on GOV.UK and through the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Further guidance on employment rights and aspects of good practice has been published by other bodies such as ACAS and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Government has also produced guidance around some new situations which have arisen from the Covid-19 outbreak, for example for those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable and on self-isolation. This suite of guidance covers the employment rights of disabled people alongside other groups in the workforce.

The Government continues to support disabled employees to access assistive technology and other forms of support they need to remain in work, including during the Covid-19 outbreak. Through the Disability Confident scheme, we are engaging employers and providing them with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to attract, recruit, retain and develop disabled people in the workplace. Our new Employer Help site provides advice on recruitment and employment of disabled people, explaining how Disability Confident and Access to Work can help businesses to ensure their practices are fair and inclusive.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas: [\[121123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 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.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department is committed to providing a strong employee benefit offer to staff. At present, there are no plans to introduce access to a credit union via a payroll deduction service.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[121028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the ability of the electricity network to support the mass charging of electric vehicles.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is investing more than £1.3bn to support new EV charging infrastructure, including £950m on future proofing electricity network capacity along the Strategic Road Network.

Electricity network operators at both the distribution and transmission levels are responsible for assessing the need for new investment to support electric vehicle charging as part of their business plans, which are then approved by Ofgem, the independent regulator. My officials regularly meet with network operators across Great Britain to discuss the impacts of the electric vehicle transition, including how the increasing demand will be managed.

Electric vehicles also present an opportunity for consumers to contribute to the efficient management of electricity supply and demand and share the benefits of doing so through smart technologies.

The necessary investment in infrastructure and the adoption of smart charging will ensure that the electricity network is able to support the mass charging of electric vehicles.

■ Energy Supply

Andrew Selous:

[\[120822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Principal councils are running local electricity schemes.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

This information is not compiled centrally, but all councils have a role to play in our transition to Net Zero. We are helping them through funding for Public Sector decarbonisation, Heat decarbonisation and support for Electric Vehicle charging.

■ Fuel Poverty

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[121119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of exemptions on levels of fuel poverty.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The minimum standard energy efficiency regulations provide a limited number of temporary exemptions for privately rented properties with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of F or G, where it is not technically advisable or financially feasible to bring those properties up to an EPC E rating. The majority of exemptions

available under these regulations are valid for a period of five years, effective from their date of registration.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[121117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of private rented households that will benefit from the Green Homes Grant.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We have estimated that the Green Homes Grant scheme, which is open to all homeowners including landlords, could support improvements in up to 600,000 homes. We do not collect information on whether applicants who are landlords let their property to private residential or social tenants as part of the scheme.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[121118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to record the tenure of the properties that use the Green Homes Grant.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The following information relating to the tenure type of the property is collected through the application process of the Green Homes Grant (GHG) Voucher Scheme.

Property owner:

- Owner-occupier
- Landlord

If the property is owned by a landlord, the following information is also collected:

- Individual (whether sole or in a group)
- Trustee
- Corporate entity (including company, LLP, CIC, Corporation sole)
- Overseas companies
- Charities

As part of the application process for the Voucher Scheme, we do not ask landlords to declare if they let their property to private residential or social tenants. Therefore we are unable to provide information on the tenure types of landlord-let properties.

Similarly, for the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) element of the GHG, applications for funding under Phase 1 of the scheme do not require local authorities to submit specific details on the types of properties they plan to upgrade. However, it is a requirement of the scheme that local authorities will submit regular GHG LAD data reports to the Household Energy Efficiency Statistics team throughout the project delivery period, and these will include data on property tenures of the homes they are working to upgrade.

■ Local Growth Deals

Louise Haigh: [\[120918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding was allocated to local growth deals in 2019-20.

Paul Scully:

Levelling up is central to the Government's agenda and we are working with local leaders to ensure every region, city and town prosper.

As part of this, £733,678,508 has been allocated in funding through the Local Growth Fund for local growth deals in 2019-20.

■ Pubs Code etc. Regulations 2016

Dr Liam Fox: [\[121140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to include companies with under 500 properties in the 2016 Pubs Code Regulations.

Paul Scully:

The Government will retain the current scope of the Pubs Code in England and Wales, which excludes pub-owning companies with fewer than 500 tied pubs, provided that these companies continue to engage in the voluntary rent dispute and complaints procedures and the level of complaints remains low. The Government will keep the threshold under review.

■ Research: Students

Esther McVey: [\[120863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of UK Research and Innovation's decision to withdraw extra grants for PhD students whose research has been affected by covid-19 on (a) those students and (b) long term research environment in the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

UKRI have acted to support PhD students during the pandemic. In March, UKRI worked to ensure that all the students it funds would continue to receive their maintenance stipend during the lockdown and would not have to suspend their studies; UKRI-funded students in receipt of a costed extension will continue to receive this stipend during their extension period. In April it was announced that UKRI-funded PhD students in the final year, whose studies have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic would be provided with additional support.

A review of the initial UKRI COVID-19 extension policy was published, bringing together evidence from students, grant holders and university management teams. On the 11th November, UKRI provided a further £19.1 million of funding, which particularly aims to support students who have recently gone into their final year of study (funding end date before or on 30 September 2021) and those with ongoing

support needs. Students with ongoing support needs include disabled students, students with a long-term illness, those who are neurodivergent or those with caring responsibilities.

Combined, these two interventions have meant that UKRI has made over £60 million of financial support available to students most impacted by the pandemic. It is estimated that this funding is available for up to 12,000 students (over half of the students that UKRI funds). We are encouraging all PhD students to discuss with their supervisors how projects can be adjusted to complete their doctoral education within their funded period. We will continue to monitor how the pandemic is affecting PhD students and the wider research system.

In regard to the long term research environment, all UKRI funded PhD students are guaranteed their funding within their funded period. The support noted above should ensure the vast majority of students are able to complete their studies on time, or later with support, and able to embark on the next step of their research career.

■ **Spaceflight: Cornwall and Sutherland**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[121410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department is making in delivering the proposed spaceport in (a) Cornwall and (b) Sutherland.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK Space Agency is monitoring progress across all potential UK spaceports, and are aiming for the first UK launches to take place in 2022.

UK Space Agency awarded £7.35m to Virgin Orbit to support their plans to launch from Cornwall, with the spaceport being delivered separately by Spaceport Cornwall. The UK Space Agency engage regularly with Cornwall Spaceport as part of their oversight of the Virgin Orbit grant and they have recently finalised their Airport Development Implementation Plan for approval. Once approved, works can commence on airport development to meet the requirements for launch operations.

The Government also provided £2.5m to Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to develop Space Hub Sutherland in Scotland, and £5.5m to Orbex to build a new rocket to launch from Sutherland. HIE have successfully secured planning approval from Highland Council, and Orbex are making good progress with developing their launch vehicle.

■ **Urban Areas: Coronavirus**

Alberto Costa:

[\[121286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support small town centres in recovering from the economic effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our high streets and town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak. Now more than ever, it is vital that we continue to help our local economies by supporting town centres and high streets, adapt and evolve.

This Government has provided a comprehensive package of support of well over £200 billion. Many of the measures introduced, including loan schemes, tax deferrals, Self Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, remain open and have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

On 25 May, the Government announced the £50m Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF) to support Local Authorities in England to safely reopen their high streets, town centres and other commercial areas through Covid-19 related advice, awareness and practical measures to support safe trading.

On 22 October, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer also announced that further grant funding will be made available to support businesses in Very High Covid-19 local alert levels that are required to close by law in order to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. Funding for business grants will also be provided via local authorities to support businesses in High Covid-19 local alert level areas that are not required to close but will have had their trade affected, particularly by restrictions on household mixing.

Our immediate response to Covid-19 builds on an ongoing programme of interventions. This includes the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, where we brought forward over £80m funding this year to support immediate improvements in 101 towns selected for deals. The fund will support local areas in England to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability.

Government is also providing support through the High Streets Task Force, helping local leaders in their work revitalising their high streets and town centres by providing proactive support to local areas to develop data-driven innovative strategies and connect local areas to relevant experts. The High Streets Task Force is rolling out its expert, training and data offer across the country, and has launched a range of online support.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Scotland**John Lamont:**[\[121333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people in Scotland are in receipt of the Warm Home Discount.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

In 2018/19, the latest scheme year for which we have data, £341 million was spent on energy bills support for low income and vulnerable households across Great

Britain. The scheme provided 2,220,194 rebates, worth £140, to Core Group and Broader Group recipients, and over £30 million worth of support through Industry Initiatives activities across Great Britain.

The breakdown of scheme spend, as well as the report for the 2018/19 scheme year, can be found in the Ofgem scheme reports: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/social-programmes/warm-home-discount/warm-home-discount-reports-and-statistics>.

■ Wind Power

Steve Double:

[120893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the maritime industry on that industry's role in supporting the Government's targets for increasing offshore wind production.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

On 6 October, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the Government is increasing its 2030 offshore wind ambition from 30GW to 40GW, including a new ambition of 1GW of floating offshore wind and that £160 million will be made available to upgrade ports and infrastructure.

This increase in offshore wind capacity over the next decade will ensure the UK remains the biggest market in the world and represents an opportunity for companies across the UK, including those in the maritime sector.

The Department has regular engagement with the maritime sector.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[121160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of energy comes from wind power in the UK.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

In 2019, electricity generated by wind power accounted for 2.9 per cent of total energy consumption^[1]^[2] and 19.8 per cent of total electricity generation^[3] in the UK.

[1] Total inland energy consumption is published in DUKES 1.1.1 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/energy-chapter-1-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

[2] Total consumption of wind power is published in DUKES 6.6 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/renewable-sources-of-energy-chapter-6-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

[3] Wind's percentage share of electricity generation is published in Energy Trends

6.1 at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/energy-trends-section-6-renewables>

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[121161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of wind power.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Offshore Wind sector is driving forward a range of innovations to improve efficiency and bring down costs, and my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has recently announced the UK's ambition to have 40GW of wind power by 2030.

Through our Energy Innovation Programme we have supported cutting edge companies such as providing Edinburgh based, ACT Blade, £1.46m to design, engineer and manufacture a prototype extra light-weight blade for offshore wind use.

As set out in the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan, wind is one of our key priorities under our new £1 billion Net Zero Innovation programme.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[121163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to increase the use of wind as a major power source in the UK.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

On 6 October, the Government set out its plans for a Green Recovery, which included an increased ambition of 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030 which would include as part of the 40GW a new target for floating offshore wind to deliver 1GW of energy by 2030 - over 15 times the current volumes worldwide. This plan will help to build a world-leading offshore wind industry with the ability to generate more power by 2030 from offshore wind than every home in the UK uses now, and bring new jobs and growth to our ports and coastal regions.

In March, the Government announced the inclusion of onshore wind in the next Contracts for Difference allocation round, which is scheduled to open in late 2021 and which will aim to support double the capacity of renewable energy compared to the last round. On 24th November, the Government published a response to a consultation on proposed amendments to the Contract for Difference (CfD) scheme for the next allocation round. This confirmed a series of amendments to the CfD scheme so that it may continue to support the deployment of low carbon electricity generation, including the creation of a new auction pot for offshore wind projects, and the introduction of floating offshore wind as an eligible technology class.

■ Wind Power: Impact Assessments

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[121162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial strategy, what recent environmental impact assessments have been undertaken on the effect of wind power on the (a) land and b) sea environments.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Offshore and onshore wind developers are required to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment as part of any planning application. The Environmental Impact

Assessment affords protection to the environment by ensuring that the planning authority considers any significant effects as part of the decision-making process and that the local community are informed of any impacts.

For onshore wind projects in England, the local authority is the primary decision maker for all sizes of schemes. We introduced planning tests in 2015 that ensure that local communities have the final say on onshore wind farm developments. This means that a local community can raise concerns based on the publicly available information in the Environmental Impact Assessment, and a development cannot be granted permission if these concerns have not been addressed. Copies of Environmental Impact Assessments are usually available on local authority websites.

Planning applications for offshore wind projects in England and Wales above 100MW capacity are determined by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime. In respect of the Secretary of State's decisions on applications for development consent made so far in 2020, Environmental Impact Assessments were carried out on the Thanet Extension Offshore Wind Farm and the Norfolk Vanguard Offshore Wind Farm, details of which are available on The Planning Inspectorate's website - <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

In addition, Defra has undertaken strategic assessments of the environmental impacts of offshore wind developments, including assessments of cabling impacts, floating wind technologies and underwater noise. Given the Government's ambitions for offshore wind, Defra is working closely with other Government bodies, the Crown Estate, industry and wider stakeholders to prepare for and mitigate against the environmental impacts of growth in this sector. Included in this is the Offshore Wind Enabling Actions programme, a £4.3m action programme to be jointly run by Defra and BEIS to deliver upon its aims.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Business: Brexit

Darren Henry:

[\[121394\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government has taken to help ensure (a) businesses and (b) people are prepared for the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

To help businesses get ready, we have launched a major communications campaign in the UK and EU urging businesses to visit gov.uk/transition to take action now, get their personalised list of actions and subscribe to updates to find out when things change. The Department for International Trade is also running a campaign ensuring that businesses in the EU are ready for 1 January 2021.

The Government has produced an easy-to-use checker tool which can be accessed via gov.uk/transition for businesses and citizens to find out exactly what they need to do to prepare.

DEFENCE

■ Shipbuilding

Bob Blackman:

[\[120852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the devolved Administrations on support for the UK shipbuilding industry.

Mr Ben Wallace:

In my role as Shipbuilding Tsar, I am acutely aware of the value of shipbuilding in the devolved nations. I am leading work across Government to deliver on my vision to create an innovative and competitive shipbuilding sector which supports jobs, skills and prosperity throughout the UK. The Ministry of Defence regularly holds discussions with the Devolved Administrations and with UK industry within each nation. Defence Ministers will continue to engage with Devolved Administrations and other stakeholders as we progress this Government's shipbuilding agenda.

■ Technology: Disclosure of Information

Owen Thompson:

[\[120921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to prevent the transfer of classified technology to agents of foreign states.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence employs a comprehensive and complementary system of controls to manage, protect, track and control the transfer of classified technology. These controls include contract law, backed up by legislation governing the use, management and transfer of classified information, together with associated contractual conditions governing IT and Cyber security, physical security measures, vetting of personnel, and export controls. These controls are underpinned by Foreign Direct Investment screening arrangements, materiel track and trace systems, controls on academic research, IT system accreditation and counter-eavesdropping technical controls as well as the implementation of robust internal security policies by both Defence and industry.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Internet Service Providers: Repairs and Maintenance**

Catherine West: [\[121879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure Internet Service Providers promptly complete repair work to ensure a reliable internet connection.

Matt Warman:

To protect telecoms consumers the government has strengthened Ofcom's powers through the Digital Economy Act 2017. As a result, in April 2019, Ofcom introduced a voluntary [automatic compensation](#) scheme for customers of broadband and landline services for when things go wrong, such as missed engineer appointments, delayed start of a service or delayed repairs. BT, Sky, TalkTalk, Virgin Media, Zen Internet, Utility Warehouse and Hyperoptic have all signed up to the scheme.

The scheme is designed to help ensure customers receive appropriate redress when things go wrong and, over time, incentivise companies to improve their service. Following a [review](#) of the scheme in August 2020 Ofcom concluded that the scheme was launched successfully, that it now covers around 80% of the broadband market and that it has increased compensation payments to consumers where repairs or installations had been delayed.

EDUCATION**■ Department of Education: Credit Unions**

Gareth Thomas: [\[121125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Nick Gibb:

The facility to deduct money and send this to a credit union is not currently offered by the Department or its Executive Agencies. However, the feasibility and costs of doing so would be considered if there were sufficient demand.

■ Education: West Midlands

Marco Longhi: [\[121384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure children and young people in (a) Dudley, (b) Sedgley and (c) Gornal and Woodsetton can catch up on the education missed during the 2019-20 school year as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government recognises that all children and young people have had their education disrupted due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department has committed to a £1 billion catch-up package to directly tackle the impact of lost teaching time on children in England.

The catch-up premium, worth £650 million, provides universal funding which is delivered in 3 payments to schools over the 2020/21 academic year. The Department expects this funding will be spent on the additional activities required to support pupils to catch up in their education. To help schools make the best use of this funding, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has published a support guide for schools with evidence-based approaches to catch up, available here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/covid-19-support-guide-for-schools/#nav-covid-19-support-guide-for-schools1>. EEF have published a further school planning guide: 2020 to 2021, available here:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/guide-to-supporting-schools-planning/>.

The first payment of the catch-up premium funding has been made to schools. The autumn payment and provisional allocations for schools in the local authority of Dudley is available to view here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-catch-up-premium-provisional-allocations>. These allocations are based on the published rates and

school census data from October 2019. The final allocations will be re-calculated once the October 2020 school census data is available.

Alongside this, the catch-up package includes a National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for disadvantaged children and young people. This scheme will provide additional, targeted support for disadvantaged 5 to 16 year olds who need the most help to catch up. The programme has 2 pillars which can be accessed by schools. Firstly, schools will be able to access high-quality, subsidised tuition from approved Tuition Partners. Schools in Dudley, Sedgley or Gornal and Woodsetton can access Tuition Partners in their area here: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/ntp-tuition-partners>. The second pillar supports schools in the most disadvantaged areas to employ in-house academic mentors who can provide small group and one-to-one tuition to selected pupils. If schools in Dudley, Sedgley or Gornal and Woodsetton would like to check their eligibility or register their interest for a mentor, they can do so here:

<https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/hire-academic-mentors>.

In addition to the 5 to 16 programme, the NTP will also provide funding to support to small group tuition for 16 to 19 years olds and the improvement of early language skills for reception-aged children. Information about tuition for 16 to 19 year olds is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-16-to-19-tuition-fund>. Information about the improvement of early language skills for reception-age children is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catch-up-premium-coronavirus-covid-19/the-reception-year-early-language-programme-neli>.

■ Environment Protection: Training

Andrew Bowie:

[120963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to work with (a) the oil and gas sector and (b) other parts of the private sector to support the technical and vocational skills training required to achieve the Prime Minister's ten point plan for a green industrial revolution.

Gillian Keegan:

The oil and gas sector has a key role to play as we move to a net zero economy and this Government has committed to supporting this energy transition with a transformational North Sea Transition Deal. The focus of this deal will be on ensuring the sector can support the energy transition and anchoring the supply chain across the UK. This also includes a focus on skills, supporting high-quality jobs in new energy technologies that will help to decarbonise our economy.

Private sector engagement through employers is also key to our work in helping shape future policies and programmes. The new Green Jobs Taskforce, which was launched on 12 November 2020, has been set up to help the UK build back greener and deliver the skilled workforce needed to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is a joint initiative between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education.

Working with employers and relevant stakeholders such as BP and the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), the Taskforce will develop an action plan to support 2 million good-quality, green jobs and the skills needed by 2030, supporting the UK to transition to a net zero economy and deliver a green recovery.

One key aim of the Taskforce is to identify the support needed for workers transitioning from high carbon industries such as oil and gas and how to best mobilise their skills for a Green Industrial Revolution.

Taskforce members will represent views of businesses, employees and the skills sector. Involvement in this work will not be limited only to Taskforce members, and there will be opportunities for a wider set of stakeholders, including the private sector, to contribute.

Details of the Taskforce including a full list members can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-launches-taskforce-to-support-drive-for-2-million-green-jobs-by-2030>.

We are also working closely with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education who are convening a Green Apprenticeships Advisory Panel to guide the Institute in identifying existing apprenticeships that support the green economy and encouraging trailblazers to align those apprenticeships to net zero and wider sustainability objectives. The Panel will also advise where there is a need for new apprenticeships to be created by employer groups. The Institute will be working to ensure that apprenticeships play their part in helping workers reskill and support a move to green sector jobs.

The ECITB grant also supports a wide range of training in the oil and gas sector, from craft, apprenticeships, and technical training to project management. The ECITB's recently announced COVID-19 support package is directly focused on the oil and gas sector, including the 'Train to Retain' initiative, which will support the retention and development of graduates and apprentices, ensuring that vital engineering skills are secured in the industry.

■ GCSE

Daisy Cooper:

[121025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether students re-sitting their GCSE exams this Autumn can have their coursework and practical work taken into account to the same proportion in the awarding of their final grade, as they would have done had their exams not been cancelled.

Nick Gibb:

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Dame Glenys Stacey, to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[120785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many school pupils have tested positive for covid-19 since 1 September 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold COVID-19 testing data.

We collect data on the open status of schools, the number of schools that have indicated they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment, and the total number of pupils reported absent due to a confirmed COVID-19 case. The 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>.

On 19 November 2020, 18,000 pupils in state-funded schools were reported absent due to a confirmed case of COVID-19. This data is collected at school level, not pupil level. Therefore, we cannot estimate a total for the number of pupils absent since the beginning of term.

Please note that Public Health England (PHE) leads in holding data on infection, incidence, and COVID-19 cases overall. PHE publishes data on COVID-19 incidents by institution, including educational settings, which can be found through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-report>.

■ Schools: Finance**Theresa Villiers:**[\[120831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of the catch-up funding for schools announced in the Spending Review 2020 is (a) new and (b) the subject of previous Government announcements.

Nick Gibb:

The Spending Review announcement allows us to carry on delivering on our £1 billion catch up package, including £350 million on the National Tutoring Programme, and extending the success of this ambitious programme for another year. This will ensure that a pupil's circumstances are not a barrier to getting the support they need to unlock their potential. Our £1 billion catch up package helps schools to address the learning loss their pupils are facing due to the COVID-19 outbreak and also includes a £650 million Catch-up Premium which schools can use based on their pupils' specific needs.

■ Schools: West Sussex**Andrew Griffith:**[\[121064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that West Sussex schools receive equitable levels of funding under the National Funding Formula.

Nick Gibb:

West Sussex are receiving an extra £29.7 million in the financial year 2020-21 through the schools National Funding Formula (NFF). This is equivalent to an increase of 5.6% in per pupil funding, compared to last year – above the national average of 4.2%.

West Sussex also attract an extra £23.9 million in the provisional schools NFF allocations for the financial year 2021-22. This is equivalent to an increase of 3.8% in per pupil funding, compared to last year – above the national average of 3.1%.

The NFF continues to distribute funding fairly, based on the needs of schools and their pupil cohorts. The formula is levelling up school funding and delivering resources where they are needed most, while ensuring that every school is attracting at least 2% more pupil-led funding per pupil.

Next year, every primary school will also receive at least £4,000 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £5,150 per pupil, delivering on the government's pledge to level up the lowest funded schools. On top of that, all schools will receive additional funds to cover additional teachers' pay and pension costs. This adds a further £180 and £265 respectively to the minimum per pupil amounts.

In the financial year 2021-22 we are also increasing the extra support the NFF provides for small and remote schools, primarily serving rural communities. Primary schools attracting this funding will be allocated up to £45,000 through the NFF's sparsity factor – a significant increase from £26,000 this year. This will be the first step

towards further expanding the support the NFF offers small and remote schools, with further changes planned from the financial year 2022-23.

■ Social Mobility

Andrew Griffith:

[121062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to promote social and economic mobility throughout the UK.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to promoting opportunity throughout the UK.

The Social Mobility Commission – an arm’s length body sponsored by the Department for Education – has a statutory responsibility to monitor social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It carries out this responsibility by appraising action on social mobility via their annual monitoring report laid in Parliament, making recommendations to the government and conducting other evidence-based research reports they publish throughout the year. The Social Mobility Commission’s reports are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission>.

A child’s earliest years are crucial to boosting economic and social mobility, which is why the government has invested in childcare places for the most disadvantaged 2 year olds, who are eligible for 15 hours of free childcare a week to give them a great start in life. Over one million disadvantaged 2 year olds have benefited from 15 hours of free childcare since the programme began in September 2013. Early years settings will continue to benefit from a planned £3.6 billion funding in the 2020-21 financial year to create free early education and childcare places for children.

Likewise, a world-class education system that works for everyone is the best way to give everyone the chance to make the most of their talents and give them the foundations to live happy and independent lives. That is why the government is investing over £7 billion more in schools by the 2022-23 financial year, compared to the 2019-20 financial year, plus additional funding to cover pension costs.

To support young people’s employment prospects, the government is investing £500 million in a package of support to ensure young people have the skills and training to go on to high-quality, secure and fulfilling employment. Adult skills are key in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage. Starting next year, the government is providing £3 billion (£2.5 billion for England) for the National Skills Fund to help people learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

To address economic mobility, this government is committed to levelling up opportunities across the UK, supporting people into employment and those on low pay. In its Plan for Jobs, the government has announced unprecedented support to help unemployed people in Great Britain find a job, and the 2020 Spending Review provides additional funding to build on this commitment. A link to the Plan for Jobs scheme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>.

For those on low pay, the government is making progress towards its long-term ambition for the National Living Wage (NLW) to reach two-thirds of median earnings by 2024. In April 2021, workers on the NLW will see a pay increase to £8.91 an hour, a rise of 2.2%.

■ Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment

Marco Longhi:

[121380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teachers in (i) Dudley and (ii) England.

Nick Gibb:

It is a top priority of the Government to ensure that we continue to attract, retain, and develop the high quality teachers we need to inspire the next generation. The Department is moving forward with delivering the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, which the Government published in January 2019:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786856/DFE_Teacher_Retention_Strategy_Report.pdf. This includes commitments to reduce teacher workload, improve continuing professional development, and offer greater opportunities for flexible working.

The Department has started to roll out the Early Career Framework (ECF) – the biggest teaching reform in a generation – to provide the solid foundations for a successful career in teaching: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-career-framework-reforms>. This will be backed by up to £130 million a year in funding when fully rolled out in 2021. Early roll-out from autumn 2020 is taking place in selected areas (such as the North East, Greater Manchester, Bradford, and Doncaster).

The new Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework, published in November 2019 for implementation from September 2020, is a mandatory core minimum entitlement for all trainees, and will work coherently with the ECF to ensure that all new teachers benefit from at least 3 years of evidence-based training, across ITT and into induction. More information about the ITT Core Content Framework is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-core-content-framework>.

The Department is also launching new National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) from September 2021. The new NPQs will offer high quality professional development for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in high quality teaching practice, to those leading multiple schools across trusts. More information about the reform of NPQs is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-npqs-reforms/national-professional-qualifications-npqs-reforms>.

We know there is further to go in some subjects. That is why we have put in place a range of measures, including bursaries worth up to £24,000 and scholarships worth up to £26,000, to encourage talented trainees towards key subjects such as

chemistry, computing, Mathematics, and physics. Further guidance about early career payments for teachers is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-career-payments-guidance-for-teachers-and-schools>.

Whilst the implementation of these commitments will support all schools, the Department recognises that some schools and local areas face greater challenges with recruitment and retention than others.

To supplement the national strategy, we are also delivering targeted programmes to support recruitment and retention in challenging areas, including funding a range of regionally targeted initiatives. Eligible Mathematics teachers in Dudley will be able to apply for uplifted early-career payments of £7,500 in their third and fifth years of teaching if they started their training in the 2018/19 or 2019/20 academic years. Eligible Mathematics, physics, chemistry, and languages teachers in Dudley will also be able to apply for £3000 per year in their second, third, and fourth years of teaching if they started training in the 2020/21 academic year.

■ Union Learning Fund

Jon Trickett:

[\[120797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Union Learning Fund is due to end in April 2021.

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. All the money will be invested in skills and retraining that will be fully accessible to everyone.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[121030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to work with the farming community to tackle difficulties arising from the bad harvest in 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has established the UK Agricultural Market Monitoring Group (UKAMMG) which is meeting on a trial basis during the transition period and will go 'live' on 01/01/21. It monitors UK agricultural markets, which includes barley and other grains, including price, supply, trade and recent developments, enabling it to provide forewarning of any atypical market movements. We engage regularly with arable stakeholders to understand and respond to concerns and issues raised by the farming community.

An extremely wet winter followed by a dry spring, have provided us with difficult harvest conditions this year. In March this year, the Government announced new measures to help farmers recover from recent flooding. The Government has supported farmers through relaxing crop diversification requirements, known as the "three crop rule", as farmers in flooded areas had suggested they would have difficulty complying with the rule this year.

We are actively supporting farmers in their planting decisions as the transition period ends and we head into 2021. The landmark Agriculture Act, which has just received Royal Assent, allows the Government to simplify the Basic Payment Scheme and cut red tape faced by farmers. With effect from the 2021 scheme year, farmers will no longer have to comply with the so-called greening requirements.

The Government has granted approximately 1,700 farmers and land managers financial support to build resilience in their business models ahead of the changes through the agricultural transition period between 2021-27. The projects cover a range of business and wellbeing support approaches and measures across different sectors and regions to improve the resilience and mental health of farmers. Defra will closely monitor and evaluate these projects to support decisions on how to provide stronger support throughout the beginning of the transition period.

■ Clinical Waste: Sri Lanka**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[120860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an inquiry to determine how shipping containers containing medical waste were exported from the UK to Sri Lanka between September 2017 and January 2018.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) as the competent authority for waste shipments for England, is proactively engaging with the authorities in Sri Lanka regarding the 263 containers of waste being returned to England and is leading the investigation on this matter. Despite media reports suggesting that medical waste was illegally shipped from England to Sri Lanka, the EA has not received any indication or evidence from the Sri Lankan authorities to corroborate those reports. Unless or until the EA receive such evidence to the contrary or come across it ourselves, it is the view of the EA that these media reports are incorrect and misleading.

With 31 containers now back on English soil, EA enforcement officers will seek to confirm the types of waste shipped, who exported it and the producer of the waste. Those responsible could face a custodial sentence of up to two years, an unlimited fine, and the recovery of money and assets gained through the course of criminal activity.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Credit Unions**Gareth Thomas:**[\[121126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural 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.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra does not currently have the facility for employees to join a credit union through payroll deductions. Staff can make arrangements to contribute to a credit union via direct debit.

The department is currently investigating options for updating the employee benefits offer for staff, including the potential for payroll deducted savings and affordable borrowing through credit unions.

Food**Stuart Anderson:**[\[121361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his timeline is for the second part of the National Food Strategy; and how members of the public can engage with that strategy.

Victoria Prentis:

In 2019, Defra commissioned Henry Dimbleby to carry out an independent review of the food system. Part Two of the independent review is expected to be published in Spring 2021 and the Government has committed to responding to this final report with a Food Strategy White Paper within six months.

The independent review held a call for evidence in autumn 2019 and received a large number of responses from the public. The review also held a public dialogue process throughout 2020, engaging with 200 members of the public from five geographic locations to understand their values and priorities relating to the food system. It will

continue to undertake a wide-ranging engagement programme as part of its development process.

■ Forests: Environment Protection

Daisy Cooper:

[\[121020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what penalties will be introduced to enforce the new law preventing illegal deforestation in the supply chains of UK businesses.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recently tabled amendments to the Environment Bill to introduce new legislation to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. The amendments passed in the Commons Committee Stage earlier this week.

Our approach would make it illegal for larger businesses to use commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used, and make it mandatory for businesses to conduct due diligence on their supply chains. To ensure transparency, information about businesses' due diligence exercises will be published. Businesses that do not comply with any one of these requirements may be subject to fines and other civil sanctions.

The Secretary of State will be responsible for issuing fines, supported by a regulator (for example, a departmental agency) who will be responsible for investigating business' compliance. Details on enforcement, including the level of fines, will be set out in secondary legislation. We will consult businesses and other stakeholders further to gather views as we develop secondary legislation.

Fines are just one tool the Government will be able to use to enforce and deter breaches of the law. The amendments set out a comprehensive suite of modern civil sanctions, including stop notices and enforcement undertakings, which we intend to use to full effect.

■ Origin Marking

Alicia Kearns:

[\[121033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to (a) fund marketing campaigns to increase the visibility of UK produce with geographical indications (GIs) among consumers, hospitality and retailers domestically and internationally, (b) assist producers in registering additional UK produce with GIs and (c) collaborate with the Department for International Trade on the export promotion of UK produce with GIs.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is developing a promotional strategy to boost the sales of UK GI products. To do this, we will focus on raising awareness of the UK GI schemes and products among consumers, retailers and hospitality. We have recently funded research to understand how to better promote GIs to consumers which will support any consumer promotional campaigns.

The Government will also aim to encourage high quality domestic applications to the UK schemes. We are publishing guidance on applying to the UK schemes and will liaise with applicants throughout the process.

Defra is working closely with the Department for International Trade to promote UK GIs internationally and to encourage producers of UK GIs to export their products, for example to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the recently agreed UK-Japan trade deal. UK GIs with high export value are also promoted in other countries through the well-established Food is GREAT campaign.

■ Rivers: Environment Protection

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[121193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Environment Agency has to take steps to improve the quality of chalk streams under River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency is working with its partners to update the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). Actions to improve the quality of chalk streams are being developed in discussion with the new national chalk stream restoration group. The updated RBMPs will include measures to improve low flows by reducing unsustainable abstraction and reducing demand for water, improvements to water quality from point source discharges and diffuse pollution, and actions to improve habitats through river restoration and removal of barriers to fish migration. Taken together these actions will help tackle pressures facing chalk streams.

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[121194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Environment Agency has taken to consult (a) locally and (b) nationally on the development of River Basin Management Plans; if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency is working with a range of stakeholders in updating the river basin management plans, including the many catchment partnerships across England.

The Environment Agency has completed two statutory consultations to date as part of updating the plans: the Working Together consultation in 2018 and the Challenges and Choices consultation launched in October 2019. The original 6 month consultation period for Challenges and Choices was extended by 5 months in response to the coronavirus pandemic, closing on 24th September 2020. The Environment Agency received over 600 responses from individuals and organisations. These responses will help to inform the updated plans.

Draft updates to the river basin management plans will be published for consultation in 2021.

■ Tyres: Seas and Oceans**Luke Pollard:** [\[121356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of car tyres discarded in British coastal waters in each of the last three years.

Luke Pollard: [\[121358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the amount of micro-plastics emitted from discarded car tyres in Britain's coastal waters.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK collects data on the quantity and type of marine litter in our waters, including data on seafloor litter, floating litter and beach litter, following methods agreed through the OSPAR Convention's monitoring and assessment programmes. This includes data on tyres. Data are available up to 2017 through the Marine Online Assessment Tool which supports the updated UK Marine Strategy Part 1 published in 2019: <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/>.

A Defra funded study concluded that particles released from vehicle tyres during use could be a significant and previously unrecorded source of microplastics in the marine environment. However, it would be challenging to specifically calculate the amount of microplastic emitted from discarded car tyres in British coastal waters due to ocean currents which can move marine plastic litter and microplastics far beyond their point of entry into the marine environment.

■ Waste: Sri Lanka**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[120859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many containers (a) including body parts from mortuaries and (b) of other hazardous waste have been returned to the UK from Sri Lanka in the last three years.

Rebecca Pow:

This year 31 containers of waste have arrived back in England. The containers, which were shipped to Sri Lanka in 2017, were found by the Sri Lankan authorities to contain waste described as mattresses and carpets exported for recycling. This is part of a shipment totalling 263 containers all of which are due to be returned to England soon.

Despite media reports suggesting that medical waste was illegally shipped from England to Sri Lanka, the Environment Agency (EA) as the competent authority for waste shipments for England, has not received any indication or evidence from the Sri Lankan authorities to corroborate those reports. Unless or until the EA receive such evidence to the contrary or come across it, it is the view of the EA that these media reports are incorrect and misleading.

■ Water Companies: Environment Protection

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[121192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many catchment management schemes were included in each of the water companies' environmental programmes agreed by Ofwat in the recent periodic review (PR19), and what proportion those environmental programmes are of all schemes and expenditures in the total PR19 programme; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

There are 550 catchment management schemes in the PR19 Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) for England and the National Environment Programme (NEP) for Wales. This is 20% of total WINEP/NEP programmes, which have a combined total of 11084 separate schemes. Water companies were funded £4.8 billion to deliver the environmental improvements WINEP and NEP. This compares with a total PR19 final determination package of £51 billion to water companies for the period 2020 to 2025.

■ Water Supply: Housing

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[121195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to implement water consumption standards for new houses; what plans he has in place to ensure compliance with those standards; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

There are already minimum standards for water efficiency that apply to new homes. Building regulations require that new homes are built to a standard of 125 litres of water used per person per day, or 110 litres per person per day if required by the local authority. The Government consulted on measures to reduce personal water use, including potential amendments to building regulations, last year and intends to publish a response as soon as possible in 2021.

■ Water: Pollution Control

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[121165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce pollution in rivers and lakes throughout the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stockport on 1 October 2020, PQ UIN 94575.

[\[questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-23/94575\(opens in a new tab\)\]](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-23/94575)

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

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Conflict, Stability and Security Fund**

Sarah Champion: [\[121846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the £821 million funding figure announced for the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund for 2021-22 as part of the Spending Review 2020 is comprised entirely of Official Development Assistance.

James Cleverly:

To ensure coherence and maximum value for money from the UK's Official Development Assistance spending, the Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review all discretionary allocations for the next financial year. This is planned to conclude before Christmas.

■ Gibraltar: UK Relations with EU

Martin Vickers: [\[121229\]](#)

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.

■ Syria: Islamic State

Stuart C McDonald: [\[121854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to ensure the fate of Syrians kidnapped by ISIS is investigated effectively.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to highlighting the appalling violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Syria including those committed by Daesh and to pursuing accountability for the most serious crimes. As penholder for the Syria text at the Human Rights Council, we have included language on enforced disappearance in recent Resolutions. We continue to support the UN Commission of Inquiry's investigations into human rights violations and abuses in Syria and the work of the UN International Impartial and Independent Mechanism which is gathering evidence for the prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under

international law in Syria. The UK has contributed over £13 million since 2012 in support of Syrian and international efforts to gather evidence and assist victims of human rights abuses and violations.

■ United Arab Emirates: Israel

Stephen Morgan:

[\[121346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the signing of the Abraham Accords on stability in the Middle East.

James Cleverly:

The UK warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Sudan. These are historic steps which sees the normalisation of relations between friends of the UK. We also welcome the suspension of plans for Israeli annexation of the West Bank - a move the UK has opposed - as it would have been counterproductive to securing peace in the region. The changing regional context and converging Arab and Israeli interests presents an opening to make progress on the Israel-Palestine issue. The UK welcomed therefore the announcement on 19 November that the Palestinian Authority and Government of Israel have agreed to restore cooperation. Restoring cooperation is an important and constructive step towards peace, and shows both sides are willing to put the needs and security of both Israelis and Palestinians first. We need to build on this momentum through further dialogue and compromise to move towards a two state solution and a lasting solution to the conflict.

■ Zimbabwe: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones:

[\[121015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Zimbabwe.

James Duddridge:

The UK regularly engages with the Government of Zimbabwe to raise serious concerns about the political, economic and human rights situation in Zimbabwe. I delivered these messages when I last spoke to Foreign Minister Moyo on 8 June, and in a letter I wrote to him on 12 August. Our Ambassador in Harare reinforced these messages when she met representatives of the Government of Zimbabwe on 24 November. In particular, she raised our deep concerns on human rights, lack of progress on political reform and chronic economic mismanagement. Most recently, I tweeted on 17 November about the prosecution of MDC activists, Joana Mamombe, Netsai Marova and Cecilia Chimhiri. I also tweeted on 13 November to express my concerns regarding continued prosecutions of journalist Hopewell Chin'ono, reiterating that the UK is committed to defending media freedom and human rights. We will continue to speak out, both privately and in public, where we have concerns and will work alongside the international community to support a better future for all Zimbabweans.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Closures**

Jon Trickett: [\[120794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many A&E wards have been closed in NHS hospitals in England since 2010.

Edward Argar:

Data is not available in format requested.

■ Ambulance Services

Jon Trickett: [\[120783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ambulance stations there are in England.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [\[109284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (a) what assessment he has made of the proportion of care homes that have suitable beds to enable the safe discharge and required isolation period relating to covid-19 for patients arriving from hospital, (b) if the number of suitable care home beds available meet the potential geographical demand under his department's modelling for covid-19 transmission, (c) if he has plans to increase this capacity and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

As part of the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) designation scheme, local areas are being asked to work with the CQC to identify a sufficient number of appropriate settings to be designated to enable the safe discharge and isolation of COVID-19 positive people before they enter a care home. We anticipate every local authority in England to have access to at least one assured facility. Local authorities will be able to identify more than one facility to be assured, to take into account geographical spread and size of the local area, the specific needs of particular cohorts, and increasing demands.

Rachael Maskell: [\[92823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Infection Prevention Control interventions in reducing covid-19 infection levels in care homes.

Helen Whately:

Our care homes guidance on infection prevention and control measures is informed by the emerging domestic and international evidence. We are working with Public

Health England (PHE) to monitor the evidence, and ensure best practice is reviewed and can be applied.

Care homes have received practical support and training from clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and local public health system partners to improve infection prevention and control practice.

In line with the wider community, levels of infection in care homes fell significantly during the summer period. As levels of infection rise in the community, the Department, PHE and partners are working to support care homes in improving infection prevention and control practice and identify lessons learned from outbreaks.

A rise in notifications of COVID-19 cases in care homes in early September prompted a letter from the Department on 11 September to reinforce the importance of measures advocated in the care home support package and outlined in guidance around infection prevention control in care homes. The data shows that notifications have dropped since this period. The letter is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-infection-rises-letter-to-care-providers-from-director-of-adult-social-care-delivery>

Bill Esterson:

[98954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the programme of testing for covid-19 in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: Protecting care home residents and staff has been one of our top priorities and this includes increasing access to testing. We have now sent out over 12 million test kits to care homes. We are continuing to prioritise Care Home Testing, where we are issuing more than 120,000 tests a day to care homes across the country. We have met our 7 September target of providing testing kits to all care homes for older people and people with dementia who have registered for regular retesting kits. In addition, all other care homes have been able to place orders for test kits from 31 August. Since they were eligible to apply for regular repeat testing on the 31 st August, over 5000 specialist homes in England have applied for tests. Where an outbreak has been identified, we test all staff and residents as a priority, with all those who test negative being tested again 4-7 days later.

■ Care Homes: Insurance

Anne Marie Morris:

[109366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that care homes that offer safe visitation for residents and their families during the covid-19 outbreak can access insurance at rates close to pre-covid levels.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: Insurance is a private contract between care providers and insurance companies which the Government is not directly involved in.

However, we recognise that COVID-19 is imposing significant pressures on the care sector. We are working closely across Government, with care providers, and insurance representatives, to understand the breadth and severity of insurance issues – including any changes to the cost of insurance – and whether there is any action the Government should take. The Government has already made an additional £4.6 billion available to local authorities to help address pressures on local services, such as insurance costs, caused by the pandemic.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Justin Madders:

[\[113568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what methodology his Department plans to use to evaluate the success of trials to allow specific family and friends to visit care homes supported by testing.

Helen Whately:

We have begun a trial of testing visitors to care homes to support care home providers and families to work together to find the right balance between the benefits of visiting on wellbeing and quality of life, and the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to social care staff and vulnerable residents.

We will be having regular calls with each of the care homes and providers involved in the pilot to understand how testing is working in practice including understanding the training needs of staff, any workforce implications and the experiences of staff, residents and loved ones throughout. If successful, care home testing will be rolled out in a phased way across the country.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Marco Longhi:

[\[118119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if will he make an assessment of the potential merits of reclassifying (a) myalgic encephalomyelitis and (b) chronic fatigue syndrome as a disability.

Edward Argar:

The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement accept the World Health Organization's classification of chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis as a neurological condition of unknown origin, and therefore health and social care professionals are expected to manage it as such.

Jim Shannon:

[\[120873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis/ CFS by (a) age and (b) gender in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Berkshire**John Redwood:**[\[121110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of covid-19 were recorded in (a) Wokingham Borough and (b) West Berkshire Council area in the latest period for which figures are available; and what the rate of hospital admissions was for people with covid-19 in each of those areas.

Edward Argar:

Information is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**Rachel Reeves:**[\[106977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's national Track and Trace system routinely instructs people who need to self-isolate to inform other members of their household to also self-isolate.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Where someone develops symptoms of COVID-19, both they and other household members should self-isolate immediately and should continue to self-isolate if they receive a positive test result. The NHS Test and Trace service asks people who have tested positive for COVID-19 to provide contact details for other members of their household so that they can be formally notified to self-isolate and, if eligible, can claim the Test and Trace Support Payment.

National Health Service Test and Trace has recently introduced changes to its processes so that, where a person who has tested positive confirms they have informed – or will inform – other family members of the requirement to self-isolate, the formal notifications to those other family members are issued by text or email rather than separate telephone calls.

Caroline Lucas:[\[99584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to (a) require companies to which he is outsourcing the delivery of the NHS Test and Trace system to (i) pay staff for training undertaken and (ii) not use zero-hour contracts and (b) introduce a process for checking the fairness and safety of staffing practices of those companies; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The Government has established a range of partnerships with industry, academia, local government and others to deliver its testing programme at pace.

Serco report that all their direct employees working on the contact tracing service have been paid for training undertaken. Serco have processes in place to check the safety and fairness of staffing practices.

■ Coronavirus: Hospitals

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[113106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS Nightingale Hospitals are in operation as at 9 November 2020; and what services each such hospital is providing.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Each Nightingale hospital plays a different role for their region and any decision to stand-up the hospitals will be based on expert clinical advice and in response to local pressures.

In late October 2020, the Manchester Nightingale reopened to support step-down care for non-COVID-19 patients, helping to maintain routine care in the region's hospitals. The other Nightingale hospitals remain on standby, ready to quickly step up and support local National Health Service hospitals if needed. Additionally, while on standby, the Nightingale hospitals in Exeter and Harrogate have provided valuable additional diagnostics capacity.

The status of each Nightingale hospital is under constant review and they remain valuable assets that will continue to be used, when required, to support local NHS services over the busy winter period.

■ Coronavirus: Patients

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[112041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish each week the (a) number of (i) covid-19 hospital patients, (ii) covid-19 hospital patients who are in critical status, (iii) hospital patients with other conditions who are in critical status and (iv) covid-19 hospitals patients who have recovered from critical status but remain in hospital and (b) discharge rate from hospitals compared with the historical average rate.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: Information is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Poplar and Limehouse

Apsana Begum:

[\[109703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many residents of Poplar and Limehouse constituency have been tested for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

Weekly data for pillar 2 COVID-19 testing for every lower tier local authority in England is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[102905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people tested for Covid-19 who did not receive their result within 2 days in (a) Slough, (b) the South East and (c) England.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish data in the format requested.

Chris Green: [\[106376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have been carried out in each month since January 2020, by English county.

Helen Whately:

Weekly data for pillar 2 coronavirus testing is available for every lower tier local authority in England at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Carla Lockhart: [\[107139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many positive cases of covid-19 there have been in the UK where the person was not in the UK 72 hours before the test was conducted.

Helen Whately:

This information is not held in the format requested.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[109554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the covid-19 testing system is accessible to people who do not have access to (a) the internet, (b) a mobile phone and (c) an email address.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: An email address and phone number are currently required to book a test. Individuals who do not have an email address can ask someone they trust, for example a family member, to receive their results.

Individuals who are not comfortable using the digital booking systems, can use 119 in England and Wales and 0300 303 2713 in Scotland and Northern Ireland to book a test.

As a priority, we are working on a non-digital solution. We expect to update further on this in the coming weeks.

Bill Esterson: [\[111492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the additional covid-19 tests announced last week were offered through OctiGene.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: We do not publish the data in the format requested.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[113171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of positive covid-19 cases have been missed in each of the Operation Moonshot pilots of rapid covid-19 tests.

Helen Whately:

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

Sir Mike Penning:[\[119196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to evaluate the (a) operational effectiveness and (b) accuracy of covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

All tests have been assessed as performing to manufacturers' specifications before being used. The current tests are very specific and the risk of false positives, where the test is reacting to other viruses, is extremely low. Like any diagnostic test however, there is always the small possibility of a false negative or a false positive result.

Jon Trickett:[\[86541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) combined value and (b) duration is of the contracts the Government has with private contractors to run covid-19 drive through testing centres.

Helen Whately:

The Government has established a multitude of partnerships with industry, academia, local government and others to deliver its testing programme and many of the contracts span multiple disciplines, making a total cost for providing testing services difficult to articulate. Many are subject to confidential commercial agreements that would preclude the Department from disclosing them publicly

All the Department's contracts are, or will be, published on GOV.UK's Contract Finder service.

Jon Trickett:[\[86544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which Government Department holds the contracts for the management of covid-19 drive through testing centres.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: The Department holds the contracts for the management of COVID-19 drive through testing centres.

All the Departmental contracts are, or will be, published on GOV.UK's Contract Finder service.

■ Cystic Fibrosis

Jim Shannon: [\[121254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people in the UK suffer from cystic fibrosis, by (a) age and (b) gender.

Edward Argar:

This data is not held centrally.

■ Dementia: Older People

Jim Shannon: [\[120870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Royal College of Nursing and (b) other bodies on the higher risk of dementia in people over 50.

Helen Whately:

The Department has had no recent discussions with the Royal College of Nursing on the higher risk of dementia in people over 50. We regularly work with a wide range of organisations, including dementia charities, to promote dementia risk reduction and healthy ageing.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Contracts

Alyn Smith: [\[109654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contracts his Department has awarded to companies without a tendering process in the last 12 months; which companies those contracts were with; and what services those contracts were for.

Alyn Smith: [\[109660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the total value of personal protective equipment public procurement contracts in the financial year 2020-21 to date.

Edward Argar:

Contracting authorities are allowed to procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency in exceptional circumstances under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. These include a direct award under which authorities may enter into contracts without competing or advertising the requirement. The great majority of contracts placed by the Department were awarded under this route.

As of the beginning of November 2020, 937 contracts worth an estimated £17.8 billion have been awarded by the Department and its executive agencies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for a wide range of products and services including personal protective equipment (PPE), the Test and Trace initiative, ventilators, IT, logistics and medicines etc.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Credit Unions**Gareth Thomas:** [\[121130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no plans to implement a payroll deduction service or require the Department's agencies to implement such a service. We are continuing to plan further work to explore if payroll deductions will be implemented in the future.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Procurement**Dan Carden:** [\[120986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 1116638 on Government departments: procurement, what steps he is taking to (a) identify and (b) tackle potential (i) conflicts of interest and (ii) bias in his Department's procurement process.

Dan Carden: [\[120988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 procurement contracts were awarded by his Department retrospectively after work had already been carried out.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: Regulation 24 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 requires contracting authorities to take appropriate measures to effectively prevent, identify and remedy conflicts of interest arising in the conduct of procurement procedures. The Department has robust rules and processes in place to ensure that conflicts of interest do not occur, including declaration from suppliers, publication of ministerial interests and robust departmental guidance.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the critical urgency of the situation and requirement to protect the National Health Service and the country led to specialist consultants and contractors being brought in at extreme pace. This meant that some work was initiated before final contract details were put in place or had been formally awarded. This situation has been addressed. Over 900 contracts have been awarded by the Department and its executive agencies in response to COVID-19. Information on the precise number of such cases has not been centrally collated by the Department.

■ Earwax: Medical Treatments**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[117196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 90063 on Earwax: Medical Treatments, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the NHS of an (a) ear, nose and throat appointment

for the purpose of removing wax, (b) an audiology appointment for the purpose of removing wax and (c) wax removal carried out in a primary care setting.

Edward Argar:

In their nationally set prices NHS England and NHS Improvement have two prices for what is termed 'Clearance of External Auditory Canal'. For both an ear, nose and throat and audiology appointment, the price is £127 for those under 18 years old and £103 for 19 years and over, regardless of speciality or setting.

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not set prices for primary care. No estimate can be provided of the cost of ear wax removal carried out in primary care settings. This is because ear syringing is not included in the GP Contract – it is an example of an enhanced service, and clinical commissioning groups are under no obligation to commission these. Some local commissioners have developed locally enhanced services (LES) so as to be able to offer to local practices supplementary services not already offered in the core practice contract, for which practices can seek funding. Some of these LES do include ear syringing.

■ **Fertility: Health Services**

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[115493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that Clinical Commissioning Groups across the country follow the NICE guidance on fertility and the factsheet produced by NHS England, to ensure that adequate and consistent fertility services are provided across the country in each CCG area; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: The level of provision of local health services available to patients, including fertility treatment, is, and has been since the 1990s, a matter for local healthcare commissioners. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory responsibility to commission healthcare services including fertility services that meet the needs of their whole population. Ministers currently have no power to direct individual CCGs in relation to their commissioning functions.

In respect of National Health Service fertility services, the Government have been consistently clear that we expect CCGs to commission fertility services in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines, so that there is equal access across England. We also expect CCGs to give fair consideration to all patients who have had fertility treatment delayed so that no one misses out on treatment due to COVID-19, in line with NHS England's recent statement.

■ **Health Professions: Coronavirus**

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[121170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of health care workers who have experienced breaches of their occupational health and safety during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: The Department does not hold the information requested.

Health Professions: Mental Health Services**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[121884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what long term mental health support he will make available to healthcare workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder linked to their work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Supporting the mental health of healthcare workers is a priority for the Government, particularly during this unprecedented pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement are investing £15 million to strengthen mental health support for National Health Service staff. This funding will be used to set up a first wave of mental health hubs that will provide outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to mental health services.

Health Services: Autism and Learning Disability**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[114238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to bring forward its strategy on transforming care.

Helen Whately:

Transforming care is a programme of work to reduce the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people who are inpatients in mental health settings.

The NHS Long Term Plan sets the targets on inpatient rates for 2023/24 and Building the Right Support is the national plan to reduce the reliance on inpatient services by developing suitable community alternatives.

We are committed to improving all aspects of care and support for people with a learning disability and autistic people. We are developing a new action plan. The plan brings together work planned or currently underway to deliver the objectives of Building the Right Support in full. This plan, which we intend to publish, will complement the actions in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Health Services: Contracts**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[113266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timetable is for the publication of contracts tendered to private companies to provide services in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: We are working to complete the publishing of all the contract award notices (CANs) and the associated contracts for all COVID-19

related work as soon as possible. 89% of the CANs have now been published and over 50% of the contracts can be found on Contracts Finder at the following link:

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

Delays in publishing this information have been due to the resources available within the Department for this work, given the vast increase in the volume of contracts that have had to be processed.

■ Health: Private Sector

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[99611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of government expenditure on health care has been paid to private sector organisations in 2020-21 to date.

Edward Argar:

As of the beginning of November 2020, 937 contracts worth an estimated £17.8 billion have been awarded by the Department and its executive agencies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for a wide range of products and services including personal protective equipment, the Test and Trace initiative, ventilators, IT, logistics and medicines.

In July, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an extra £31.9 billion of support for health services to respond to COVID-19. At the end of September he announced an additional £16.4 billion for health services.

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus

Clive Efford: [\[90030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of risk to disabled people of infection with covid-19 from domiciliary care workers who visit multiple homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: In July Public Health England published the results of a study of infection with COVID-19 among domiciliary care workers in England which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-prevalence-survey-domiciliary-care-staff-in-england>

■ Hospital Beds

Chris Grayling: [\[110065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of NHS bed occupancy rates in each month of (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 November 2020]: Data is not available in the format requested.

Dr Dan Poulter:[\[113532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the hospital bed occupancy rate was as of 10 November (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Edward Argar:

Information on the hospital bed occupancy rate as of 10 November 2019 specifically is not available.

The latest published data is for 8 November 2020 and reports 75,640 general and acute beds occupied and a total of 88,237 beds general and acute beds open.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Health Education**Alexander Stafford:**[\[122927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of running a public awareness campaign on the (a) symptoms and (b) wider health effects of inflammatory bowel disease.

Edward Argar:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Medical Treatments**Jim Shannon:**[\[113097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people receiving treatment for (a) Crohn's or (b) ulcerative colitis in each nation of the UK.

Edward Argar:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Intensive Care: Hospital Beds**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[110727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many intensive care beds there were in NHS hospitals in England on (a) 31 March 2020 and (b) 31 October 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Information on intensive care bed numbers is not available in the format requested.

■ Manchester Royal Infirmary and Withington Hospital: Finance**Afzal Khan:**[\[121353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional financial support his Department will be providing to (a) Manchester Royal Infirmary and (b) Withington hospital as a result of the 2020 Spending Review.

Edward Argar:

We are delivering on our historic long-term settlement for the National Health Service, which will see funding increase by £33.9 billion by 2023-24. We are now confirming an additional £3 billion for the NHS next year, on top of the long-term settlement, to support the recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

Further funding to help ensure the NHS can continue to meet the ongoing costs of tackling COVID-19 will also be set out in the New Year. This will then allow planning guidance for 2021-22 to be communicated to the system and for individual organisations such as Manchester Royal Infirmary and Withington Hospital to agree financial plans. The Government is working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure the NHS has all it needs to plan effectively ahead of the new financial year in April.

Members: Correspondence**Matthew Pennycook:**[\[113173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 1 August 2020 regarding his constituent's access to certain medication unavailable in the UK and the EU, ref PO1249786.

Edward Argar:

The Department replied to the hon. Member's letter on 9 November 2020.

Nurses: Students**Sir Alan Campbell:**[\[121172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding is available for English students studying nursing at a university in Scotland.

Helen Whately:

English domiciled students studying nursing in Scotland can receive maintenance loans and tuition fee loans from Student Finance England to contribute to their costs of study, subject to meeting the eligibility requirements.

The National Health Service learning support fund, including the new non-repayable training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year, however, is available only to students studying at English universities.

Decisions about the NHS workforce in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, including the funding that they provide for students, are a matter for the devolved administrations of those countries.

Older People: Coronavirus**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[95213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what lessons he has learnt from the first wave of the covid-19 outbreak with respect to protecting older people from covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The adult social care COVID-19 taskforce worked with a broad range of stakeholders, including residential and domiciliary care providers and representatives of those who receive care to produce recommendations for the Government in supporting the adult social care sector through a potential second wave and the winter.

'Adult social care: our COVID-19 winter plan 2020 to 2021' drew on the recommendations of the taskforce, advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and Public Health England, to set out the actions the Government would take to support the sector, along with the steps local authorities, the National Health Service and care providers should take to prevent and control COVID-19 outbreaks. This plan draws extensively on lessons learned from first wave.

Surgery**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[109403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who had an operation cancelled in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

This data is not available in the format requested.

Tourette's Syndrome**Jim Shannon:** [\[121255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people in the UK suffer from Tourette's, by (a) age and (b) gender.

Edward Argar:

This data is not collected in the format requested.

Travel: Coronavirus**Sir Desmond Swayne:** [\[119961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to introduce a covid-19 vaccination certificate and negotiate its recognition overseas to help the travel industry recover from the economic effects of the covid-19 pandemic.

Jo Churchill:

Whilst deployment of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine would be a welcome step forward, we do not yet know what impact this will have on the current wave of

the pandemic. We first need to improve understanding of the any potential vaccine in order to fully understand the potential of vaccine certificates as part of our efforts to recover from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: LGBT People

Claire Hanna:

[\[119420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been granted asylum in the UK as a result of persecution for being LGBTQ+ in their home state within the last two years.

Claire Hanna:

[\[119421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department takes to confirm an individual's sexual orientation for the purpose of asylum claims.

Chris Philp:

UIN: 119421

A claimant seeking protection on the basis of their sexual orientation is required to substantiate the claim they are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual (LGB), or perceived to be so by others, and that they have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country arising from this sexual identity. They are required to establish this to a reasonable degree of likelihood.

We do not accept that someone is LGB simply because they affirm it. Any such declarations will form the starting point of explorations and all claims will be subject to a proper assessment of all relevant facts and circumstances.

Our processes ensure applicants are afforded ample opportunity to establish how they define and identify themselves sexually and how their sexual identity is relevant to fears around future risk of harm.

The Home Office approach to considering such claims is based on dedicated published guidance and training aimed at ensuring that claims are handled sensitively and appropriately. Our guidance and training products reflect all relevant UK caselaw and all claims are considered on their merits in accordance with the obligations under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

UIN: 119420:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications and initial decisions for main applicants for whom sexual orientation formed part of the basis of their claim, broken down by nationality in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. The latest data, covering the period from 2015 to 2019 were published in [Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020](#). Data on the number of grants of asylum at initial decision where

sexual orientation formed a basis of their claim are published in tables SOC_00 and SOC_02 of the '[Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation tables](#)'.

Data published in this release relate to the number of asylum claims made where sexual orientation – lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) – formed part of the basis of the claim. The data do not represent the number of asylum claimants who define themselves as LGB. Having an identifier that an asylum case is based on sexual orientation does not indicate that a claimant has any particular sexuality or that sexual orientation is the reason for any grant or refusal of asylum. It also does not signify whether that aspect of the claim has been accepted. Sexual orientation as a basis of claim could be due to imputed assertions or association rather than a defining characteristic of the claimant.

These data are experimental statistics and should be interpreted with caution. Experimental statistics are statistics that are in a testing phase and are not yet fully developed. These statistics have not been subject to the full level of quality assurance of National Statistics. Further details can be found in the Office for National Statistics [Guide to Experimental Statistics](#).

The next published update will be August 2021, covering the period from 2015 to 2020.

■ **Deportation: Appeals**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[122668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to prevent last-minute legal appeals by foreign born-criminals who are subject to deportation orders.

Chris Philp:

We are committed to removing foreign national offenders and other immigration offenders who have no legal basis to be here.

The Home Secretary has set out the Government's ambition to overhaul our approach to asylum and illegal migration, delivering a firm but fair system, including bringing forward new legislation next year.

■ **Deportation: Coronavirus**

Patrick Grady: [\[121284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of suspending deportations until the World Health Organization declares that the global covid-19 pandemic has been brought under control.

Chris Philp:

We remain committed to removing foreign national offenders or those who violate our immigration rules and we have shown that we can continue to do this safely.

Immigration Enforcement are following the latest guidance from Public Health England. On all removal flights public health guidance is adhered to, those on flights

are seen by a healthcare professional before they are returned and anyone who is exhibiting symptoms would be removed from the flight and placed into medical isolation.

■ Home Office: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121133\]](#)

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

James Brokenshire:

The Home Office introduced a financial wellbeing toolkit earlier in the year and at the current time are not intending to introduce a payroll deduction service for accessing credit unions.

■ Immigrants: Detainees

Caroline Lucas:

[\[122657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether women held at (a) Dungavel and (b) Colnbrook immigration removal centres have access to doctors and other medical staff with (i) knowledge of and (ii) expertise in gender-based violence; what assessment she has made of the effect of detaining women at immigration removal centres predominantly holding men on her ability to fulfil her duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) b); and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The health and welfare of those in our care is of the utmost importance. The provision of 24-hour, seven-days-a-week healthcare in all immigration removal centres (IRCs) ensures that individuals held there have ready access to medical professionals and levels of primary care in line with individuals in the community, according to their clinical needs.

Detention Services Order (DSO) 06/2016 'Women in the detention estate' sets out guidance for Home Office, supplier and healthcare staff on the care and management of women in immigration detention. The DSO ensures a consistent approach is taken by all centres that accommodate women, and that the female-specific needs of the population are met.

Victims of sexual or gender-based violence (including female genital mutilation) are covered by the adults at risk in immigration detention policy. Anyone who falls within the scope of the policy is regarded as unsuitable for detention unless the specific immigration circumstances in their case are considered to outweigh the vulnerability issues.

Healthcare in IRCs in England is commissioned by NHS England, who only commission evidence-based treatments approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). NICE provides guidance on the treatment of people who have suffered sexual or gender-based violence, which healthcare professionals

in IRCs are expected to take into account. The revised Primary Care specification for IRCs acknowledges the importance of healthcare professionals delivering trauma informed interventions across the immigration detention estate.

The healthcare team at Dungavel, comprising registered nurses and NHS Scotland GPs, work to the standards set by 'Equally Safe', Scotland's strategy to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence. In addition, all registered nurses at Dungavel are female and access to a female GP is available on request.

■ Intelligence Services: Registration

Owen Thompson: [120922]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has taken steps to establish a registry of foreign agents.

James Brokenshire:

As the Prime Minister outlined in his response to the ISC report on Russia, the Home Office is considering like-minded international partners' Foreign Agent Registration legislation as part of its ongoing work on to develop new legislative proposals to tackle hostile activities by foreign states.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Homelessness: Children

Jon Trickett: [120786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many children are classified as being homeless as at 25 November 2020.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The latest published statutory homeless figures are for April to June 2020. Published figures are available at this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-april-to-june-2020>.

■ Homelessness: Urban Areas

Neil Coyle: [120875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing Combined Homelessness and Information Network style reporting systems in city regions outside of London to improve the quality of data on homelessness and rough sleeping.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) is a multi-agency database recording information about people seen rough sleeping by outreach teams in London. To introduce a CHAIN style reporting system in city regions outside of London would require all local authorities to have a multi-agency database or to have an outreach team counting the number of rough sleepers in their area every night of

the year. However, we do expect all local authorities to regularly gather information and data on rough sleeping in their area.

Our annual snapshot data provides a way of estimating the number of people sleeping rough across England on a single night and allows us to assess change over time. The Rough Sleeping Snapshot statistics are independently verified by Homeless Link and designated as Official Statistics.

■ Local Government Finance

Helen Hayes:

[\[120939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what his policy is on (a) funding for local councils, (b) grants and (c) council tax principles for the 2021-22 financial year prior to the 2021-22 Local Government Funding settlement in December 2020.

Luke Hall:

Spending Review 2020 confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.5 per cent in cash terms- a real terms increase. This package means local authorities will be able to access an estimated additional £2.2 billion to support Adult and Children's Social Care and to maintain universal services.

Within their Core Spending Power, councils will have access to an additional £1 billion for social care next year, made up of a £300 million increase to the social care grant and 3 per cent Adult Social Care precept. The additional £1 billion of grant funding announced at SR19 for Adult and Children's Social Care will be continuing, along with all other existing social care funding including the improved Better Care Fund.

Complementing this is an unprecedented package of support for local authorities to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, including measures worth an estimated circa £3 billion of additional support for Covid-19 pressures next year, along with extending the current Sales, Fees and Charges scheme (which refunds 75 per cent of eligible income loss beyond a 5 per cent threshold) into the first three months of 2021-22.

This is on top of the support committed this financial year, including over £7.2 billion for local authorities, even before the extension of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for those authorities under the highest level of restriction – potentially worth over £200 million a month – announced as part of the Covid-19 Winter Plan. This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of Covid-19 to over £10 billion.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 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.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department is aware that there are a number of credit union schemes on offer and that some departments have chosen to offer this facility through payroll. For a number of reasons, not least the administrative issue when employees leave the Civil Service or move between departments, this department and its executive agencies have decided not to pursue this benefit. We do however encourage our employees to make use of other Civil Service wide opportunities such as the Charity for Civil Servants 'Money Matters' service and the Department's Employee Assistance provider who are available to aid in financial management and provide advice where required.

■ Religion: Finance**Alicia Kearns:**[\[121403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a legal requirement for religious institutions to publicly declare (a) donations and (b) overseas funding.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Faith-based organisations and faith-based giving play an important role in our society. Their contributions play an integral role in supporting our most vulnerable in communities and tackling a number of social challenges.

Faith-based Institutions and organisations registered as a charity (with an income of over £25,000) and as other not for profit entities, either through the Charity Commission or Companies House, are required to produce and submit annual returns, reports and accounts to their relevant regulatory body. All returns, reports and accounts required by law must be made available on request by the registering body or is made accessible via a public register.

Some religious charities are 'excepted' from charity registration and are not required to register or submit annual returns. They are still charities, and are subject to charity law.

This government encourages greater transparency across the charity sector as a matter of good practice and it is our assessment that the current level of legal transparency, regarding sources of funding for charities, is appropriate. It is right that charities are not legally required to publicly disclose the identity of individual donors because donor anonymity can be an important factor in giving people the confidence to donate to charitable causes they care about.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund**Louise Haigh:**[\[120916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which areas will be part of the £220m trial of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

To help local areas prepare over 2021-22 for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we will provide £220 million additional UK funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches. Further details will be published in the new year.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Medical Equipment: Import Duties****Chris Green:**[\[120882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what level of tariff will be introduced by the UK Global Tariff regime on medical products such as adhesive removal sprays and the medical devices which require their use in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

Chris Green:[\[120883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the effect on charges to patients of the introduction of tariffs on medical products such as adhesive removal sprays and the medical devices which require their use in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal; which other essential products will potentially be subject to such tariffs; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

Our ambition is to ensure there are no tariffs, fees, charges or quantitative restrictions on trade in goods between the UK and the European Union (EU) at the end of the transition period through a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). We are currently in an intense phase of negotiations with the EU, and we are working hard to achieve that. We therefore do not expect the UK Global Tariff (UKGT) to apply to EU imports.

The UKGT will apply to UK imports from countries the UK does not have trading arrangements in place with. The Government has assessed all available evidence submitted as a part of the public consultation in depth, and in addition, conducted its own assessment to ensure the UKGT is robust and supportive of the UK's economy. Government will publish more analysis in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) alongside the legislation, as is standard practice.

JUSTICE**■ Begging and Vagrancy: Wakefield****Jon Trickett:**[\[120792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people in the Wakefield local authority area have been prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published prosecutions, convictions and sentencing outcomes in England & Wales up to the year ending December 2019 and is available in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data tool', available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx

Data for 2020 is not scheduled for publication until May 2021.

The spreadsheet linked above gives annual figures for prosecutions down to police force area (including West Yorkshire) for offences under the Vagrancy Act 1824, up to 2019 by filter by the following:

1. 'Offence code' to '18200', '18300', '18501', '18801', '18805'.
2. 'Police Force Area' to 'West Yorkshire'.

The number of individuals prosecuted for these offences in the West Yorkshire Police Force Area can be found in the resulting pivot table in row 31.

■ Cemeteries: Greater London**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:****[121364]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make it his policy to (a) halt mounding at Manor Park Cemetery and (b) establish an independent inspection of the effect of earlier mounding at that cemetery on remains.

Alex Chalk:

Private burial grounds such as Manor Park Cemetery are not covered by the same legislation that governs local authority burial grounds, and the Government's intervention and enforcement powers are limited.

However, we anticipate that those operating private burial grounds will adhere to the standards and principles underpinning the framework of regulation and guidance which applies to local authority burial grounds. I have asked my officials to ensure that this expectation is conveyed to officials at Manor Park Cemetery.

I will also ask them to ensure that the issue of mounding is brought to the attention of the Law Commission in the context of its forthcoming project, as part of its current Programme of Law Reform, to consider modernising and streamlining the law governing the disposal of human remains with a view to putting forward a legal framework for the future.

■ Criminal Proceedings**Ms Lyn Brown:****[121211]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Population Projections 2020 to 2026, England and Wales, published on 26 November 2020, if he will publish the

estimated changes in (a) charging rates for each offence, (b) monthly caseloads for the criminal courts and (c) average time spent on remand over the projection period.

Chris Philp:

The additional information you are interested in is not covered as part of the modelling of the prison population projections publication. However, the modelling does assume that overall charge volumes would increase in coming years proportionally to the number of additional police officers this government is recruiting. While we do not project time on remand specifically, we do expect the remand population to fall over the next year as courts recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

■ **Family Courts**

Ben Bradley:

[121002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the equity of service delivered by family courts to both parties.

Alex Chalk:

HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) works with an independent judiciary to provide a fair, efficient and effective family justice system. Details of how we achieve this and our future plans for improvement can be found in the Ministry of Justice Single Departmental Plan and in the HMCTS Business Plan 2019/2020.

The business plan describes how HMCTS aims to run an efficient and effective courts and tribunals system, enabling the rule of law to be upheld, and providing access to justice for all. The plan also details how HMCTS is responsible for:

- providing the supporting administration for a fair, efficient and accessible courts and tribunal system
- supporting the independent judiciary in the administration of justice

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-single-departmental-plan/ministry-of-justice-single-departmental-plan--3>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819783/HMCTS148_Business_Plan_2019_A4P_External_RGB.PDF

■ **Ministry of Justice: Credit Unions**

Gareth Thomas:

[121136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice does not actively promote the use of Credit Unions to staff.

However, any promotion of credit union schemes is generally publicised by the Trade Unions for staff to access.

Although the Ministry does not currently provide such a facility, it does offer financial wellbeing support and advice, as part of its wider employee benefits offer to staff and will continue to explore options to support staff and raise awareness of financial wellbeing.

■ Prison Accommodation

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[121209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Population Projections 2020 to 2026, England and Wales, published on 26 November 2020, Table 1.1, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the projected rate of decrease in the indeterminate sentenced prison population.

Lucy Frazer:

As the projections show, the indeterminate population is forecast to decline over the next 6 years. This is largely due to a continuing decline in the number of prisoners continuing to serve the sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP).

We are committed to ensuring that all prisoners serving indeterminate sentences, including those serving IPPs, have every opportunity to progress towards safe release. HM Prison and Probation Service are focused on reducing the risk and thereby the successful rehabilitation of IPP prisoners via an action plan which is taken forward jointly with the Parole Board. This approach is working, with high numbers of unreleased IPP prisoners achieving a release decision each year and we expect this to continue.

■ Prison and Probation Service: Complaints

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[121218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Annual Staff Equalities Report 2019/20, published on 26 November 2020, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for the higher rates of (a) grievance, (b) investigation, and (c) conduct and discipline, and of the lower rates of grievance success for Black staff compared to white staff.

Lucy Frazer:

The reasons for the higher rates of grievance, investigations and conduct and discipline cases, and for the lower proportion of cases upheld for BAME staff compared to White staff in HMPPS are uncertain, however HMPPS is clear that the basis on which any case is initiated, along with the conduct and outcome of that case, must be fair and objective.

Work has recently been initiated to review the HMPPS and wider-MoJ grievance policies to ensure they are as clear and simple to follow as possible and to strengthen the guidance and supporting information, including on ensuring the investigation is done promptly and is objective, fair and independent.

HMPPS has also recently launched the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviours Unit which includes a confidential helpline to support staff in situations involving

unacceptable behaviours. The MoJ High Profile and Complex Case Team continue to review lessons that can be learnt across the MoJ from grievance investigations and conduct and disciplinary cases and share these or the best practice identified with the business.

■ **Prison and Probation Service: Labour Turnover**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[121217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Annual Staff Equalities Report 2019/20, published on 26 November 2020, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for the (a) lower promotion rate among Black staff compared to white staff and (b) higher leaving rate among (i) Asian and (ii) other BAME staff.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) are committed to achieving a more representative workforce, and addressing the under-representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) colleagues at all levels. It is recognised that there are many factors which contribute towards the lower promotion rate amongst Black staff and higher leaving rates for Asian and other ethnic minority staff. As part of actions to address disparity in this area HMPPS are launching their Race Action Programme in December 2020; which aims to build on the work of recent years and develop between awareness of the rich diverse cultures of all staff and those in our care, with the aim of equitable outcomes for all. The programme consists of five projects:

1. Creation of safe spaces and support for staff and service users
2. Training
3. A review of our current diversity and inclusion structures and policies
4. Recruitment and career progression
5. Greater engagement and consultation with our BAME led third sector partners.

■ **Prison and Probation Service: Pay and Performance Appraisal**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[121216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Annual Staff Equalities Report 2019-20, published on 26 November 2020, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for the (a) ethnicity and (b) disability disparities in (i) staff appraisals and (ii) special bonuses.

Lucy Frazer:

In HMPPS the usual process for staff appraisal, the Staff Performance and Development Record (SDPR) assessment, was suspended at year end for 2019/20 due to Covid-19 with the intention of easing some of the administrative burden around the end of year performance management process at a difficult time.

Whilst analysis and comparison with previous years is not possible other than for 'outstanding' markings, it continues to be a concern that overall the proportion of BAME staff receiving 'outstanding' compared to white counterparts was lower, and that the proportion of disabled staff compared to non-disabled staff receiving an 'outstanding' marking was also lower. Similarly, with the award of 'special bonuses'.

HMPPS is committed to ensuring a fair and inclusive performance management and special bonus process and is currently working to improve and strengthen the guidance, learning tools and support available to line managers and employees. It is also looking at the oversight and assurance around this, to ensure staff at all levels are treated fairly and objectively and recognised appropriately for their performance and the positive impact of their contributions.

The SPDR process has subsequently been suspended for the 2020/21 period due to the continuing impact of Covid-19, and HMPPS are taking the opportunity to review its approach to performance management going forward.

■ **Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[121219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Annual Staff Equalities Report 2019-20, published on 26 November 2020, what the reasons are for the higher Average Days Lost to Sickness Absence measure for BAME staff than white staff.

Lucy Frazer:

Whilst the reasons for the higher Average Working Days Lost to sickness absence measure for BAME staff than white staff for 2019/20 are unclear, the health and wellbeing of all HMPPS staff is a priority, and HMPPS will continue to work with line managers and employees to encourage them to work together to manage attendance in an open and effective way with early intervention and support when health issues arise or when absence levels are unsatisfactory, and to ensure that attendance is managed in a way which is fair and transparent.

HMPPS is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff in England and Wales, with all staff having access to a comprehensive occupational health service and employee assistance programme.

The primary categories for overall sickness absence reasons in HMPPS in 19/20, can be found in the September HMPPS Workforce Quarterly Report, (table 20) available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2020>

Ms Lyn Brown:

[121220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Annual Staff Equalities Report 2019-20, published on 26 November 2020, what the reasons are for the increase in the Average Days Lost to Sickness Absence from 2018-19 to 2019-20.

Lucy Frazer:

HMPPS has published the reasons for sickness absence which have contributed to average working days lost (AWDL). The full list of reasons for sick absence in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19 can be found in the September HMPPS Workforce Quarterly Report (table 20), available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2020>

Sickness absence has increased in the majority of sickness categories, which has contributed to the overall increase of AWDL across HMPPS. HMPPS is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff in England and Wales, with all staff having access to a comprehensive occupational health service and employee assistance programme.

■ Prison Service: Finance**Ms Lyn Brown:****[121213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Population Projections 2020 to 2026, England and Wales, published on 26 November 2020, if he will publish estimates of the projected effects on (a) average caseloads per probation staff member, (b) probation service funding per person under probation supervision, (c) prisoners per prison staff member and (d) prison service funding per prisoner over the projection period.

Lucy Frazer:

A) Our future model for the probation system is based on enabling our staff to deliver all elements of their role to protect the public to help people live law abiding lives, rather than an average caseload per probation staff member. All staff will deal with work and caseloads that have a range of complexity, matched to their level of training and expertise.

To tackle additional demand and on the probation system we are also increasing our recruitment capacity for new probation officers. We have committed to recruiting 1,000 trainee Probation Officers in 2020/21, with 443 already started in July 2020.

C) Prisoner to staffing ratios will continue to be agreed on a case by case basis specific to the establishment's design, category and the type of prisoners held. During periods of prisoner unlock, the minimum number of staff on each residential unit is determined by 'Safe, Decent and Secure Operating Levels' (SDSOLs) which are agreed in each establishment. Several factors influence SDSOLs such as design and size of a residential unit, specialist functions or prisoner cohort.

B) and D) Government has recently announced the Spending Review settlement for MoJ which will set funding for prisons and probation for 2021-22. Funding for later years are a matter for future Spending Reviews.

■ Prisoners on Remand: Suicide**Alex Cunningham:****[122690]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have died by suicide while on remand in each of the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

We publish this information as part of the Safety in Custody statistics available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-september-2019>

Please see the number of self-inflicted deaths of those on remand in each of the last five years below:

2019 – 23

2018 – 27

2017 – 21

2016 – 33

2015 – 36

These figures are derived from the HMPPS Deaths in Prison Custody database. As classification of deaths may change following inquest or as new information emerges numbers may change from time to time.

Every death in custody is a tragedy. We do all we can to prevent prisoners taking their own lives.

We have rolled out revised and improved “Introduction to Suicide and Self-harm Prevention” training for new and existing staff. Over 24,000 staff have received part training and over 12,000 have received training in all six modules.

We have increased the level of support for prisons to help staff implement and monitor any necessary changes and we continue to support prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm through the multi-disciplinary Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) process.

■ Prisoners: Females and Children**Ms Lyn Brown:****[121214]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Population Projections 2020 to 2026, England and Wales, published on 26 November 2020, whether the projected increases in prison populations for (a) adult women and (b) children reflect his Departmental policies.

Lucy Frazer:

The projections are based on Government policies as outlined in the publication. Increases are expected particularly due to the recruitment of an extra 20,000 police officers which is likely to increase charge volumes.

It remains the case that the Government's position is that children should be sentenced to custody only as a last resort. Similarly, we remain committed to the Female Offender Strategy published in 2018 which outlines our intention to see fewer women in custody and more women supported in the community.

The recent Sentencing White Paper outlined a number of measures to strengthen community sentences and give both courts and the public confidence in their ability to act as a robust alternative to custody.

■ Reoffenders**Ms Lyn Brown:****[121210]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Prison Population Projections 2020 to 2026, England and Wales, published on 26 November 2020, whether the estimated recall rate for determinate sentenced offenders reflects his Departmental policies.

Lucy Frazer:

The Recall, Review and Re-Release of Recalled Prisoners Policy Framework, published 31 March 2020, sets out the comprehensive policy for the recall of determinate and indeterminate sentence offenders to custody. The recall rate estimated in the Prison Population Projections 2020 – 2026 reflects the assumption that the practice of probation staff will be in line with the policy.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877071/recall-review-rerelease-pf.pdf

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Business: Northern Ireland****Andrew Griffith:****[121409]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the economic support available for Northern Irish businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Robin Walker:

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK Government has supported businesses and employees throughout Northern Ireland. I have regular discussions with HM Treasury on economic support, and am grateful for the generous support that has been given so far.

Northern Ireland has benefited from the UK Government's employment support package, with around one in four jobs in Northern Ireland protected by this, as well as

loans and support of over £1.3 billion to more than 34,000 firms across Northern Ireland. A UK-wide VAT cut and the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme have ensured that the world renowned hospitality industry of Northern Ireland can support its 65,000 workers.

In the current financial year, the UK Government also provided the Executive with £2.8 billion to respond to Covid-19. The Executive has used some of this to support businesses in Northern Ireland. In the recent Spending Review, the Chancellor announced an additional £0.5 billion of further funding for the Executive for Covid-19 in 2021/22.

■ Foreign Relations: Republic of Ireland

Ruth Jones: [\[121016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he last had discussions with An Taoiseach.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland last spoke to the Taoiseach on 16 July, and is in regular contact with the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, Simon Coveney. I last spoke with the Taoiseach on 8 November, where we both attended the Remembrance Sunday service at Enniskillen.

The Prime Minister last spoke to the Taoiseach on 29 November. UK Government Ministers regularly engage with their ministerial counterparts in the Republic of Ireland.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas: [\[121137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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 Robin Walker:

The Northern Ireland Office's HR services, including payroll, are provided by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). MOJ does not currently offer the facility to allow staff to join a Credit Union through payroll deductions.

TRANSPORT

■ Department for Transport: Credit Unions

Gareth Thomas: [\[121128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There are no plans to require the Department of Transport or its agencies to provide a payroll deduction service as described.

■ Driving Instruction: Coronavirus**Alexander Stafford:****[121045]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that driving schools are able to re-open safely, as taxi companies have been permitted to, in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

As business owners, approved driving instructors (ADI) are responsible for ensuring their services remain safe and COVID-secure. Guidance on how ADIs can carry out risk assessments can be found on the Health and Safety Executive's website at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk>

The requirement for pupils to wear PPE during a lesson is the decision of the driving instructor and the pupil.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has worked closely with trade associations, such as the National Associations Strategic Partnership (NASP), and shared its plans with them to allow NASP to publish guidance for ADIs. NASP has also produced guidance on training which is available online at: www.n-a-s-p.co.uk/

The DVSA has also signposted ADIs to Government guidance on safety in vehicles and while working. A copy of the guidance can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-restarting-driver-and-rider-training-and-tests>

The DVSA does not have sufficient or direct powers to instruct ADIs to take certain measures; it can only offer guidance, which is what it has done.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Alan Brown:****[120900]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the funding allocated to the rapid charge fund announced in the March 2020 budget has been spent to date; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

As announced in the Spending Review on 25 November 2020, the Government will invest £950 million in future proofing grid capacity along the Strategic Road Network to prepare for 100% uptake of zero emission cars and vans ahead of need. The Spending Review announcement supersedes the March 2020 budget. As of 26th November 2020 no funding has been released, however work to design the Rapid Charging Fund is underway and the timing and process for the delivery of this funding will be confirmed in due course.

Alan Brown:

[\[120901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many rapid charge points have been installed through the Rapid Charge Fund to date; and how many rapid charge points are programmed for installation from that fund in the next 12 months.

Rachel Maclean:

As announced in the Spending Review on 25 November 2020, the Government will invest £950 million in future proofing grid capacity along the Strategic Road Network to prepare for 100% uptake of zero emission cars and vans ahead of need. Work to design the Rapid Charging Fund is underway, and the timing and process for the delivery of this funding will be confirmed in due course. We will work closely with motorway service area operators and chargepoint operators to make sure that this funding is used to support the rollout of as many chargepoints as possible.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[121029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to improve infrastructure for the charging of vehicles away from drivers' homes in (a) Bosworth constituency and (b) the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

While the Government believes the majority of electric vehicle (EV) charging will take place at home, we understand that many consumers want to see sufficient charging infrastructure in place across destinations, workplaces and the Strategic Road Network, before they will make the leap to purchasing an EV.

The roll out of rapid charging is an opportunity to remove range anxiety for electric vehicle drivers across the roads network. To ensure the private sector can continue to expand the charging network at pace in the 2020s, the Government will invest £950 million in future proofing grid capacity along the Strategic Road Network to prepare for 100% uptake of zero emission cars and vans ahead of need. In May, we published an ambitious vision for rapid charging infrastructure along strategic roads in England over the next decade. This vision sets out the number of rapid chargepoints that will be located across motorways and major A roads to meet the future demand for electric vehicles.

Through our Workplace Charging Scheme, businesses, charities and the wider public sector can get grants of up to £350 per socket for installing up to 40 charging sockets for their employees and fleets. Over 11,000 installations have been funded using the scheme, including 21 in the Bosworth constituency, as of 1 October 2020. Local authorities across the country are able to take advantage of the On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), which assists them with the cost of installing chargepoints on residential streets.

To increase confidence in the charging network and reduce range anxiety the Government is working with industry to make chargepoint data available, helping drivers easily locate and access available chargepoints. Government will consult on using its powers under the Automated Electric Vehicles Act to mandate minimum

standards, such as requiring contactless payment for rapid chargepoints, to improve the consumer experience of charging.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

Jon Trickett:

[120788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the High Speed Two rail project.

Andrew Stephenson:

In April, the Government approved the Full Business Case for Phase One and set the funding envelope at £44.6bn (2019 prices), including Euston. The overall Phase 2a estimated cost is ranged between £5-7bn (2019 prices). Updated cost estimates will be provided for the Phase 2b links to Manchester and Leeds once the Integrated Rail Plan is concluded. The Government has committed to keeping Parliament regularly updated on the latest cost estimates of the scheme via twice yearly reporting. The first of these was published in October and can be accessed below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hs2-6-monthly-report-to-parliament>.

■ Kidsgrove Railway Station: Disability

Jonathan Gullis:

[121037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve disabled access at Kidsgrove Railway Station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Construction of an accessible route, including a footbridge and three lifts at Kidsgrove station is due to begin next Spring and be completed by Autumn.

■ Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen

Ian Paisley:

[120869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to promote the use of hydrogen in transport.

Rachel Maclean:

The Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution included ambitious new policies and investment in hydrogen transport projects including:

- £20 million to support the development of cost-effective, zero emission heavy goods vehicles in the UK
- £20 million to help develop clean maritime technology
- £3 million in the recently announced Tees Valley Hydrogen Transport Hub

We will build on those announcements and set out the role for hydrogen in our forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which will set out how we intend to reduce emissions and deliver transport's contribution to net zero by 2050.

■ Ports: Carbon Emissions

Steve Double:

[\[120895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of UK ports on their role in contributing to the Government's net zero emissions target.

Robert Courts:

The Department has regular meetings at both Ministerial and Official level with individual ports and their trade representatives on wide a range of issues including decarbonisation.

The UK's ports are covered by both the Net Zero 2050 target, and our national carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act. Ports will need to decarbonise alongside the wider UK economy.

Most recently I have met with the board members of the UK Major Ports Group, one of the two port trade associations in the UK, on the 27th of November. We discussed a range of issues of interest to the sector including decarbonisation.

Alan Brown:

[\[120906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of UK ports on the role of ports in contributing to the Government's Net Zero targets.

Robert Courts:

The Department has regular meetings at both Ministerial and Official level with individual ports and their trade representatives on wide a range of issues, including decarbonisation.

The UK's ports are covered by both the Net Zero 2050 target, and our national carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act. Ports will need to decarbonise alongside the wider UK economy.

Most recently I have met with the board members of the UK Major Ports Group, one of the two port trade associations in the UK, on the 27th of November. We discussed a range of issues of interest to the sector including decarbonisation.

■ Public Transport: Social Distancing

Jon Trickett:

[\[121157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that plans are in place to enforce social distancing measures on public transport between 23 and 27 December 2020.

Jon Trickett:

[\[121158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has in place to ensure that public transport networks can cope safely and in adherence to social distancing

measures with a potential increase in passengers on services between 23 and 27 December 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

Travel restrictions across the UK and between tiers will be lifted over the Christmas period, allowing up to three households to come together between 23 and 27 of December in Great Britain and between the 22 and 28 for those travelling to and from Northern Ireland.

The pandemic will undoubtedly make journeys more challenging, longer and busier than usual over the Christmas period. We have therefore been working closely with delivery partners to devise a series of measures focused on supporting passenger and staff safety, reducing disruption wherever possible and helping people travel with confidence. Sir Peter Hendy has also been asked to scrutinise the plans of all rail, road, coach, maritime and aviation operators to ensure a collective focus across the transport industry on minimising disruption and supporting passengers.

■ **Railway Stations: Parking**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[120826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of Transport for London's capacity to manage its projects to build flats over station car parks.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has agreed a further extraordinary funding and financing package for TfL of up to £1.7bn to ensure the continuation of public transport services in London.

As part of this deal, by 11 January 2021 TfL will produce a single, comprehensive management plan with options as to how a trajectory to financial sustainability by 2023 can be achieved, including their contribution to capital projects within London. As transport in London is devolved, it is for the Mayor and TfL to assess the merits of capital projects in which they wish to invest, and their capacity to deliver such projects.

■ **Railway Stations: Sussex**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[121048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve access at railway stations for disabled people in (a) Sussex and (b) Arundel and South Downs constituency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We remain committed to improving accessibility at stations and £383m has been allocated to extend the Access for All programme until 2024. Since 2012 nine stations in Sussex have benefitted from the programme, including tactile paving for visually impaired passengers and platform humps to reduce the stepping distance to the train. Hassocks also received two lifts to provide step free access at the station.

■ Railways: Pay**Sam Tarry:**[\[121040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the rates of pay for rail workers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We took immediate action at the outbreak of the pandemic to support the rail industry, investing billions in an emergency support package to keep services running for passengers and key workers. The pandemic has had a significant impact upon the rail sector, and we will be engaging with industry and stakeholders as we consider the long-term impact. In terms of pay, according to Office for National Statistics data, rail workers earnings have on the whole since 2011 increased above inflation.

■ Railways: Staffordshire**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[121036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve rail connections in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is working to improve rail connections across the network including at Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire through both the HS2 and Midlands Connect schemes. Plans are being developed for the Midlands Engine between the Department for Transport and Midlands Connect, which include proposals to increase the frequency of trains between Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe.

Avanti West Coast currently run an hourly service calling at Stoke-on-Trent between London Euston and Manchester Piccadilly.

West Midlands Trains also run an hourly service between Birmingham New Street and Crewe, calling at Stafford, Stone and Stoke – on – Trent. From December 2020 the timetable will be uplifted so this service includes calls at Penkridge, meaning an extra hourly service at this station in addition to the calls made by the existing Birmingham New Street – Liverpool Lime Street service.

HS2 services are expected to serve Stoke-on-Trent once the railway is operational. No final decisions have been made on the exact HS2 train service, however, and the Department has appointed West Coast Partnership Development to analyse passenger demand on the route and present options for train service patterns that best allow this demand to be met with the available infrastructure. The Secretary of State will decide on the preferred option, once it has been subject to wider consultation, nearer to the time that HS2 opens.

In January 2020 the Secretary of State announced the £500 million Restoring Your Railway fund to deliver our manifesto commitment and start reopening lines and stations, reconnecting smaller communities. Meir station was successful in the first round of the Ideas Fund and is currently on track to progress to the next stage of the Restoring Your Railway process.

■ Railways: Sussex**Andrew Griffith:**[\[121061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to connect more Sussex towns to the railway network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Earlier this year, Network Rail completed and published the West Sussex Connectivity Study. This study focused on identifying long term improvements that could be pursued on the Arun Valley Line and West Coastway Line (between Brighton and Chichester). A range of potential train service, timetable, and infrastructure options have been identified that could improve connectivity between towns and local stations in West Sussex. Network Rail are considering if a case can be made to develop these options further, which would be assessed in line with the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline process.

■ Roads: Noise**Andrew Griffith:**[\[121056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 June 2020 to Question 55079, what assessment he has made of the results of the acoustic camera trials announced in June 2019 to monitor traffic noise; and what plans he has for a wider rollout of acoustic cameras.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department's initial trials of a prototype acoustic camera have concluded. The outcome of the trial is currently being considered, including what further development would be required to enable the technology to be used for more targeted and efficient enforcement.

It is too early in the development of the device to provide a plan for its introduction, but we are optimistic that it will provide an effective enforcement tool in the future.

■ Roads: Staffordshire**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[121035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the condition of roads in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is providing (a) Stoke-on-Trent with over £5.5 million and (b) Staffordshire with over £37 million through the Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund this financial year. It is for each Council to decide on how this funding is utilised based on their highway asset management strategy, needs, and priorities.

In addition, Stoke-on-Trent council were successful in their £5 million 'Keep Stoke Moving' key corridor Challenge Fund bid in February this year. In February

Staffordshire County Council also successfully bid for £2.35 million to upgrade Chetwynd Bridge, a historic Grade II* structure.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Steve Double:

[\[120894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the maritime industry on funding for feasibility projects relating to maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

On 18 November the Prime Minister announced, as part of his Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, £20 million for a Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition to develop clean maritime technology, such as feasibility studies on key sites. My officials and I have had preliminary discussions with representatives from the maritime sector concerning the commitments in the Ten Point Plan, including the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition. Further information on the terms of the competition will be published in due course.

Alan Brown:

[\[120905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the maritime industry on the allocation of funding for feasibility projects relating to maritime decarbonisation.

Robert Courts:

On 18 November the Prime Minister announced, as part of his Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, £20 million for a Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition to develop clean maritime technology, such as feasibility studies on key sites. My officials and I have had preliminary discussions with representatives from the maritime sector concerning the commitments in the Ten Point Plan, including the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition. Further information on the terms of the competition will be published in due course.

■ Transport: Dudley

Marco Longhi:

[\[121379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the local transport connectivity improvements that will be required for Dudley to benefit from High Speed Two.

Andrew Stephenson:

As part of the devolution deal that created the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), a £4.4bn HS2 Growth Package was agreed for the region. This has provided the means to implement a comprehensive package of interventions and investments, to maximise the true impact and ensure the DfT and WMCA's vision for HS2 becomes a reality.

The WMCA has made an assessment of the transport connectivity improvements that will be required for the all parts of the region to benefit from HS2. This has been published as the Midlands HS2 Growth Strategy and is a publicly available document.

An extension of the Midland Metro tram from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill via Dudley town centre includes a contribution of £207m from the West Midlands Combined Authority Transforming Cities Fund allocation. Proposals are also being developed by the rail industry and Birmingham City Council to improve the connectivity between Birmingham Moor Street station and the new HS2 terminus at Curzon Street. This will benefit those people in Dudley who use the Snow Hill Line, as they will be able to enjoy a seamless connection between their local rail network and the high speed network.

■ Travel: Africa

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[121009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the evidential basis for the exclusion of African nations for the purposes of an air bridge to allow covid-19 quarantine free travel from UK.

Robert Courts:

Ministerial decisions on International Travel Corridors are informed by risk assessments provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), working closely with Public Health England (PHE), using a methodology endorsed by the four Chief Medical Officers of the UK which has been published on GOV.UK.

Risk assessments focus on the public health risk, posed by incoming travellers, to the UK population. The JBC and PHE monitor information from over 250 countries, territories and islands daily to inform these risk assessments.

The Government has made consistently clear it will take decisive action if necessary to contain the virus, including removing countries from the Travel Corridors list rapidly if the public health risk of people returning from a particular country without self-isolating becomes too high.

The African nations of Namibia, Rwanda, and Mauritius and the Seychelles are currently on the Travel Corridors list.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Alan Brown:

[\[120903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the role of the UK maritime industry in supporting the Government's targets for increasing offshore wind production.

Robert Courts:

While my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible for the Government's targets on offshore wind production, my officials and I regularly engage the maritime sector on all relevant

matters, including offshore wind production and the decarbonisation of the vessels serving offshore windfarms.

Alan Brown: [\[120904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the maritime industry on that industry's role in supporting the Government's targets for increasing offshore wind production.

Robert Courts:

While my Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is responsible for the Government's targets on offshore wind production, my officials and I regularly engage the maritime sector on all relevant matters, including offshore wind production and the decarbonisation of the vessels serving offshore windfarms.

TREASURY

■ Bankruptcy: Tax Avoidance

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[120816\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people who will be declared bankrupt as a result of the implementation of the Loan Charge.

Owen Thompson: [\[120923\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who will declare bankruptcy as a result of the Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not want to make anybody bankrupt, and insolvency is only ever considered as a last resort. HMRC will work with individuals to reach sustainable and manageable payment plans wherever possible. In line with current practice, HMRC will pause recovery action where a taxpayer has no ability to pay, until there is a significant change of circumstance.

HMRC are not always the only creditor and some individuals may choose to enter insolvency themselves based on their overall financial position.

Anyone who is worried about being able to pay what they owe is encouraged to get in touch with HMRC as soon as possible on 03000 599110.

■ Boats: VAT

Alberto Costa: [\[120889\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on British yacht and boat owners of the requirement to pay a second VAT payment upon their return to UK waters after the end of the transition period.

Jesse Norman:

Returned Goods Relief from customs duties and import VAT will be extended to include goods in the European Union at the end of the transition period that otherwise meet the conditions for relief.

■ **Cars: Northern Ireland****Paul Girvan:**[\[120976\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to include car dealers in Northern Ireland in margin schemes for used-cars as part of the Government's levelling-up programme.

Jesse Norman:

The Northern Ireland Protocol frames the approach to VAT on goods, including the second-hand margin scheme, in Northern Ireland. As is the case for tax policy generally, the Government is keeping this under review.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Disability****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[120931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure clinically extremely vulnerable disabled workers who cannot work from home are furloughed by their employers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[120932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure disabled workers with an impairment or health condition who cannot work from home can be furloughed by their employers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[120933\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the Job Support Scheme will provide support for all disabled workers.

Ruth Jones:[\[121013\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure that clinically extremely vulnerable disabled workers who cannot work from home are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by their employers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ruth Jones:[\[121014\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure that disabled workers with an impairment or health condition who cannot work from home are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by their employers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is available to all employers and employees providing they meet the eligibility criteria, and this includes the clinically extremely vulnerable and disabled workers.

In cases where their employer chooses not to furlough them under the CJRS and does not have other suitable policies in place (e.g. the ability to work from home, or the provision of special leave), Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is available as a safety net. Those who receive a notification that they need to shield from going to work if they cannot work from home, will be eligible for SSP from their employer, or new style Employment and Support Allowance, subject to the wider eligibility criteria. Individuals on low incomes may also be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Fraud

Owen Thompson:

[\[121308\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will launch an investigation into the estimated £3.5 billion fraudulent claims to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme forms part of a collective national effort to protect people's jobs. Fraudulent claims put at risk the provision of public services and the protection of livelihoods. This could include employers claiming on an employee's behalf and not then paying them what they are entitled to, asking employees to do work while on furlough, or making a backdated claim that includes times when workers were working.

Compliance investigations are now under way. HMRC estimated that CJRS error and fraud could be between 5-10%. The evidence needed to be sure of the actual levels will not be available until HMRC have conducted a sufficient number of compliance investigations. These investigations could carry on for the next two years, so a full and robust error and fraud estimate will not be available until 2022.

Employees can play a vital role by reporting fraudulent claims to HMRC, via their online fraud reporting tool: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-excise-and-vat-fraud-reporting>. HMRC are checking claims made through this scheme. Payments may be withheld or need to be repaid in full to HMRC if the claim is based on dishonest or inaccurate information or found to be fraudulent.

HMRC have made clear that they will not hesitate to act on reports of abuse and the first arrest made in relation to CJRS fraud was on 8 July.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Martyn Day:

[\[121866\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2020 to Question 71800 on Government Assistance: Coronavirus, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) people and (b) businesses not eligible for any of the Government's financial support packages during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has provided a comprehensive economic response that is one of the most generous globally, taking unprecedented steps to support individuals, businesses and the most vulnerable. As well as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), this package includes a suite of government-backed loans and grants to businesses, tax deferrals, and a moratorium on commercial tenant evictions.

This comprehensive package also includes extra funding for the welfare safety net, to get us through the outbreak and help those unable to access other forms of support. The temporary welfare measures include increases to Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance, a relaxation of the Universal Credit minimum income floor, making Statutory Sick Pay easier to access, and providing £500 payments to self-isolate for those on low incomes who can't work from home

However, the government also recognises that our economy is changing, and so existing schemes provide an appropriate route for employees to access high-quality training and prepare individuals for jobs of the future. That is why at the Spending Review last week, the Chancellor announced an additional £3.7 billion to build on the commitments made in the Plan for Jobs.

The government has put in place an economic package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the Winter months, even as measures to prevent further spread of the virus change. We continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

■ Day Centres: VAT**Alberto Costa:**[\[121289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of excluding privately run social care day centres from the requirement to pay VAT.

Jesse Norman:

Many care services provided by charities, public bodies and regulated private welfare institutions to elderly people are exempt from VAT, meaning no VAT is charged on their services.

Introducing a zero-rate of VAT on adult social care would cost nearly £2 billion per year, and this must be viewed in the context of about £50 billion of other requests for relief from VAT since the EU referendum.

The Government has no current plans to review the VAT treatment of these services.

■ Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority: Credit Unions**Gareth Thomas:**[\[121120\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to require the (a) Prudential Regulation Authority and (b) Financial conduct Authority to provide a payroll deduction

service to allow staff to save more easily with a credit union; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the vital role credit unions play in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings, and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.

The legislative framework provides for the regulators to be operationally independent from Government, and HMT has no role in setting employee policies.

■ **Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Non-domestic Rates**

Marco Longhi:

[\[121375\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the (a) administrative and (b) financial burden of business rates on retail and hospitality businesses once the business rates holiday expires in April 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has supported retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England with over £10 billion of business rates relief. It will continue to look at how to adjust its support in a way that ensures people can get back to work, protecting both the UK economy and the livelihoods of people across the country. The Government is conducting a fundamental review of business rates and will outline plans for future business rates reliefs in the New Year.

■ **Investment Income: Taxation**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[120824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on small businesses of changes in the level of dividend taxes.

Jesse Norman:

Dividend tax is paid by individual shareholders rather than businesses. Dividend taxes were changed in 2016 and again in 2018. In 2016 the dividend tax credit was abolished and replaced with a new £5,000 allowance, and an increase of 7.5 percentage points was also introduced in each tax band. Over 75 per cent of dividend taxpayers either gained from or were unaffected by these changes, and about one million individuals benefited from a tax reduction on their dividend income due to the new Dividend Allowance. The full impacts were set out in the Tax Information and Impact Note published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/533150/TIIN_Dividends-Allowance_-_updated.pdf

This change was made to help address the incentive for some people to set up a company and make payments as dividends rather than as wages simply to reduce their tax bill. The changes simplified, reformed and modernised dividend taxation, helping to create a fairer tax system.

In 2018, the Dividend Allowance was reduced from £5,000 to £2,000 to ensure support for investors was targeted more fairly. About two thirds of all those with dividend income were unaffected by this measure. Only those individuals and households who were in receipt of dividend income between £2,000 and £5,000 were affected. The full impacts were set out in the Tax Information and Impact Note published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/income-tax-dividend-allowance-reduction>.

■ Non-domestic Rates

Helen Hayes: [120941]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the timescale is for publishing the Government's fundamental review of business rates.

Jesse Norman:

The final report of the fundamental review of business rates will be published in Spring 2021.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [120940]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to support retail hospitality and leisure businesses with a further business rates holiday in 2021-22 before the March Budget 2021.

Layla Moran: [120994]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the business rates holiday to the end of 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has taken the unprecedented step of providing over £10 billion in business rates relief this year for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties.

As announced at the Spending Review, to support businesses next year the Government will freeze the multiplier and has committed to announcing any decisions on future rate reliefs in the New Year.

■ Overseas Aid

Jon Trickett: [121159]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the revenue that will accrue to the public purse from reducing overseas aid expenditure from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of gross national income in each year up to 2025.

Steve Barclay:

The Spending Review 2020 allocated £10bn for Official Development Assistance to spend in the financial year 21/22.

On 25 November the Office for Budget Responsibility published its Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This forecasts Gross National Income (GNI) for the 2021 calendar year to be £2138.6bn. 0.7% of this GNI estimate is £14.97bn and 0.5% of this GNI estimate is £10.69bn.

Financial year allocations for subsequent years will be decided at future Spending Reviews. The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows.

■ Packaging: Taxation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[121835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy paper entitled Policy paper Plastic packaging tax updated by his department on 22 November 2020, what plans he has to exempt to confirm that (a) polybutyrate adipate terephthalate and (b) other compostable packaging from the proposed plastic tax.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 12 November, the Government published the summary of responses to the recent consultation on the detailed design and implementation of the Plastic Packaging Tax. This included confirming the consultation proposal to include all bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastic packaging in the scope of the tax.

As set out in the summary of responses to the consultation, the Government believes that alternative plastics can play a role in addressing plastic waste if used in the right circumstances. However, further evidence is needed on the impact of widespread adoption of such materials, and it is right to include them within scope of the tax at this stage.

In their report on Plastic Food and Drink Packaging, published 12 November 2019, the Committee for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs stated they did not support a general increase in the use of industrially compostable packaging at this stage.

As part of the Bioeconomy Strategy, the Government is working with industry and the research community to better understand the impact of using bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics. Following the conclusion of the Bioeconomy Strategy, the Government will consider further the treatment of these plastics in relation to Plastic Packaging Tax.

■ Recycling

Alexander Stafford:

[\[121046\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help ensure the development of a circular economy through the National Infrastructure Strategy.

Kemi Badenoch:

As set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy, waste tracking technology is the future of a high-tech circular economy underpinned by world class digital infrastructure, and will ensure that all waste movements across our economy can be

tracked, supporting resource efficiency as well as informing sustainable future infrastructure investment. Full details can be found in the strategy -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-infrastructure-strategy>.

This SR will also ensure progress in implementing flagship Environment Bill measures including extended producer responsibility for packaging waste, the introduction of a deposit return scheme, and consistent collection of waste – including food waste – in every local authority in England.

■ Revenue and Customs: Dispute Resolution

Andrew Lewer:

[120997]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if HMRC's officers will provide their tax analysis and answer questions from the taxpayer arising from the analysis, before parties enter into Alternative Dispute Resolution scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Lewer:

[120998]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of taxpayers who have used HMRC's Alternative Dispute Resolution through (a) arbitration and (b) mediation in each year that the scheme has existed.

Jesse Norman:

Throughout a compliance check HMRC will provide accurate, consistent and clear information to the taxpayer, including details of any assessments raised and explanations for any decisions HMRC make during the check. Should a taxpayer have any questions about the compliance check or an assessment, they should write to HMRC who will seek to clarify anything that is unclear. However, HMRC's approach also relies on a shared understanding of the full facts so that they can understand the full nature of the tax risk and deal with it appropriately.

It is generally only when an impasse is reached between HMRC and the taxpayer that Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is considered. In some cases the full facts will have been established and the mediation will focus on the consequent tax analysis. But in some, the value of ADR will be to seek through mediation, a shared understanding of the facts and help the case progress on that basis.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a voluntary, informal process in which an impartial HMRC mediator actively assists parties to work towards agreement of a tax dispute. ADR is one facet of HMRC's overall approach to dispute resolution, which is wherever possible to reach agreement with taxpayers through collaboration. The following is specific information relating to the ADR function only and therefore only forms part of the dispute resolution landscape in HMRC. HMRC do not currently offer arbitration as a means to resolve disputes.

For the period 1 April 2015–31 March 2020 there have been 5,467 applications for ADR. Of these, 2,641 were suitable for mediation and accepted into the ADR process with an average resolution rate of 86.8% across all years.

■ Revenue and Customs: Location**Jon Trickett:** [\[120782\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC tax offices there are in England.

Jesse Norman:

At 31 October 2020 HMRC had 59 staffed offices in England. On 19 October 2020 an updated list of HMRC office closures and regional centre opening dates was committed to the House of Commons Library. This list is now deposited as paper reference DEP 2020-0609:

<https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282554/details>.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[121189\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) taxi drivers who have recently purchased a zero-emissions-capable taxi and offset the cost against their earnings using capital allowances and (b) other self-employed people not eligible for the self-employed income support scheme.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[121190\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on drivers who have leased a zero-emissions-capable taxi; and what steps he plans to take to support those people.

Jesse Norman:

This is a challenging time for many sectors and individuals, including taxi drivers. In response to the second national lockdown, the Chancellor announced that the next Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant, which covers the period from November to January, will increase to 80% of average profits, up to £7,500.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed, and those ineligible for the SEISS Grant Extension may still be eligible for other elements of the support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. They may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

More widely, the Government uses the tax system to encourage the uptake of vehicles with low carbon dioxide emissions to help meet the UK's legally binding climate change targets. Since April 2019, purpose built zero-emission capable taxis have been exempted from the Vehicle Excise Duty expensive car supplement. At Budget 2020, the Government also announced that First Year Allowances on purchases of zero-emission business cars, including zero-emission taxis, will remain

available until at least March 2025. Businesses hiring zero-emission cars also retain the ability to set 100% of rental costs against taxable profits.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[121365\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2020 to Question 110758, if he will enable people who are long-term self-employed to submit previous self-assessment returns prior to 2018-19 for the Self-employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided, and will continue to provide, generous support to the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

If an individual is not eligible based on their 2018-19 Self Assessment return, HM Revenue & Customs will then look at their Self Assessment returns from 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 to determine their eligibility. This reduces the impact of one-off events, such as a redundancy payment, in determining eligibility.

To calculate an individual's average trading profits for the purposes of the SEISS grant, HMRC will consider previous Self Assessment returns prior to 2018-2019, where possible.

The grant is calculated by taking an average of yearly trading profits over the last three tax years and dividing this by four to give a three-month average. The grant will then be provided at 80% of this three-month average, capped at £7,500.

Moreover, the SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[120833\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been raised from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy in 2020-21 to date; and which programmes and organisations have received funding as a result of that revenue.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC's October publication of receipts for the year to date shows that the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) has provisionally raised £223m in revenue in 2020-21. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmrc-tax-and-nics-receipts-for-the-uk>

There is no formal link between SDIL revenues and individual programmes. However, the Government will continue to invest in supporting public health and tackling obesity, including the Department for Education's primary sports premium.

■ Tax Avoidance

Mr Alistair Carmichael: **[120815]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people who have been in settlement discussions with HMRC on the Loan Charge have settled their case.

Jesse Norman:

About 5,600 employers and individuals settled their use of disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes in the period to 30 September 2020, in addition to the about 11,000 employers and individuals who settled their use of disguised remuneration schemes between Budget 2016 and 31 March 2020.

Further information on settlements is available in HMRC's report to Parliament on the implementation of the recommendations of the independent Loan Charge Review, which was published on 3 December:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-loan-charge-review-hmrc-report-on-implementation>.

Andrew Rosindell: **[120817]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many penalties have been issued under the legislative powers to tackle Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes; and what steps he is taking to investigate and prosecute promoters of such schemes.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) top priority in dealing with the promoters of tax avoidance schemes is to change their behaviour so that they stop this activity altogether. HMRC uses a range of powers to achieve this, including the Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes (POTAS) legislation. POTAS is designed to encourage promoters to change behaviour voluntarily or to face an escalating series of sanctions.

Following challenge many promoters have chosen to stop and others have done so as a consequence of being issued with a Conduct Notice. Penalties would only then be in point if the Courts found that the Conduct Notice had been breached or information had not been provided when the promoter is formally required to do so. None has yet reached the stage of incurring liability to a penalty.

The Government and HMRC are determined to continue to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes. This includes challenging the entities and individuals who promote disguised remuneration loan schemes. On 19 March 2020, HMRC published their strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes. The strategy sets out HMRC's work to date and outlines how HMRC will continue to take robust actions against promoters of tax avoidance. The Promoter Strategy is available on GOV.UK.

Layla Moran:

[\[120993\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people have been affected by mis-selling schemes which are now subject to the Loan Charge in (a) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency and (b) the UK.

Jesse Norman:

While the Government empathises with anyone who believes they were misled into using a disguised remuneration (DR) scheme, it is an individual's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of their tax return and to understand the consequences of their decisions. It remains right that the Government takes action to tackle tax avoidance which is unfair to the vast majority of taxpayers who pay the correct tax.

The Government estimates that about 50,000 individuals are affected by the Loan Charge. The number who may feel they have been affected by mis-selling is not available.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment and Training: Lone Parents

Chris Elmore:

[\[120956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support single parents to (a) stay in work, (b) return to work and (c) retrain.

Will Quince:

We are committed to helping parents into work. Childcare is essential in enabling parents to work, although we recognise that this can cause additional financial difficulty. Universal Credit claimants are able to claim up to 85 per cent of their childcare costs, compared to 70 per cent on the legacy system. Work allowances for working parents and people with disabilities were increased by £1000 from April 2019. 2.4 million households will be up to £630 better off (per year), in a package worth £1.7bn by 2023/24.

Universal Credit Work Coaches have flexibility and autonomy to build individual support packages to help the individual into work and help those with low incomes. Work Coaches utilise additional packages to support individuals such as Self-Employment, New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) and funding from the Flexible Support Fund to help individuals overcome their barriers to enter employment.

The UC childcare policy aligns with the wider government childcare offer, which includes 15 hours per week free childcare for disadvantaged 2 year olds and 3 & 4 year olds. This doubles to 30 hours per week free childcare for working parents of 3 & 4 year olds.

■ Universal Credit**Chris Elmore:** [\[120957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of childcare costs that can be claimed under universal credit.

Chris Elmore: [\[122831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of (a) universal credit and (b) the policy of payment of costs in arrears in helping parents meet childcare costs.

Will Quince:

In Universal Credit, working families can claim up to 85%, increased from 70% in legacy benefits, of their eligible registered childcare costs each month. This equates to a maximum support of £646.35 per month for one child and £1,108.04 per month for two or more children.

The current childcare offer is comprehensive, broad ranging and reflects different family circumstances, covering children over a range of ages. We believe that helping parents with their childcare costs is one of the best ways to help people into work, support families with the cost of living, and ensure every child has the opportunity of a high quality early education.

The UC childcare policy aligns with the wider government childcare offer, which includes 15 hours per week free childcare for disadvantaged 2 year olds and 3 & 4 year olds. This doubles to 30 hours per week free childcare for working parents of 3 & 4 year olds.

Chris Stephens: [\[122792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims have been subject to deductions; what the average amount was of those deductions; what the total sum deducted from those claims was; and what proportion of those deductions was, on average, for the purposes of repaying advance payments, in each constituency, in the most recent month for which data are available.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: From 3rd April 2020, deductions from Universal Credit for some government debt, such as Tax Credits, benefit overpayments and Social Fund Loans were suspended for 3 months. This was done to ease the financial pressure of debt recovery on benefit claimants and to also allow Debt Management staff to be re-deployed to focus on the unprecedented volume of new claims received during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universal Credit advance repayments are made gradually over 12 months, and deductions are capped at 30% of a claimant's standard allowance. This is further to the reduction of the overall maximum level of deductions from 40% to 30% of the standard allowance since October 2019.

From October 2021, the repayment period will be extended from 12 months to 24 months deductions cap will be reduced from 30% to 25%.

For those who find themselves in unexpected hardship, advance repayments can be deferred for up to three months in certain cases.

The requested information surrounding deductions to Universal Credit payments by parliamentary constituency is shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. PQ122792 Table [PQ 122792_Table 1.xlsx]