



## Daily Report

Monday, 7 December 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 7 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (08:54 P.M., 07 December 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Auctions: Fraud

**Sir Greg Knight:**

**[124138]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of shill bidding taking place at auctions; what his Department's policy is on preventing, deterring and detecting that matter; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

'Shill bidding' refers to the practice during an online auction of a seller or a seller's acquaintance placing bids on his or her goods in order to drive up the price. Trading Standards have brought successful prosecutions against sellers engaging in these practices under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and will continue to do so where appropriate.

Anyone who feels they have been the victim of a fraudulent sale should contact the Citizens Advice consumer service on 0808 223 1133 or 0808 223 1144 (Welsh speaking). They provide help and advice on consumers' rights. Citizens Advice will refer cases to Trading Standards offices for enforcement action where necessary.

#### ■ Business: Coronavirus

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[123614]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses, by sector, that have gone into administration in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

The Insolvency Service publishes National Statistics on insolvency cases for England and Wales combined. It is not possible to identify accurately companies in England specifically, or companies that operated within specific regional or local areas before entering insolvency. The data used for insolvency statistics is compiled from information at Companies House. The registered office address for a company may not be representative of its trading location, and often it is changed upon insolvency to the address of the appointed Insolvency Practitioner dealing with the case. Subject to these caveats, the full quarterly statistics on company insolvency in England and Wales can be found online, with an update to include Q4 2020 due to be published on 29 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/company-insolvency-statistics-releases>.



Insolvency data are now additionally published on a monthly basis to provide faster indicators of the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on insolvency.

However, proxy company location is not compiled for this monthly series. Top-level monthly summary statistics for England and Wales can be found online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monthly-insolvency-statistics>.

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[123615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of the outbreak on the mental health of business owners.

**Paul Scully:**

Throughout this crisis, our priority has been clear: to protect lives and livelihoods. We know how worried people are and we are taking many steps to protect both jobs and the long-term financial future of businesses during the current economic emergency.

We have introduced an unprecedented and comprehensive package of business support measures to help as many individuals and businesses as possible, which has mitigated some of the worst immediate impacts of Covid-19 on risk factors for poor mental health. This includes measures such as the small business grants, the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. Businesses can also access tailored advice through our Freephone Business Support Helpline, online via the Business Support website or through their local Growth Hubs in England.

Further measures have been announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer that build on the significant support already available as well as set out how current support will evolve and adapt. This includes the extension of the CJRS until the end of March 2021, the increase of the third Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grant from 55% to 80% of trading profits, and the extension of the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes until 31 January 2021.

In order to highlight available support around mental health, the Government is signposting resources for businesses and employers, including Mind's website and the Mental Health at Work toolkit, through GOV.UK here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-support-for-business-from-outside-government>.

We also continue to work with the Thriving at Work Leadership Council to encourage employers to sign up to the Mental Health at Work (MHAW) commitments and to engage leading Mental Health charities and organisations to better understand issues around SME mental health, financial insecurity for small business owners and the self-employed, and continue to explore what further support may be offered.

**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[124337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people with (a) cancer, (b) fibromyalgia, (c) multiple sclerosis and (d) other serious conditions each of the covid-19 vaccines have been tested on.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Individuals with certain medical conditions are not specific trial groups, but safety data will be coming from all trials to set out how the COVID-19 vaccines work in different types of people. The NHS Covid-19 vaccine research registry, developed in partnership with NHS Digital, will help facilitate the rapid recruitment of large numbers of people into trials. The Government has been encouraging a diverse pool of people to volunteer to help researchers better understand the effectiveness of each vaccine candidate.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries**

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to section 4.6 of the Spending Review 2020, when he plans to announce further details of the financial support for electric vehicle battery production in the West Midlands.

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the timetable for creating electric vehicle battery production in the West Midlands.

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the proposals by the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Economic Partnership to create an electric vehicle battery manufacturing facility in the West Midlands.

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's preferred locations are for electric vehicle battery production.

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to section 4.6 of the Spending Review 2020, if he will publish details on how the £500 million to support electric vehicle battery production will be allocated.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Government has announced nearly £500m of support through the Automotive Transformation Fund to drive the electrification of the UK automotive sector. This is part of the up to £1 billion that this Government previously committed to these efforts. The application process is managed by the Advanced Propulsion Centre on behalf of

BEIS and funding will be allocated on a competitive basis, dependent on a full assessment of the relative value for money of any request received.

There are a range of factors that will influence the location of any UK Gigafactory investment, and the final location decision will be a commercial matter. There are several locations across the UK including in the West Midlands that may meet the requirements of investors, and the Government is working closely with local government and business to help inform their selection process.

## ■ Hospitality Industry: Government Assistance

**Andrea Leadsom:**

[\[124178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure equity of support for (a) medium sized and (b) large hospitality businesses.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has provided an unprecedented package of support for both medium size and large businesses in the hospitality sector. Measures include the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until March 2021, grant and loan schemes, the ability for businesses to defer VAT payments, and business rates holidays.

## ■ Hydrogen: Fife

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published November 2020, how much money from the Net Zero Hydrogen Fund has been allocated to the H100 hydrogen trial to be undertaken in Levenmouth, Fife by Scottish Gas Networks.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Scottish Gas Networks has proposed the H100 project, a 100% hydrogen network demonstration in the Levenmouth area of Fife, intended to provide the gas to 300 homes over a four-year period. At the end of November Ofgem announced funding of up to £18m to Scottish Gas Networks for the H100 Fife project. Ofgem's decision triggers a further investment of £6.9m from the Scottish Government.

The Net Zero Hydrogen Fund is for capital co-investment in new low carbon hydrogen production. Government will be engaging with industry over the coming months on design of the Net Zero Hydrogen fund, and more details on delivery of the scheme will be published in 2021.

## ■ **Medicine: Research**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[124160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much of the £14.6 billion for Research and Development, announced in the Spending Review 2020 will be allocated to medical research.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Medical research is an important part of the UK research landscape. The Government recognises this and already provides significant support within the tax system, the research funding system and through the many measures that have been introduced to counter the impacts of the pandemic.

Despite the fiscal challenges, the Government has set out plans at Spending Review to cement the UK's status as a global leader in science and innovation by investing £14.6 billion in R&D in 2021/22. Departments will now undertake an allocations process to decide how this funding should be spent across the R&D activities for which they are responsible. Funding for medical research will be subject to this allocations process and further details of how funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

## ■ **Nuclear Power: Finance**

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the £385m Advanced Nuclear Fund announced in his Department's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published November 2020, how much of the fund was previously announced as part of the £172m of Government funding within the nuclear sector deal.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has announced a broad set of policy measures to drive the UK to net zero, including a new £1bn net zero innovation portfolio from 2021 to accelerate the commercialisation of innovative low-carbon technologies, systems and business models in power, buildings and industry.

The £385m Advanced Nuclear Fund contains funding for both Small and Advanced Modular Reactors. Up to £30m of existing contracts and commitments from the nuclear sector deal for the nuclear innovation programme will continue to be funded through the Advanced Nuclear Fund.

## ■ **Pay**

**Andy McDonald:**

[\[123607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the (a) wages recovered for workers, (b) money recovered for workers from unlawful fees charges to workers and (c) unpaid holiday pay recovered for workers by the (i) Employment Standards Agency Inspectorate, (ii) HMRC National Minimum

Wage Enforcement Team and (iii) Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority in 2016-17, 2017-18, 2019-20 and 2020-21.

**Paul Scully:**

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) enforce the National Minimum Wage regulations on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). They investigate where they believe an employer is not paying the minimum wage and follow up every worker complaint they receive. HMRC only hold data relating to (a) wages recovered for workers. They do not hold data relating to (b) money recovered for workers from unlawful fees charges to workers or (c) unpaid holiday pay recovered for workers as these are outside of their remit.

The Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS) and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) do not differentiate between the amount of money recovered in unpaid wages, holiday pay or a potential unlawful deduction.

MONEY RECOVERED FOR WORKERS				
	2016-17	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate</b>	£69, 500	£150, 000	£61, 000	£73, 500 (up to 30 November 2020)
<b>HMRC National Minimum Wage</b>	£10,918,047	£15, 615, 609 [1]	£20, 800, 000	Not yet available [2]
<b>Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority</b> [3]	£93, 165	£94, 444	£116, 605.30	£8, 285.90 (Up to 31 October 2020)

[1] Source: [18/19 compliance and enforcement report](#)

[2] These figures will be published in the enforcement and compliance report for that year.

[3] GLAA are sponsored by the Home Office, rather than BEIS. These figures have been provided by GLAA.

**Andy McDonald:**

**[123608]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of investigations carried out by (a) the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, (b) the Gangmaster Labour Abuse Authority and (c) the HMRC National Minimum Wage Enforcement Team involve joint work with Immigration Enforcement.

**Paul Scully:**

The proportion of investigations undertaken by Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate with Immigration Enforcement amounts to 0.6% of all cases between 1 April 2016 and 30 November 2020.

HMRC only conduct joint visits where there are pertinent risks for other enforcement agencies. From 2017/18 to 2019/20, joint visits involving Immigration Enforcement represent 1.3% of HMRC National Minimum Wage Team's investigations.

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority work with several partners, including Immigration Enforcement, in different ways which may change as an investigation develops. They only capture data on the lead agency in each case and therefore it is not possible to accurately state the total proportion of investigations carried out with Immigration Enforcement.

**■ Recruitment and Training: Coronavirus****Andrea Leadsom:****[124179]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support is available for small coaching and recruitment businesses to bid for Government contracts to provide help for people seeking training and reskilling opportunities after the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government's online Contracts Finder lets firms search for information about contracts worth over £10,000 with the government and its agencies. Contracts Finder can be used to search for contract opportunities in different sectors, find out what is coming up in the future and look up details of previous tenders and contracts. Interested firms are welcome to use the finder on GOV.UK at: [www.gov.uk/contracts-finder](https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder). Firms can create an account to apply for contracts, get email updates and save searches. Alternatively, they can search and apply for contracts without an account.

The Government is also taking many steps to increase training and reskilling opportunities available across the UK. We provide grant funding to Be the Business – a business-led independent charity which aims to raise productivity at the firm level – through technology adoption and by promoting best practice management and leadership. Be the Business is delivering executive leadership and management training, expert mentoring, place-based collaborative peer networks and free online advice and benchmarking tools, including around digitalisation, to help smaller and medium businesses (SMEs) identify practical steps to transform their business.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer's Plan for Jobs also provides new funding to ensure more people will get tailored support to help them find work. This includes launching the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme fund and investing £2.9 billion in the Restart programme over 3 years to support and encourage the UK's labour market. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are also doubling the number

of jobcentre Work Coaches to provide intensive support for both young people and the newly unemployed.

Further measures include committing £8 million for digital skills boot camps, increasing apprenticeship opportunities, expanding sector-based work academies programme (SWAPs), launching the Job Finding Support Service, and increasing the funding for the Flexible Support Fund by £150 million in Great Britain.

## ■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

**Kim Johnson:**

**[121930]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will issue guidance to (a) supermarkets and (b) other large retailers on maintaining appropriate (i) social distancing and (ii) other safeguards under the local covid-19 Tier restrictions.

**Paul Scully:**

Our Safer Working [guidance](#) was updated on 26 November to reflect the new tiers.

Our shops and branches guidance can be found at:

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

## ■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[124202]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the ability of small businesses to prepare for the end of the transition period; and what additional (a) financial and (b) other support his Department is providing to help small business preparedness for the end of the transition period.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government recognises the challenges small businesses are facing as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak when they also need to prepare for the end of the transition period. The Government has provided a wide range of help for small businesses affected by COVID-19, including the Coronavirus Job Retention and Support Schemes; the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme; the Bounce Back Loan scheme; Local Authority grants for businesses; business rates relief; support for trade credit insurance; the Eat Out to Help Out scheme; VAT deferral; the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and sectoral guidance on safer working.

As well as the extensive financial support available to small businesses to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, HMRC has provided £84 million to support small businesses adapt to new customs rules and DIT has established a £38m Internationalisation Fund for small businesses. We have also provided tailored guidance – on [gov.uk/transition](https://www.gov.uk/transition) - for businesses on what they need to do to prepare for the end of the transition period, as well as undertaking a comprehensive programme of engagement with businesses throughout the country.



## ■ Travel Agents: Coronavirus

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[123652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 pandemic on travel agencies.

**Paul Scully:**

We know how difficult the current national and international restrictions are for the travel sector, with businesses having already faced many months of reduced trade. Impacted businesses can access a range of Government support measures, including the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes, as well as various government-backed loans.

We are regularly assessing Covid-19's impact on tourism businesses and are continuing to engage across Government and with stakeholders - such as the Association of British Travel Agents and Association of Independent Tour Operators - to assess how we can most effectively support the recovery of travel and tourism across the UK.

The Government has also committed to producing a Tourism Recovery Plan setting out the transformation and growth of the sector over the next five years as part of our economic recovery.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[123653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to provide targeted financial support for the travel agency industry during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Paul Scully:**

We recognise that these are extremely challenging conditions for businesses in the travel sector, including tour operators and travel agents, which is why we've provided a range of targeted measures to see the sector through COVID-19.

On top of our wider economic support package, we've provided business rates relief and one-off grants for eligible hospitality and leisure businesses – and we've cut VAT for tourism and hospitality activities from 20% to 5% until the end of March.

Additionally, on 18 July the Government announced that ATOL-protected holidaymakers can book with confidence following confirmation that the Government will protect refund credit notes offered if packages are cancelled as a result of COVID-19.

## ■ Working Hours

**Andy McDonald:**

[\[123609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Court of Justice of the European Union ruling based on the case of Federacion de Servicios de Comisiones Obreras v Deutsche Bank SAE, whether he plans to require



employers to measure the duration of time worked by each employee, both normal hours and overtime, to ensure that staff (a) do not work beyond the legal maximum number of hours and (b) receive stipulated daily and weekly rest periods.

**Andy McDonald:**

[\[123610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what legal advice he has received on the Government requiring employers to measure the duration of time worked by each employee, both normal hours and overtime, to ensure that staff do not work beyond the legal maximum number of hours, and that they receive stipulated daily and weekly rest periods following the Court of Justice of the European Union ruling based on the case *Federacion de Servicios de Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) v Deutsche Bank SAE*.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government does not currently intend to amend domestic legislation to require employers to record working hours as set out in the judgment.

It is important that employers comply with the Working Time Regulations in respect of working hours and daily and weekly rest, and that they are held to account if they don't. Workers can take a case to employment tribunal concerning insufficient rest, and the Health and Safety Executive directly enforces maximum working hours. The Government has also committed to bringing forward state enforcement of the rules in the Working Time Regulations on holiday pay for vulnerable workers, to ensure that workers get the paid time off they deserve.

The Government does not disclose the legal advice it receives in relation to its work.

## ■ Wyfla Power Station

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will pursue options for a new nuclear station at Wyfla following Hitachi's withdrawal from the project; and if he will make a statement.

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will pursue options for a new nuclear station at Oldbury following Hitachi's withdrawal from the Wyfla project; and will he make a statement.

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will pursue options for a new nuclear station at Moorside following Toshiba's withdrawal from the project; and will he make a statement.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government believes nuclear power will play a key role in our future energy mix and we remain willing to discuss new nuclear projects with any viable developers and investors wishing to develop sites in the UK, including sites at Wyfla, Oldbury or

Moorside. We continually engage with developers to assess the viability of their projects.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Charities: Redundancy

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[124174\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of redundancies in the charity sector.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ124174 [PQ124174.pdf]

### ■ Public Sector: Procurement

**Dan Carden:**

[\[123687\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the forthcoming Green Paper on transforming the UK's public procurement regulations will include conditions to ensure that companies tendering for public contracts must (a) meet their tax obligations and (b) disclose publicly their beneficial owners.

**Julia Lopez:**

Details of policy announcements will be made in the usual manner.

### ■ Veterans: Homelessness

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[121390\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of homeless people who (a) are veterans and (b) have been provided with support through the Armed Forces Covenant.

**Johnny Mercer:**

As we enter the winter months, it is more important than ever to ensure that no veteran or member of the Armed Forces community should be without a home to call their own. I would like to thank all those across the public sector and charities for their tireless efforts to support these efforts. More generally, for 2020/21 the Government has put in place over £600 million of funding to tackle homelessness across the UK, marking a 65% increase from the previous year.

Homelessness data monitoring veterans is currently available through H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Collection). Other independent research shows that the rough sleeping figures for veterans are around 3% across the UK.

Serving personnel and veterans benefit from a range of services delivered under the Armed Forces Covenant, such as the MOD's Forces Help to Buy scheme which has helped around 21,000 Service personnel purchase their own property. All service leavers can now remain in Service Family Accommodation for up to a year after departure and can access military accommodation for up to a year after leaving the military, an extension of six months. Every service leaver also has access to the MOD's Defence Transition Service to help them find adequate housing, and enhanced support to those who need it through the Veterans Welfare Service. In June 2020, we also published new statutory guidance for local authorities to improve access to social housing for the Armed Forces and veterans community.

## ■ Veterans: Mental Illness

**Marco Longhi:**

[121388]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of fireworks on veterans suffering from (a) PTSD and (b) mental health disorders.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Government recognises that the use of fireworks can affect veterans and other groups due to the loud noise or flashes associated with fireworks and remains committed to promoting the safe and considerate use of fireworks. Advice for veterans about the potential impact of fireworks is available on the Veterans Gateway [https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/732/~five-tips-to-help-you-deal-with-bonfire-night-and-fireworks](https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a_id/732/~five-tips-to-help-you-deal-with-bonfire-night-and-fireworks)

Advice on how to use fireworks safely and in a considerate manner, that includes the considerations of vulnerable people, can be found as a part of the Office for Product Safety and Standards 2020 campaign that launched in October.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/opss-launches-firework-safety-campaign>

## DEFENCE

## ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Marco Longhi:**

[909802]

What steps his Department is taking to support defence exports to NATO partner countries.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Ministry of Defence leads on strategic campaigns but engages fully with our NATO partners more widely on defence exports. The Department is keen to support our allies with excellent British capabilities and in doing so support British jobs. Many such roles and export opportunities are embedded across the Midlands.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[909810\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on improving mental health support for veterans who have recently been discharged.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The provision of veterans' mental healthcare is the responsibility of the NHS in England and the Devolved Administrations. Where Personnel leaving the Armed Forces have an enduring need for mental healthcare, we work in partnership with the NHS to ensure continuation of care. The MOD's Departments of Community Mental Health initiative remains accessible for up to six months after discharge, to help veterans during their transition period.

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[909820\]](#)

What representations he has received from former armed forces personnel on the effect of the Overseas Operations Bill on the limitation period for claims against his Department.

**Johnny Mercer:**

I receive regular representations from veterans and from veteran groups, including Regimental Associations, on a wide range of matters of interest to them, including in respect of the Overseas Operations Bill. In 2019, our consultation on proposed legal protections measures, which informed the measures in the Bill, attracted 2,261 responses from those who identified as either a veteran or a relative of a veteran. I am committed to continuing to engage with this important group on these issues.

**Anna McMorris:**

[\[909827\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the climate emergency on UK defence preparedness.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Department recognises that climate change is already having a potential impact on Defence. A review is ongoing to assess the strategic implications and how these can be best addressed.

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[909830\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with military charities on improving support for veterans throughout the UK.

**Johnny Mercer:**

MOD officials and I have regular discussions with the Service charities on a range of subjects including support for veterans. This Government has been proactive in providing support to the charity sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MOD and the OVA provided £6million in funding for the Armed Forces community, through the COVID Impact Fund, working in partnership with Service charities to deliver support for the most vulnerable. Over 100 Service charities benefited from this funding.

## ■ Armed Forces Covenant: Veterans

**Marco Longhi:**

**[121387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Armed Forces Covenant in supporting veterans in (a) Dudley, (b) the Black Country and (c) the UK.

**Johnny Mercer:**

*[Holding answer 4 December 2020]:* This Government is committed to making the UK the best place to be a veteran and to do more to ensure that each veteran is valued, contributing and supported. This is why we published the Strategy for our Veterans in November 2018, and its Action Plan in January 2020, and have been working with a range of partners, including those in local Government, to make this vision a reality: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans>

Our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant has seen tangible progress in 2020, including through the launch of the Veterans Gateway app in May, which provides local information on services available to support veterans. Since signing the Armed Forces Covenant, we have worked closely with Dudley Council through our local liaison officers and the Council now guarantees job interviews to Service leavers and veterans who meet the minimum criteria. All past and serving personnel and their families also qualify for the half price Options Leisure Plus scheme at sports halls, swimming pools and most events at borough halls. In June, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government published new statutory guidance for local authorities to further improve access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

Dudley Council now allows any veteran or Service leaver family applying for social housing to have their service years classed as years spent on its housing waiting list. All four Black Country Local Authorities are participating in the West Midlands working group supporting the Covenant legislation engagement process, ahead of the legislation being introduced to Parliament in the Armed Forces Bill next year.

## ■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus

**John Healey:**

**[124112]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel will be deployed to support covid-19 testing in areas under tier three local covid alert level restrictions.

**John Healey:**

**[124113]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost will be of armed forces personnel supporting covid-19 testing in areas under tier three local covid alert level restrictions.

**John Healey:**

[\[124114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how the armed forces will be deployed to support community testing for covid-19 in areas under tier three local covid alert level restrictions.

**James Heappey:**

Currently there are over 150 military personnel deployed to assist with community testing in tier three areas. Defence and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) are currently working together to assess how resource can be used most effectively in line with the guidance for local delivery on 30 November 2020.

As agreed by the Secretary of State for Defence and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (CST), marginal costs would be the default charging regime where military support is requested for COVID-19 related tasks. Marginal costs takes into account travel, food and accommodation, but not the cost of the support itself. The total cost varies depending on factors such as the number of military personnel required as well as the duration of the task.

Military support to the community testing will be deployed at the request of the local authority in consultation with DHSC and authorised by a Defence Minister using the Military Aid to Civil Authority (MACA) process.

## ■ Armed Forces: Pay

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[120806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the armed forces will receive a pay rise in 2021-22.

**Johnny Mercer:**

*[Holding answer 4 December 2020]:* As announced on 25 November 2020 by my right. hon Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, this Government will be taking three steps regarding public sector pay awards in 2021-22. First, taking account of the pay review bodies' advice, we will provide a pay rise to over a million nurses, doctors and others working in the NHS. Secondly, to protect jobs, pay rises in the rest of the public sector will be paused next year, including the Armed Forces. But, thirdly, we will protect those on lower incomes; the 2.1 million public sector workers who earn below the median wage of £24,000 will continue to receive a pay increase. It is important to note that over 35,000 of our most junior sailors, soldiers and aviators fall below the £24,000 threshold, meaning they will be unaffected by the pay freeze and still receive a guaranteed pay rise of £250 in the 2021-22 pay year.

Furthermore, military personnel also benefit from a progressive pay model where, subject to satisfactory performance, they can receive yearly incremental pay progression for every additional year spent in their rank after an initial two-year period, up to a certain cap. In the year 2019/20 45.3% of service personnel moved up a pay increment. This incremental progress is not affected by the pay pause and all personnel expecting to move up an increment next year will continue to do so provided they meet the normal criteria.

A further announcement will be made next year once we have received the recommendations from the independent Armed Forces' Pay Review Body.

■ **Armed Forces: South West**

**Chris Loder:** [\[121920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to expand the Armed Forces Employability Pathway in the South West.

**Johnny Mercer:**

There are no plans to expand the Pathway in the South West.

HQ South West continue to engage in regional Youth Outreach projects.

■ **Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[123740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the employment status will be of UK-based staff working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in France and Belgium from 1 January 2021.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[123741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK-based staff working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission overseas are not financially adversely affected as a result of the UK leaving the EU.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[123742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the proportion of UK based staff working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in France and Belgium that may experience reductions in their gross annual income from 1 January 2021.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is actively supporting those personnel who are working on UK-based contracts within the European Union (EU), to ensure that new arrangements are in place before the transition period from exiting the EU ends in 2021. Discussions are ongoing and the Commission is committed to ensuring that its personnel have a choice of remaining in the EU on appropriate local terms or returning to work in the UK. There are 30 UK personnel employed by the Commission who are permanently based in Belgium and France, as part of a wider workforce of around 550.

■ **Cruise Missiles**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[122602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government has made a formal commitment to the Future Cruise/Anti-Ship Missile programme.



**Jeremy Quin:**

Future Cruise/Anti-Ship Weapon seeks to develop a new generation of deep strike and anti-ship missiles for the 2030s and 2040s. In 2017, UK and France entered a 'Joint Concept Phase', led by MBDA to reduce the number of possible options. This phase is concluding. The UK MOD is exploring with the French Direction générale de l'armement (DGA) the possibility for a joint UK/FR Assessment Phase in 2021 to mature and develop the concepts further.

**Electronic Warfare****Damian Collins:**[\[909799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to develop UK offensive and defensive cyber capabilities.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence has funded programmes to mitigate cyber risks against our platforms, weapon systems and core digital infrastructure. And building on the National Offensive Cyber Programme, the new National Cyber Force will design and deliver cyber operations, from supporting warfighting operations to countering serious crime and combatting terrorism.

We are developing a cyber-aware workforce to embed cyber security into our business and operations, and establishing a dedicated career stream for our most highly-skilled military cyber professionals for which various possible remunerative options are being explored.

**Forensic Science Service****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[123534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the tendering process for Forensic Science Service has cost the public purse.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The principle cost to the public purse for the tendering process for the Forensic Science Service used by the Royal Military Police and the Royal Navy Police are attributable to the personnel employed in the process. All of these are existing Defence staff and their specific time allocation on this work is not recorded.

**Guided Weapons****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[122597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department has made on the interim Royal Navy surface-to-surface guided weapon (SSGW) programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Royal Navy has set the requirements for a Surface-to-Surface Guided Weapon (SSGW) to ensure they maintain the ability to deter and defeat enemy warships. A



competition is now taking place and on current plans, subject to funding, we expect bids to provide a solution to SSGW, by mid-2021.

## ■ Military Exercises

**John Healey:**

[\[124111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on the training exercise Agile Stance; and if he will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

The AGILE STANCE Campaign Plan is a multi-year programme designed to test and develop a responsive and agile UK Strategic Base. It will be managed and operated as a capability and demonstrate elements of UK Whole Force mobilisation.

The initial exercise in the campaign, AGILE LAUNCH, will be conducted in autumn 2021. This had been previously planned for Autumn 2020 but was delayed owing to the impact of COVID 19.

Future major exercises are planned for 2022 (AGILE POSTURE) and 2024 (AGILE DEFENDER) which will increase in scale and complexity.

## ■ Minesweepers: Decommissioning

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[122598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the forecast out of service dates are for the Hunt and Sandown mine countermeasures vessels.

**Jeremy Quin:**

On current plans, the Hunt Class Mine Countermeasures Vessels will leave service between 2029 and 2031. The Sandown Class Mine Countermeasures Vessels will leave service between 2023 and 2031.

## ■ Minesweepers: Procurement

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[122599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his Department's policy to purchase mother ships for autonomous mine hunting systems.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Maritime Mine Countermeasures system is designed to be deployable from a variety of platforms and from the shore. No decision has yet been made on the delivery platform.

## ■ Navy: Deployment

**Simon Jupp:**

[\[909798\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of recent Royal Navy deployments to the Black Sea.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

HMS DRAGON and HMS ENTERPRISE have both recently operated in the Black Sea conducting a highly successful programme of regional defence engagement activity with Georgia, Ukraine and Romania. This included joint exercising with the Ukrainian and Romanian Navies to share expertise and knowledge, as well as delivery of a package of maritime interdiction training to the Georgian Coastguard. This is a further demonstration of the UK's ability to provide reassurance to allies and partners, as well as a deterrent effect across the Euro-Atlantic area.

**■ Saudi Arabia: Arms Trade**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[122632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 2 January 2018 air-strike on a car in Munbah was among the 528 incidents entered on the MOD Tracker as of 30 April 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[122633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 9 January 2018 air-strike on a vehicle in Al-Mukha was among the 528 incidents entered on the MOD Tracker as of 30 April 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[122634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 6 January 2017 air-strike on a school in Al-Haymah Al-Dakhiliyah was among the 528 incidents entered on the MOD Tracker as of 30 April 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[122635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 8 January 2016 air-strike on a water desalination plant in Mokha was among the 528 incidents entered on the MOD Tracker as of 30 April 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[122636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September 2020 to Question 86598, whether the 3 January 2018 air-strike killing eight civilians in a restaurant in Zabid was among the 528 incidents entered on the MOD Tracker as of 30 April 2020.

**James Heappey:**

I am unable to answer the hon. Member's questions due to ongoing legal proceedings.

**■ Shipbuilding: Hartlepool**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[122594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has commissioned research on the future of shipbuilding in Hartlepool.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

We have not commissioned any research specific to Hartlepool, however I am working closely with colleagues across Government and with industry to reinvigorate the shipbuilding industry across the length and breadth of the UK. Our efforts are not limited to just shipbuilders; we are focused on supercharging the entire Defence sector across the UK, from our rich supply chain to repair and disposal.

**■ Type 45 Destroyers****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[122595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on the Type 45 destroyer midlife update.

**Jeremy Quin:**

There is no distinct mid-life upgrade package for the Type 45 destroyers. The ships' capabilities are continually upgraded through-life to meet the needs of the Royal Navy and the evolving nature of any threats.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Arts: Skilled Workers****Apsana Begum:**[\[124883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to ensure the retention of highly skilled workers in the creative industries.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

We recognise the crucial role that highly skilled workers play in making our creative industries world-leading, and the Government is providing extensive support to workers in these sectors. The £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund provides targeted support to critical cultural, arts and heritage organisations to help them, and the skilled workers that work in them, survive and recover from the Covid pandemic. In addition Arts Council England has made £119 million available to individuals (including freelancers) and in July, the Government also announced a UK-wide £500m Restart scheme to support film and TV production companies that have been unable to film due to the lack of insurance covering Covid-related risks. As of 19 November, the scheme is supporting over 4,500 jobs.

The Government also recently announced the extension of both the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until March 31 2021. This support will help creative businesses across the country to protect their employees' jobs during this difficult winter period.

Government continues to engage regularly with stakeholders such as the BFI, the Creative Industries Federation and the Creative Industries Council to ensure we understand the impact of Covid-19 on the skills and talent needed to keep the UK's creative industries a global success.

**Bowling: Coronavirus**

**Damian Green:** [\[124096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of safety measures taken by bowling centres during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement on the ability of those centres in Tier 3 to re-open.

**Chris Green:** [\[124212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the rate of covid-19 transmission within bowling centres.

**Chris Green:** [\[124213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support operators of bowling centres during their extended period of closure during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Since 2 December, as set out in the COVID Winter Plan, we have returned to a tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions in England. Relevant venues in the entertainment, leisure and tourism sectors - including bowling alleys - will be permitted to reopen in tiers 1 and 2, subject to curfew restrictions and in line with COVID-19 Secure guidance. In tier 3 areas, indoor venues and attractions - including bowling alleys - must close.

We worked closely with a range of visitor economy stakeholders to develop our guidance for leisure and hospitality venues. We continue to engage with bowling stakeholders, such as the Ten-Pin Bowling Proprietor's Association, to update and review our guidance. Further specific guidance on bowling alleys has been published within UKHospitality's 'COVID-19 Secure Guidelines for Hospitality Businesses.'

Our decisions have been and will continue to be based on scientific evidence and public health assessments.

Bowling centre operators can continue to access the Government's comprehensive support package - including the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes, new grant schemes, as well as various government-backed loans. We have also provided business rates relief and grants for many in the retail, leisure and hospitality sector.

We are listening to stakeholders' concerns, and will continue to closely monitor the ongoing impact of Government restrictions on bowling alleys.

**Broadband: Finance**

**Selaine Saxby:** [\[121932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding he has allocated to the roll-out of gigabit-capable broadband; and what his timeframe is for the UK reaching 100 per cent coverage.

**Matt Warman:**

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

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

**Fairgrounds: Coronavirus****James Wild:**[\[121373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will issue guidance to local authorities on the covid-secure operation of fairgrounds in tiers 2 and 3 under the covid-19 restrictions after the end of the national lockdown on 2 December 2020.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

From 2 December, as set out in the COVID Winter Plan, we will return to a tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions in England. Funfairs and fairgrounds - which will be permitted to reopen in all three tiers as they were prior to this period of national restrictions - will need to go through the normal process of requesting permission and any relevant licences from the relevant authority and have the relevant health and safety protocols in place, including a Covid-19 risk assessment.

Local Authorities are responsible for deciding whether to permit outdoor events in their area. Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given to both the risks and the mitigations in place.

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

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) holds regular engagement calls with local government sector groups to highlight significant policy updates and holds regular Ministerial calls with local authority leaders and chief executives.

**Housing: Broadband****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[122806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to prevent developers entering into exclusivity arrangements with internet providers and locking residents in to a limited range of broadband services.

**Matt Warman:**

Ofcom has powers to impose network access requirements on providers it deems to hold significant market power, requiring these providers to allow other operators to access their network. Ofcom regularly reviews market definitions and remedies, and is currently consulting on regulations to apply from April 2021.

Additionally, the Communications (Access to Infrastructure) Regulations 2016 enable telecoms operators to request information about the physical infrastructure of other utilities, transport and communications providers, and provide the right to access that infrastructure on fair and reasonable terms and conditions. We are currently reviewing whether these Regulations can be improved to encourage more use of infrastructure sharing to deploy telecoms networks.

Taken together, these measures help increase the numbers of different services consumers can choose from.

**Independent Press Standards Organisation****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[123654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has plans to review the role of the Independent Press Standards Organisation in the regulation of the news media.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The government is committed to the independent self-regulation of the press and does not intervene in the operation of independent regulators. There have been significant changes to press self-regulation since the Leveson Inquiry and there now exists a strengthened, independent, self-regulatory system. Sir Joseph Pilling's 2016 review of IPSO found that it had made some important achievements in demonstrating that it is an independent and effective regulator, and it has made further progress since then.

**Openreach: Broadband****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[122805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that BT Openreach can gain access to buildings and install infrastructure for fibre optic connectivity.

**Matt Warman:**

The Electronic Communications Code (the Code) is the legal framework underpinning rights to install and maintain digital communications infrastructure on public and

private land. We are working closely with stakeholders to understand whether the current legislative framework supports the delivery of the gigabit-capable infrastructure, and intend to consult on whether further reforms to the Code are necessary to support the delivery of gigabit-capable connectivity.

We have also introduced the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill, which will make it easier for operators to install gigabit-capable broadband in blocks of flats and apartments in cases when the landowner does not respond to repeated requests for access.

## ■ Social Media: Disinformation

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[123621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to bring forward (a) fines for and (b) criminal prosecutions against social media companies in the event that voluntary agreements do not result in a reduction in misinformation about the covid-19 vaccine on those companies' platforms.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

We are working closely with social media platforms to help them identify and take action to remove incorrect claims about the virus, particularly around the potential Covid-19 vaccine in line with their revised terms and conditions, and to promote authoritative sources of information.

The Online Harms White Paper highlighted disinformation as potentially being in scope of the regulatory framework, and set out a list of potential steps that platforms could take ahead of regulation. Further details about how the legislation and the regulator will tackle disinformation will be published in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper. The regulator will have strong enforcement powers to deal with non-compliance, including the power to issue notices, warnings and fines.

## ■ Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus

**Jane Stevenson:**

[\[123694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what criteria he has set for increasing the limit on the number of spectators allowed in outdoor sports stadia during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The safety and security of players and spectators remains of paramount importance and we will continue to be led by wider public health guidance. The recently announced capacity limits have been agreed by the Government with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority and Public Health England as a maximum capacity for spectators, in light of the updated Covid Tiering system. Capacity limits will be kept under review in line with wider public health policy decisions.



A series of successful pilot events demonstrated the ability of the sector to follow covid secure guidance. We have updated our guidance to the sector, and the SGSA's SG02 guidance sets out explicit guidance on how safe socially distanced capacities can be maintained.

■ **Theatre: Coronavirus**

**Gill Furniss:**

**[124272]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support theatres in tier three local covid alert level areas.

**Caroline Dineneage:**

In Tier 3 areas, indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, such as theatres, concert halls and music venues will be closed to audiences. However, training, rehearsals and performances without an audience for broadcast or recording purposes may continue. Drive-in venues will remain open to performances with audiences. Outdoor performing arts activity can still take place in line with the restrictions laid out in the Performing Arts Guidance, if not in an outdoor venue. The Performing Arts guidance covers both professional and non-professional activity and events.

We know that the introduction of venue closures in Tier 3 areas will affect some scheduled shows around the country. However we know that a number of venues are adapting their performances to broadcast without audiences. We have updated the performing arts guidance to enable all forms of performing arts activity to go ahead where it is safe for them to do so.

The Government continues to work with the cultural sector to bring back more and more performances and fuller audiences when it is safe to do so.

We have committed to a review of the Tiers on 16 December.

■ **Youth Investment Fund: Yorkshire and the Humber**

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[R] [123597]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of the Youth Investment Fund is planned to be awarded to (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) Sheffield City Region and (c) Yorkshire and the Humber.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

In the recently announced Spending Review £30m of the Youth Investment Fund was committed as capital investment for 2021-22. This will provide a transformational investment in new and refurbished safe spaces for young people, so they can access support youth workers, and positive activities out of school, including sport and culture. Further details on the plans for distribution will be announced in due course.



**EDUCATION****■ Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[121873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that Ofsted (a) provided oversight to local authorities in applying the legislative flexibilities provided by the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, and (b) had the requisite resources necessary to do this for all local authorities.

**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[121874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what involvement his Department had in decisions taken by Ofsted to request information regarding the use legislative flexibilities provided by the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 from certain local authorities.

**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[121875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department took to ensure that local authorities did not use the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to avoid or delay dealing with complaints.

**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[121876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department took to ensure that remote and virtual visits by social workers to (a) children's homes and (b) other children's care placement settings are adequate to understanding the potential issues facing children in care and meet the needs set out in their Education, Care and Health plans.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations (2020) came into force on 24 April 2020 and expired on 25 September 2020. Where local authorities deemed it appropriate to make use of these flexibilities, taking account of all available information, every decision had to be agreed at senior manager level and recorded. This includes decisions taken around dealing with complaints. We set guidance that flexibilities should only be used when absolutely necessary and must be consistent with the overarching safeguarding and welfare duties that remain in place.

As the inspector of children's services, Ofsted is expected to take note of any use of these flexibilities, and local authorities should be ready to explain why their use was necessary. As it stands, Ofsted is conducting assurance visits, determined using a risk-based approach, to ensure that children's safety is a priority. Ofsted is arranging visits based on the most recent inspection judgements, other information it holds about the provider or local authority, the amount of time since the last inspection and, where appropriate, whether the provider is newly registered and therefore has not yet been inspected.

Our approach to monitoring the regulations was based on a triangulation of information gathered from a variety of sources, including local authorities, charities and key partners including Ofsted. The monitoring information is published within the consultation document on children's social care and is available here:

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/children2019s-social-care-covid-19-co-ordination-unit/changes-to-the-adoption-and-children-regulations-c/>.

We are clear that the use of virtual visits should be the exception. Our children's social care guidance document has some advice on virtual visits:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>. It advises that virtual visits can be used as a result of public health advice or when it is not reasonably practicable to have a face to face visit relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19. Considerations should also be given to the wishes of the children and young people affected and to the ability of the child or young person to engage in a virtual visit due to reasons including their age or disability. Wherever possible, visits should be held face to face.

## ■ Apprentices

**Karin Smyth:**

**[122785]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of apprentices have not had the required amount of training in the workplace necessary to complete their apprenticeship; and what steps he is taking to ensure apprentices receive the training they require.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are committed to supporting apprentices and employers to safely continue with, and complete, their programmes during the COVID-19 outbreak while maintaining quality. Provisional figures show that 46,930 apprentices achieved their apprenticeships (frameworks and standards) between 23 March and the end of July 2020.

In recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, we introduced a number of flexibilities in March to ensure that apprenticeships can continue where possible. These includes flexibilities to off-the-job training to support remote learning and making it possible for furloughed apprentices to continue their apprenticeships and undertake end-point assessments.

For apprentices who have experienced disruption to their training due to the COVID-19 outbreak, employers are able to extend the planned duration of the apprenticeship to accommodate this. 54,330 breaks in learning were recorded from the 23 March to the end of July 2020.

Where apprentices are continuing with their apprenticeships, they should continue to receive the minimum 20% off-the-job training requirements, and their training must remain relevant to their apprenticeship. Where a provider is able to do so safely, apprenticeship training can be delivered in the workplace where that workplace

meets COVID-19 secure guidelines on ensuring the workplace is secure. Apprentices are only put forward for end-point assessment when the employer and training provider judge them to display occupational competence and meet the minimum requirements of the apprenticeship, including for off-the-job training.

We continue to engage with providers and employers to understand the situation for their apprentices and help them make the most of the existing flexibilities to best deliver training.

**Karin Smyth:**

**[122787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many current apprentices are not able to complete their apprenticeship because there is no digital functional skills offering available; and what steps he is taking to ensure the availability of that qualification.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department is committed to supporting apprentices, employers, and training providers to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. Where Functional Skills assessments have been disrupted, we have been clear that providers, employers, and Awarding Organisations must work together in the best interests of apprentices. In addition to wider programme flexibilities, we have expanded the Examination Support Service to include apprenticeship training providers. They can now use this service to book COVID-19 secure exam space, and invigilators, and claim additional funding where this exceeds their normal delivery costs. The departmental guidance about providing apprenticeships during the COVID-19 outbreak is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-apprentices-employers-training-providers-end-point-assessment-organisations-and-external-quality-assurance-pro>.

We continue to work closely with Ofqual, awarding organisations, and sector representatives to monitor the situation and agree how we can, together, identify and support apprentices that are unable to take their functional skills exam.

## ■ Apprentices: Young People

**Alison McGovern:**

**[123590]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he had made of new apprenticeships that were taken up by people under the age of 25 from low income backgrounds in each year since 2010.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department does not hold information on the income backgrounds of apprentices.

We publish breakdowns of apprenticeship starts by learner age:

- 2017/18 to 2019/20: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>.

- 2010/11 to 2018/19:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/848350/Further-education-and-skills-November-2019-main-tables-final.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/848350/Further-education-and-skills-November-2019-main-tables-final.xlsx).

We also publish breakdowns of apprenticeship starts by Indices of Multiple Deprivation of the learner's home postcode from 2014/15 onwards: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>.

## ■ Armed Forces: Assessments

**Chris Loder:** [121921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure Military Preparation Diplomas continue to receive adequate funding.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Education providers use their government funding on qualifications that are approved by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The list of qualifications approved for funding includes 18 qualifications that involve preparation for uniformed service (sometimes referred to as Military Preparation Diplomas).

The funding providers receive for qualifications approved by the ESFA is based on a range of factors detailed in our guidance published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-rates-and-formula>.

All qualifications at level 3 and below (excluding A levels, T Levels, GCSEs and Functional Skills) are subject to a review in which we will decide which qualifications will be available for public funding in future. As part of the review, we have recently published a consultation and call for evidence. Respondents are welcome to give views on the role and purpose of specific qualifications, including those designed to prepare students for the military.

## ■ Children in Care

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [124196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Court of Appeal's ruling of 24 November 2020, Case No: C1/2020/1279, if he will take steps to reintroduce safeguards for children in care removed by the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [124197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Court of Appeal's ruling of 24 November 2020, Case No: C1/2020/1279, what discussions he had with the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families prior to the introduction of the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[124198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what was the cost to the public purse of legal fees for the Court of Appeal case against him Case No: C1/2020/1279.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[124199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Court of Appeal's ruling of 24 November 2020, Case No: C1/2020/1279, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the effects on children of the removal of safeguards for children in care.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 came into force on 24 April 2020 and expired on 25 September 2020. Further regulations continuing a small number of these amendments came into force from 25 September 2020 (Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020) following a public consultation over the summer. This is to ensure that services are maintained during the COVID-19 outbreak. These amendments are in place until 31 March 2021.

Where local authorities deemed it appropriate to make use of the amendments, taking account of all available information, every decision had to be agreed at senior manager level. The amendments were monitored by the department based on a triangulation of information gathered from a variety of sources, including local authorities, charities and key partners, including Ofsted.

As a departmental official, the Chief Social Worker is routinely involved in the development of policy on children's social care, providing independent expert advice.

The legal cost for the initial Judicial Review (High Court) and the appeal (Court of Appeal) are estimated to total £80,000.

## ■ Children: Day Care

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[123656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the effect of the national minimum wage changes due in April 2021 on the cost per hour of delivering childcare.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government continues to support families with their childcare costs. On 25 November 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further £44 million investment in the 2021/22 financial year for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers. Further details and information on how this will be distributed will be made available as soon as possible.

We use evidence from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (SCEYP) to understand the impact the national living wage has on the early years sector. The SCEYP can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providers-finances-survey-of-childcare-and-ey-providers-2019>.

## ■ Children: Social Services

**Tulip Siddiq:** [123659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the review of children's social care will be a zero-based review.

**Vicky Ford:**

The review of children's social care will take a fundamental look across children's social care, with the aim of better supporting, protecting, and improving the outcomes of vulnerable children and young people. The urgent local and national response to the COVID-19 outbreak has delayed launching the review, but we are making preparations to launch as soon as possible and will set out further details at that point.

## ■ Educational Psychology: Coronavirus

**Andrea Leadsom:** [124181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representations he has received from headteachers on students being unable to access educational psychology assessments as a result of the professionals delivering those assessments working from home during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Vicky Ford:**

Supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) continues to be a priority for this government, and their wellbeing has been central to our response throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

The department has not received any specific representations from headteachers, regarding their students being unable to access educational psychology assessments, due to educational professionals working from home, during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Educational specialists, including educational psychologists, have continued to provide services during the COVID-19 outbreak and we have been clear that children and young people with SEND should still be receiving the therapeutic and specialist interventions they need.

## ■ Foster Care

**Tulip Siddiq:** [121878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the average length of time that children have spent in a temporary foster placements in each month of the last five years.

**Vicky Ford:**

The information requested is not held centrally. Short breaks for children can be provided by local authorities under either section 17 or section 20 of the Children Act (1989). Whilst information on children receiving services is reported in the children in need census, the detail of the specific service or support provided to the child is not collected.

**■ GCSE: English Language****Robert Halfon:****[124164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of pupils did not achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE English in (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20.

**Robert Halfon:****[124165]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of pupils did not achieve a grade 4 or above in GCSE Maths in (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department publishes the number of pupils at the end of key stage 4[1] who achieved the English and maths pillars of the English Baccalaureate[2].[3]. The attached table shows the percentage of pupils who did not achieve Ebacc pillars for English and Maths for each of the last 3 years.

The cancellation of the summer 2020 GCSE exams and the substantially changed method for awarding GCSE grades has impacted greatly on the results. Comparisons with earlier years are not recommended for the purposes of measuring changes in underlying pupil performance.

[1] Pupils are identified as being at the end of key stage 4 if they were on roll at the school and in year 11 at the time of the January school census for that year. Age is calculated as at 31 August for that year, and the majority of pupils at the end of key stage 4 were age 15 at the start of the academic year. Some pupils may complete this key stage in an earlier or later year group.

[2] All State-funded schools include local authority maintained mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges, further education colleges with provision for 14 to 16 year-olds and state-funded special schools. They exclude independent schools, independent special schools, non-maintained special schools, hospital schools, pupil referral units and alternative provision. Alternative provision includes academy and free school alternative provision.

[3] Link to published data: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance-revised>.

**Attachments:**

1. 124164 124165 table [124164  
124165\_table\_showing\_proportion\_of\_students\_not\_achieving\_English\_and\_Maths\_Ebacc.  
pdf]



**■ Headteachers: Sefton****Bill Esterson:****[123578]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the letter sent to him by the Sefton Association of Primary Heads and the Sefton Association of Secondary Heads dated 11 November 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

As referenced in my reply, this Government remains committed to ensuring that schools receive the support they need to provide pupils with a high-quality education. We have provided additional funding to support schools with extra costs they have incurred during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak. To date, schools across the country have received payments totalling £102 million for all claims within the scope of the fund. We are also providing schools with another opportunity to claim for any additional costs incurred between March and July.

We have recently announced a new COVID-19 workforce fund to support schools with the costs of high levels of staff absences and ensure they can remain open. This is in addition to an unprecedented package of catch-up funding worth £1 billion and increasing school budgets year on year - £2.6 billion in 2020-21, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23.

The Department is clear that exams will take place in Summer 2021 because they are the best way of judging students' performance. We recognise the challenges faced by schools, teachers, and students and that is why we have taken additional steps including making changes to grading criteria, delaying the exam timetable by 3 weeks to allow more time for teaching in the Spring Term and other adaptations, such as giving students advanced notice of topic areas and providing support in the exam hall.

System leaders are doing a very good job in ensuring our children catch up and we want to make sure that we are fair to schools. That is why Ofsted have suspended routine, graded inspections for the Spring Term 2021. Inspectors will take into account the potential impact of COVID-19 on attendance and staffing and will do the same when inspecting and regulating nurseries, childminders and social care providers.

**■ Manufacturing Industries: Apprentices****Alison McGovern:****[123589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many new apprenticeships were made available in the manufacturing industry in each year since 2010.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The most recent statistics on apprenticeship starts by industry sector cover the academic years 2012/13 to 2018/19 and are published on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/apprenticeships-in-england-by-industry-characteristics>



The following table shows the number of apprenticeship starts in the manufacturing industry in England between academic years 2012/13 and 2018/19.

	ACADEMIC YEAR						
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Total matched apprenticeship starts</b>	<b>450,710</b>	<b>388,590</b>	<b>445,910</b>	<b>457,020</b>	<b>449,830</b>	<b>346,840</b>	<b>366,170</b>
C - Manufacturing	29,780	27,230	32,180	36,820	36,170	26,160	26,850

Data previous to 2012/13 is unavailable and data for 2019/20 will be published in February 2021.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[123579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the email from the hon. Member for Sefton Central of 27 October 2020 on emergency coronavirus funding for primary schools in Formby.

**Nick Gibb:**

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the email dated 27 October, ref BE3385, from the hon. Member for Sefton Central.

#### ■ **National School Breakfast Programme**

**Simon Fell:**

[\[121916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policy of the Spending Review on funding school breakfast provision beyond March 2021.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department is considering how to encourage and support schools to ensure that children continue to benefit from school breakfasts beyond March 2021. We are developing our thinking in this area. The department is engaging with the breakfast food market, following the release of a Public Information Notice in October 2020.

#### ■ **Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[122774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the decision not to include Early Years providers in the short term Covid Workforce Funding offered to schools and colleges.

**Karin Smyth:**

**[122775]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Early Years Alliance' survey which found that one in six early years providers could close by Christmas 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic without additional funding.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government recognises the importance of supporting the early years sector financially during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is why we are continuing to fund childcare for the autumn term at the same level as before the COVID-19 outbreak, giving nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of how many children are attending.

Given the uncertain times ahead, we are keeping our plans for the funding of spring term 2021 under close review. Further details will be announced as soon as possible.

In addition to this, the government has provided a package of support for individuals and businesses which is directly benefitting providers of childcare. This includes business rates relief and grants, the extended Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which will remain open until March 2021.

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. On 25 November, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a £44 million investment in the 2021-22 financial year, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers. This will pay for a rate increase that is higher than the costs nurseries may face from the uplift to the national living wage in April. Further information on how this will be distributed will be made available as soon as possible.

The Covid Workforce Fund aims to support schools and colleges to remain open, even when they face significant workforce pressures caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

The number of early years providers has remained broadly stable throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. An estimated 80% of early years settings were open on 26 November and we estimate that 826,000 children were attending early years settings. The attendance in education data and Ofsted data on joiners and leavers in the childcare sector, contains further information.

The attendance in education data is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Ofsted data on joiners and leavers in the childcare sector is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joiners-and-leavers-in-the-childcare-sector>.

Data published on 26 October in the latest parent survey by Ipsos MORI showed that, in September, 94% of parents whose child received formal childcare before the COVID-19 outbreak were either using formal childcare now or were intending to return their child to formal childcare if they could by January 2021. The Ipsos MORI parent survey is available here: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/childcare-and-home-learning-families-0-4-year-olds-during-covid-19-0>.

We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

**Tracey Crouch:**

[123564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance is issued to early years providers on the collection of fees for children who are self-isolating due to a positive Covid-19 test in their family.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department thanks those who work in the early years sector and those who have dedicated their time, effort, and skills to providing high-quality early years education and childcare during these challenging circumstances. The Competition and Markets Authority issued an open letter on 28 July 2020 to the early years sector, following complaints from parents about allegedly unfair charging practices early during the COVID-19 outbreak. The letter supports the government's position that providers must be balanced and fair in their dealings with parents, and that they must avoid unfair charging practices. This letter is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904194/Open\\_letter\\_to\\_Nursery\\_and\\_Early\\_Years\\_settings.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904194/Open_letter_to_Nursery_and_Early_Years_settings.pdf).

The department is not aware of any significant rise in consumer complaints since the open letter was published. Since then, the circumstances providers are operating in have changed, but the principles set out in this letter are still relevant. While contracts are a private arrangement between consumers and providers, the provisions of the letter are still broadly applicable. If parents or their children test positive for COVID-19, or are contacted by NHS Test and Trace, the principle that parents should not be charged for a service that cannot be provided without breaching government legal requirements would apply.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[123658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's new Covid Workforce Fund for schools and colleges, whether he plans to make equivalent financial support to help with the cost of staff absences available to registered early year providers.

**Vicky Ford:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 7 December 2020 to Questions [122774](#) and [122775](#).

**■ Pre-school Education: Staff****Tulip Siddiq:** **[123657]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of the early years workforce which is aged 23 to 24 years old.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers (2019) collected data on ages of the early years workforce. This can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2019>.

Data for early years staff aged 23 to 24 is not available because the data is banded into age groups. However, the unpublished data shows that 4% of staff working in school-based early years settings, 17% of staff working in group-based settings, and 1% of childminders were aged between 21 to 24 years old in 2019.

**■ Remote Education: Coronavirus****Rosie Cooper:** **[123551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of formally advising secondary schools in the UK to return to remote learning for the final week of term to help reduce the spread of covid-19 over the Christmas break.

**Nick Gibb:**

It continues to be the Department's aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full time. Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of learning and children's future ability to learn.

As set out in the Government's COVID-19 Winter Plan, nurseries, schools, and colleges should not change their Christmas holidays or close early this term. Parents should continue to send their children to school during term time. Head teachers, teachers and staff in schools and colleges have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open.

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

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

## ■ Schools: Census

**Catherine McKinnell:**

**[124186]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish the data from the October 2020 school census.

**Nick Gibb:**

There are no plans to publish a comprehensive dataset from the October 2020 (Autumn) school census.

Data collected in the autumn census on exclusions relates to the 2019/20 academic year and is expected to be published in July 2021. No data was collected on pupil absence in the autumn census 2020.

The Department release annual National Statistics in the Schools, pupils and their characteristics publication, based on the Spring Census, collected in January. This includes data on pupil numbers by characteristics including gender, age, free school meals eligibility, language, and ethnicity, alongside data on class sizes and school numbers. The latest release is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

Further information on Special Educational Needs is also produced from the Spring Census and released in the 'Special educational needs in England' publication, available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Andrea Leadsom:**

**[124180]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of the potential merits of either permitting or encouraging schools to move to remote working during the last week of term in December 2020 to enable families who wish to self-isolate for two weeks to do so prior to meeting with elderly relatives over Christmas.

**Nick Gibb:**

It continues to be our aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full time. Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education and children's future ability to learn.

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

Schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise risk of transmission. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. Senior clinicians,

including the Chief Medical Officers of all four nations, still advise that school is the very best place for children to be.

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

**Andrea Leadsom:** **[124182]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the availability of supervised non-resident parent visits in schools during the covid-19 lockdowns.

**Vicky Ford:**

Schools should keep a record of all visitors with sufficient detail to support rapid contact tracing if required by NHS Test and Trace and those individuals will be expected to comply with the school's arrangements for managing and minimising risk. This includes taking particular care to maintain distance from staff and pupils. Schools will also have the discretion to require face coverings for visitors where social distancing cannot be safely managed.

The local restriction tiers have introduced limits on people gathering indoors or outdoors. However, there are exceptions to enable people to meet, including for contact between parents and children where children do not live in the same household as both parents. Parents can, therefore, visit their children in residential provision such as children's homes and residential schools that are registered as children's homes.

**Darren Henry:** **[124328]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the extent to which schools who have had students physically attending have been covid-secure during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

It continues to be the Department's aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full time. Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. Senior clinicians, including the Chief Medical Officers of all four nations, still advise that school is the very best place for children to be.

The leaders and staff of nurseries, schools and colleges have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open, keep settings safe and provide education.

The Department published guidance to support schools to welcome back all children from the start of the autumn term. This guidance can be viewed at:

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

Schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise risk of transmission. The measures set out in the Department's guidance have been endorsed by Public Health England. These include regular handwashing, promoting good respiratory hygiene, keeping groups separate and maintaining distance and minimising contact between individuals. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining the distance between individuals.

Schools must comply with health and safety law and should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in this guidance.

Any concerns in respect of the protective measures in place should be raised initially with the school. If that does not resolve the issue, the concern can be raised with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). From the start of this term, the HSE has also carried out spot checks, via telephone, of schools to evaluate their understanding and awareness of the relevant guidance. Where calls raise concerns about a school's approach, it will be referred for a further intervention which may include a visit to the school.

#### ■ **Schools: Inspections**

**Wes Streeting:**

**[123638]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether routine Ofsted inspections will resume in January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Nick Gibb:**

For state-funded schools, the Department's intention is that routine, graded Ofsted inspections will not be reintroduced until the 2021 summer term. During the spring term, inspectors will conduct monitoring inspections in schools most in need of support, such as inadequate schools and schools that require improvement. These supportive visits will focus on matters that are particularly relevant at this time, such as curriculum and teaching (including remote education), and attendance, particularly of vulnerable pupils.

#### ■ **Schools: West Midlands**

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[124205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the proportion of (a) primary and (b) secondary age children in (i) the West Midlands and (ii) Coventry who attend a school rated (A) outstanding and (B) good by Ofsted.

**Nick Gibb:**

The data published by Ofsted shows the number of schools rated as Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, and Inadequate which is available from the published data.

Please see the attached table.



**Attachments:**

1. 124205\_table  
[124205\_table\_outstanding\_and\_good\_schools\_west\_midlands\_and\_coventry.pdf]

■ **Social Services**

**Tulip Siddiq:** **[121877]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of distribution of funding to different local authorities to meet social care need in those areas.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Department for Education works closely with local authorities and the sector to assess the impact of a variety of factors on children's services, including funding and any increases in demand.

Local authority funding is distributed using a formula based on population and deprivation, as well as the varying cost of delivering services across the country.

The government is committed to reform of the local government finance system and will continue to work with the sector to ensure that the system supports local authorities to effectively deliver their services.

■ **Teachers: Coronavirus**

**Neil Coyle:** **[124201]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take to ensure that teachers will be prioritised for covid-19 vaccination now that one is available.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

JCVI advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age.

Regarding the next phase of vaccine rollout, JCVI have asked that the Department of Health and Social Care consider occupational vaccination in collaboration with other Government departments. The Department for Education will input into this cross governmental exercise.



**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Animal Feed****Sir Greg Knight:**[\[123533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice he plans to issue to farmers and animal owners on maintaining an adequate stock of animal feed and food for their animals on and after 1 January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

On and after 1 January 2021, farmers and animal keepers will continue to have a duty of care to their animals, which includes ensuring that they have access to a sufficient quantity of quality feed and food to maintain animal health and welfare.

Publications and datasets for animal feed will continue to be published by the Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board so that farmers and animal keepers have the most up to date statistics and predictions to enable them to make informed decisions on obtaining feed for their animals.

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

**■ Animals: Exports****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[124157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total value was of UK live animal exports by (a) country and (b) region to (i) the EU and (ii) all other countries in each financial year since 2015.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The following table shows UK exports of live animals to EU and non-EU countries in each financial year since 2015.

FINANCIAL YEAR	EU	NON-EU
2015/16	£302m	£138m
2016/17	£359m	£185m
2017/18	£356m	£178m
2018/19	£337m	£201m
2019/20 (provisional)	£352m	£211m

The data provided for live animal exports includes farm animals (cattle, sheep, pigs etc.) as well as non-farm animals (exotic animals, race horses etc). Both breeding and non-breeding animals are included. Country and regional level trade data is not readily available, and has not been provided.

Data source: HMRC Overseas Trade Statistics

#### ■ **Cats: Tagging**

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

**[124353]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of making microchipping of domestic cats compulsory; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport on 29 October 2020, [PQ UIN 107106](#).

#### ■ **Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[121836]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce a statutory duty to extend the range of residential waste collected by local authorities to include aggregates, rubber and household chemicals.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Householders are already able to deposit aggregates, rubber and some household chemicals at Household Waste Recycling Centres. In accordance with the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012, householders can also arrange for collections with their local authority where they want to dispose of items of waste that exceed 25kg or cannot be contained within a receptacle for household waste provided.

We want to increase recycling of waste and reduce what is sent to landfill or energy recovery. We have legislated in the Environment Bill to require separate collection of six recyclable waste streams from households including glass, metal, plastics, paper and card and food and garden waste. We will consult further on these measures in 2021. In the Resources and Waste Strategy the Government committed to investigate extending the role of Household Waste Recycling Centres as necessary to have in place arrangements for the collection of hazardous household waste by 2025. This would be subject to consultation and assessment of potential for new burdens.

#### ■ **Economic Situation: Rural Areas**

**Alberto Costa:**

**[121287]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the long-term sustainability of the rural economy.

**Rebecca Pow:**

On 30 November, Defra published 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024'. This document will help farmers and land managers better understand what changes are coming as part of the seven-year agricultural transition period, now that the UK has left the EU. The Environmental Land Management scheme is the cornerstone of our new agricultural policy and it is intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

Defra is working with other departments on a range of other measures to support rural economies and help address long-term productivity challenges. This includes the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will support investment in rural infrastructure and businesses and the £5 billion UK Gigabit Programme targeted at connecting hard to reach areas. Defra will shortly publish the first annual rural proofing report on how the needs of rural areas in England are being addressed.

**Food: Packaging****Geraint Davies:**[\[124098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to enforce the restrictions on the market of C9-C14 PFCAs, their salts and related substances, agreed by ECHA by the end of the transition period; and whether those restrictions will be transposed into UK REACH by 1 January 2021.

**Geraint Davies:**[\[124099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the restriction proposal on manufacture, use and placing on the market of PFHxS, its salts and related substances agreed by ECHA will be transposed into UK REACH at the end of the transition period.

**Rebecca Pow:**

At the end of the transition period, only those restrictions that are in force in EU REACH will be automatically carried over into UK REACH. The restriction proposals on C9-C14 PFCAs and on PFHxS are not yet agreed under EU REACH and are not likely to be in force at the end of the transition period, so will not be automatically carried over into UK law.

After the end of the transition period we will make independent decisions on future REACH restrictions, taking into account any analysis already carried out, including in the EU, consultations, and our own independent scientific advice.

Defra and the Environment Agency are working closely with other regulators to investigate sources, pathways and risks associated with PFAS chemicals in the environment in order to facilitate decisions on future risk management options.

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[124100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) Swedish Chemicals Agency's substance evaluation for flame retardant bis(2-ethylhexyl) tetrabromophthalate and (b) potential merits of the Health and Safety Executive classifying the flame retardant bis(2-ethylhexyl) tetrabromophthalate as a substance of very high concern.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The substance evaluation recently completed by KEMI, the Swedish Environment Agency, recommended further follow-up regulatory action at EU level, although the process required under EU REACH to identify the substance as a "substance of very high concern" (SVHC) has not yet started.

After the end of the transition period, the UK will establish its own independent chemicals regulatory framework for Great Britain, UK REACH. All substances on the EU REACH candidate list of SVHCs for authorisation at that point will be listed on the UK REACH candidate list. We will make independent decisions on future identification of substances as SVHC, taking into account existing evidence, and consultation.

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Sir Charles Walker:**

[\[124199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what financial requirements his Department places on housing developers in relation to meeting the costs of providing water and sewerage resources to new developments; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In 2016, Defra published its '*Water industry: guidance to Ofwat for water and sewerage connections charges*'. This guidance covers the rules which Ofwat may set, about the charges that water and sewerage companies may make to developer, self-build, and self-lay customers for connections to their water and sewerage services.

The guidance ensures that Ofwat's Charging Rules reflect the Government's policy priorities for the water sector, which include: stable and predictable charges; transparent and customer focused charging; fairness and affordability, and environmental protection.

## ■ Meat: Exports

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[124158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total value was of UK meat exports by (a) country and (b) region to (i) the EU and (ii) all other countries in each financial year since 2015.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The following table shows UK exports of meat to EU and non-EU countries in each financial year since 2015.

FINANCIAL YEAR	EU	NON-EU
2015/16	£1.2bn	£242m
2016/17	£1.3bn	£325m
2017/18	£1.5bn	£342m
2018/19	£1.5bn	£384m
2019/20 (provisional)	£1.5bn	£562m

Data source: HMRC Overseas Trade Statistics

**Members: Correspondence****David Linden:**[\[123682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 15 June 2020, which was transferred to his Department from the Home Department in July 2020, reference DL6304, from the hon Member for Glasgow East.

**Victoria Prentis:**

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. Defra is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. A reply to the hon. Member's correspondence is being prepared and will be sent out very shortly.

**Pest Control: Animal Welfare****Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[124350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the legality of glue traps in capturing animals; and if he will make a statement.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[124351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent consultations he has had with stakeholders on the use of animal glue traps; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Secretary of State has had no such discussions or recent consultations.

However, this Government remains committed to high standards of animal welfare. We are in the process of developing a range of important animal welfare and animal-related measures to strengthen our position as a world leader in this field. This

includes delivering our manifesto commitments to introduce new laws on animal sentience, to ban live exports, restrict the imports of trophies from endangered species and ban keeping primates as pets.

We are currently considering the best legislative vehicle to bring forward these reforms in the near future. We will be engaging with stakeholders and other Government departments as necessary.

## ■ Tyres

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[121357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with car tyre producers on extended producer responsibility for car tyres.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As set out in the Government's December 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy, we are committed to reforming the four existing producer responsibility schemes and to considering the introduction of extended producer responsibility to five new material streams, including tyres. Consideration of the five new streams is scheduled to take us up to 2025. Ministers have had no such recent conversations with car tyre producers.

## ■ Veterinary Medicine: Drugs

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[123532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to mitigate the risks associated with veterinary medicine (a) shortages and (b) unavailability after 1 January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Veterinary medicines manufacturers and suppliers have prepared for the end of the transition period by establishing appropriate stock levels and working with delivery partners so they are ready to meet the new customs and border requirements. Many veterinary medicines transit into the UK from manufacturing sites in the EU and do so via the short straits. This ferry crossing is vulnerable to disruption and as such pharmaceutical companies have been considering alternative logistics options. Veterinary medicines are classified as Category 1 goods and can access Government secured freight capacity. These contingencies provide assurance that there are ways to facilitate the ongoing flow of veterinary medicines into the UK.

In addition, veterinary surgeons will continue to be able to use the Special Import Scheme to apply for alternative medicines to be imported where there is no suitable UK authorised medicine available in the UK.

Defra has well-established mechanisms for dealing with supply issues as and when they arise and works closely with the veterinary pharmaceutical industry to detect potential problems at the earliest point.

## ■ Water: Environmental Impact Assessment

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[121164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent environmental assessments his Department has carried out on water quality in lakes and rivers throughout the UK.

**Rebecca Pow:**

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

The Environment Agency recently published updated results for the ecological status and potential classification for all waters in England from source to sea on the Catchment Data Explorer. This is available at the link below. In addition, the Environment Agency carries out assessments for a range of purposes including for bathing waters, water resource planning, flood risk management, the status of salmon and other fisheries and monitoring known and emerging chemical risks. The assessments are to target and understand the effectiveness of programmes of measures and to inform regulatory and enforcement work and decisions on specific schemes or permits.

The Environment Agency reports on the state of the environment in a number of different ways, including releasing data and analysis to meet specific statutory requirements and producing State of Environment (SoE) reports to provide a balanced picture of environmental state in England that go beyond these specific statutory requirements. A Water Quality report (Feb 2018) and a Water Resources report (May 2018) were produced as part of a rolling programme of SoE reports. These are available at the link below.

<http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-environment>

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Children

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[124193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the trends in the number of children (a) killed and (b) maimed by the use of explosive weapons in conflict zones over the last 10 years, and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK's objectives on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) are primarily pursued through our engagement with the UN. The UK is an active permanent member of the UN Security Council Working Group on CAAC, which leads the international response to violations committed against children in conflict. These violations include:



the killing and maiming of children, including by the use of explosive weapons. The Working Group focuses on responding to the UN Secretary-General's annual report and country specific reports on CAAC which assess the treatment of children within conflict zones and list governments and armed groups for committing grave violations against children. At the UN Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict on 23 June, the UK reaffirmed our commitment to tackling violations against children in armed conflict and highlighted the need for a transparent and credible framework for accountability based on a standardised and evidence-backed approach to de-listing and listing of state and non-state actors for violations.

The UK is the largest single financial contributor to the office of the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) for CAAC, contributing £1.3m over the last six years in support of her core mandate. The UK increased its funding to £550,000 in FY20/21. This includes the funding of the SRSG's visits, political engagements, technical missions to support UN Country Taskforces on Monitoring and Reporting who collect information, assess trends, respond to grave violations and engage in advocacy, notably to negotiate and implement Action Plans to end the recruitment and use of children. For FY 19/20, the UK also funded Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict to produce two reports on "Defending and Upholding the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda: Advocacy for Children's Rights" and "A Credible List": Recommendations for the Secretary-General's 2020 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict," in support of securing greater accountability for violations of children's rights in conflict.

## ■ Belarus: Sanctions

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[123671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the Government's list of sanctions against Belarus officials to all institutions which are assisting the funding of the Belarus regime.

**Wendy Morton:**

On 29 September, with Canada, the UK implemented sanctions on Alexander Lukashenko, his son and six other members of the Belarusian senior leadership under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime for serious human rights violations linked to the presidential election in August. We welcomed the EU's decision to impose sanctions on other linked officials and will transfer the existing EU Belarus sanctions regime into an autonomous UK sanctions regime at the end of the Transition Period. We remain concerned by the situation in Belarus and are considering future designations carefully, guided by the evidence and objectives of the sanctions regime. It is not appropriate to speculate on future designations.



## ■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[124167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many emergency loans for (a) return travel to the UK and (b) essential living costs have been provided to UK citizens stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic; and what the total value of those loans is.

**Nigel Adams:**

To date, almost 3000 emergency repatriation loans and over 200 subsistence loans have been issued to UK citizens since 1st January. This brings the number of loans issued to almost 3200 with a total value of around £2.5 million.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[124169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK citizens have had their passports cancelled as a result of failing to repay emergency loans provided to them by the Government while stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

To date, the FCDO has not requested any passport be cancelled for a failure to repay an emergency loan issued during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[124171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether loan extensions have been granted to UK citizens who have been unable to repay in full within six months the emergency loans provided to them by the Government while stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have agreed to more than 500 loan repayment plans with recipients of loans so far. Most of these repayment plans mean the loan will not be repaid in full until after the six month deadline.

## ■ Developing Countries: Malnutrition

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

[\[124139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has spent on tackling malnutrition and starvation in the developing world in each of the last five years; and what his Department's budget will be to tackle malnutrition and starvation in each of the next three years.

**Wendy Morton:**

According to independent analysis, the department spent £667 million in 2015, £629 million in 2016, £693 million in 2017 and £699 million in 2018 on programmes to address the direct and underlying causes of malnutrition. Analysis of our 2019 spend will be published in June 2021 when data is available publicly through the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System.

The department spent £308 million in 2015, £338 million in 2016, £365 million in 2017, £349 million in 2018 and £395 million in 2019 specifically on food assistance and food security programming.

In September 2020, the Foreign Secretary announced a £119 million package of support to combat famine and acute hunger. This includes a new 5-year partnership with UNICEF to improve prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition.

Addressing malnutrition and acute food insecurity remain important for our objectives on global health and humanitarian preparedness and response. The Department is beginning a rigorous internal prioritisation process in response to the spending review announcement and we will update on this in due course.

## ■ Development Aid

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[123600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the reduction in the UK's Official Development Assistance on (a) children living in conflict and (b) climate change.

**James Cleverly:**

As announced on 26 November, in order to maximise our strategic focus in the use of Official Development Assistance (ODA) next year, the Foreign Secretary will lead a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise all of the UK's ODA allocations. Decisions on support for children in conflict and climate change will be taken as part of this process and based on evidence of where UK ODA can make a difference.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[123673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for each UN agency, how much Official Development Assistance his Department has dispersed to date in 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

Information on how much ODA the UK channels through UN agencies is included in the National Statistics publication, Statistics on International Development (SID). The most recent published figures are for 2019. Detailed UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021.

## ■ Development Aid: EU Action

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[122716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much UK Official Development Assistance was spent by the EU and EU-managed or administered funds or instruments in 2018-19.

**Wendy Morton:**

UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spent by the EU and EU-managed or administered funds or instruments in 2018-19 totalled £1,479.4 million, of which: £950

million was the UK's ODA attribution to the EU Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF)- Heading IV; £435 million was spent through the European Development Fund; £9 million through the Economic Resilience Initiative in the Syria Region programme managed by the European Investment Bank; £64 million through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey; £1.4 million through the EU's Trust Fund for Africa; and £20 million to the EU programme Support the Palestinian Authority to Deliver Basic Services, build Stability and Promote Reform in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

## ■ **Disability: Equality**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to include measurable policies on disability equality in his Department's next Single Departmental Plan.

**Wendy Morton:**

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO, and the Ministerial team remain committed to embedding it across all of our work. Last month, we published a progress paper outlining achievements against the 2018 DFID Disability Strategy and we are planning a refresh of this strategy in 2021.

Following the Spending Review outcome, FCDO Ministers are currently considering which policies and metrics will underpin our departmental plans. HMG departmental plans for delivery during the next financial year (2021-22) will be published next year following approval by the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury and No10. FCDO will report regularly to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury on progress against the agreed metrics. The public will be able to track government (and FCDO) performance against finalised outcomes through public reporting.

## ■ **European Development Fund Committee**

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[122712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans are in place for UK participation in the European Development Fund Committee after 31 December 2020.

**Wendy Morton:**

As stipulated in the Withdrawal Agreement, the UK is eligible to attend the European Development Fund (EDF) Management Committee without voting rights. It is our understanding that the EDF Management Committee will cease to exist as of 31 December 2020.

The EU's new development instrument, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Development Instrument (NDICI) will provide funding to the current EDF countries (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries) and regions from 2021 as part of the EU's new Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027. The UK is not committed to any new EU funding through the NDICI. The Commission has yet to set

out how member states will oversee legacy funding from the 2014-2020 MFF and the EDF as part of the new NDICI governance structure.

#### ■ **Forced Marriage: Children**

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[122802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget (a) from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent and (b) as a result of the UK's decreased GDP on Government funding for UN and civil society programmes to end child marriage.

**Wendy Morton:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic has forced us to take tough decisions, including temporarily reducing our aid budget. We will remain a world-leading aid donor. We will spend more than £10 billion next year to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health. We will reform how aid is spent across Government to deliver even better results for the money we spend. Combined with our wider diplomatic work, this will ensure we remain a force for good next year and beyond.

We remain committed to the goal of ending child marriage, including as part of our work to deliver the Prime Minister's commitment to champion 12 years of quality education for all girls. Decisions on UK ODA allocations will be made following a cross-government process led by the Foreign Secretary.

#### ■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Foreign Nationals**

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[123606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether existing international development staff who are non-UK nationals will be (a) able to apply for new jobs and progress their careers in his Department and (b) offered assistance if they wish to become UK citizens.

**Nigel Adams:**

Existing non-UK national staff in the FCDO remain in the department and are able to apply for roles in a range of functions, continuing their valuable contribution to the Department's work and progressing their careers. In line with Civil Service policy, the FCDO offers support to staff wishing to apply for naturalisation, in the form of providing evidence and supporting statements on request.

#### ■ **Gulf States: Overseas Aid**

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[124318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 106362 on Gulf States: Overseas Aid, which of the 47 projects delivered through the Integrated Activity Fund in financial year 2019-20 were delivered solely within one country; and what those countries were.

**James Cleverly:**

In 2019/20, the Integrated Activity Fund delivered 33 projects solely in the Gulf States including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

**■ Infant Mortality****Elliot Colburn:**[\[123712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to end preventable child deaths.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK is committed to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, new-born babies and children by 2030, as part of our leadership on global health. This is more important than ever, given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last 20 years, UK aid has helped immunise over 760 million children, saving over 13 million lives.

We will maintain our position as a global health leader, investing in Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance; the Global Fund for Aids, TB and Malaria; and the International Finance Facility for Immunisation. The UK is also partnering with countries to improve investments in health systems, including sexual and reproductive health and nutrition services, working towards universal health coverage. This will help to end preventable deaths, and address the impacts of COVID-19 on health systems in our partner countries.

**■ Iraq: Bombs****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[122667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the amount of unexploded ordnance that remains in the Iraqi city of Mosul.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK works closely with the Government of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government and international partners on the removal of exploded ordnance in Iraq, including in Mosul. This includes close collaboration and continuous assessment of the level of unexploded ordnance. The UK funds UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) demining efforts in Iraq and is the third largest donor, having provided over £24.75 million since 2015. This funding provides Explosive Hazard Management (EHM) response in support of humanitarian and stabilisation efforts, delivers risk education at the community level and national/regional level, and enhances Government entities' capacity to manage, regulate and coordinate an EHM response through training and mentoring programmes.

**■ Israel: Body Searches****Andy Slaughter:** [\[123543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterpart on the increase in the proportion of children strip searched in Israeli military detention.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK remains concerned about the treatment of Palestinian children detained in Israeli military detention. We are committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including on this issue. We also continue to fund projects providing legal aid to minors and capacity building to local lawyers.

**■ Israel: Detainees****Andy Slaughter:** [\[123544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Government of Israel on the findings of Save the Children's report entitled, Defenceless: The impact of the Israeli military detention system on Palestinian children, published on 29 October 2020.

**James Cleverly:**

We are concerned by the findings of the Save the Children's report entitled, 'Defenceless: The impact of the Israeli military detention system on Palestinian children'. We remain concerned about the treatment of Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons. Reports of the heavy use of painful restraints and the high number of Palestinian children who are not informed of their legal rights, in contravention of Israel's own regulations, are particularly concerning, as is the continued transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv have a regular dialogue with Israel on this issue. We also fund projects providing legal aid to minors and capacity building to local lawyers. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

**■ Israel: Palestinians****Stephen Crabb:** [\[121825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it remains the UK's position that any settlement resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should include recognition of the plight of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa as well as Palestinian refugees.

**Stephen Crabb:**

[\[121826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on recognition and restitution for Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa.

**James Cleverly:**

We are clear that the status of refugees must be agreed as part of any final peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The United Kingdom is focused on working with international and regional partners to harness the changing Israeli-Arab relations to encourage a return to dialogue. The history of Jewish migration and displacement in the region is highly complex and cannot be ignored. We acknowledge that the Jewish community has experienced unacceptable suffering. We continue to support the aspiration for a Jewish homeland in the modern state of Israel, just as we support the objective of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. A peaceful future for the Middle East depends on a peace agreement that offers fair restitution for both sides, and a willingness on the part of all countries in the region to respect the rights of minorities and build inclusive societies which enshrine and uphold those rights.

#### ■ **Nutrition: Development Aid**

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[122795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget (a) from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent and (b) as a result of the UK's decreased GDP on the level of Government support for nutrition-relevant programmes.

**Wendy Morton:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take tough but necessary decisions, including temporarily reducing the overall amount we spend on ODA. The UK remains firmly committed to helping the world's poorest people. Despite next year's adjustment, latest figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) confirm the UK will remain one of the most generous G7 aid donors as a percentage of GNI in 2021.

Preventing and treating malnutrition will remain important for achieving priorities on global health, including ending preventable deaths among mothers, newborns and children. It will also be an important priority for our work on humanitarian response.

The Department will begin a rigorous internal prioritisation process and we will update on this in due course including how this relates to the nutrition funding.

#### ■ **Overseas Aid**

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[124319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 117262 on Overseas Aid, which Minister or Ministers were consulted in relation to that project.



**James Cleverly:**

Former Ministers from the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office were consulted about the project's Overseas Security and Justice Assessment.

**■ Overseas Aid: Children****Sir Oliver Heald:**[\[123498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effect on children's (a) health and (b) education globally of the planned cut in UK aid from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent.

**Wendy Morton:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic has forced us to take tough decisions, including temporarily reducing our aid budget. We will remain a world leading aid donor. We plan to spend more than £10 billion next year to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health. As set out by the Foreign Secretary, our priorities will include girls' education and global health, including tackling COVID-19 and strengthening international health security.

We will build on our existing achievements in supporting girls' education and working to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children. We have set ambitious global targets of getting 40 million girls into education, and one third more reading by the age of 10, and we will co-host the replenishment for the Global Partnership for Education next year. We have pledged up to £1.65 billion to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to support immunisation of 300 million children over the next five years.

**■ Overseas Aid: Females****Sir Oliver Heald:**[\[123499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effect on safeguarding of women and girls globally of the proposed cut in UK aid from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent.

**Wendy Morton:**

The proposed reduction to 0.5 per cent is temporary and we will return to 0.7 per cent as soon as the fiscal situation allows. The new strategic framework for our aid announced last month will ensure we can deliver UK aid better, even if our budget is smaller, by combining aid with diplomacy and focusing our efforts where the UK can make a world-leading difference. Safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment will remain a priority. We want to ensure that no harm is done to any person receiving or delivering aid and will continue to pay particular attention to the risks facing women and girls, including examining how these risks change over time.

As set out in our September 2020 Safeguarding Strategy, the UK is committed to driving up safeguarding standards across the aid sector and is leading global efforts to do so regardless of how much aid we spend each year. Our goal remains to

ensure that all those engaged in poverty reduction take all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, from occurring and to respond appropriately when harm or allegations of harm occur.

#### ■ **Papua: Self-determination of States**

**Ben Lake:**

[\[122850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the (a) Indonesian and (b) Dutch Government on the independence movement in West Papua.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary discussed Papua with Foreign Minister Retno on 14 October. The UK Government fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, which includes Papua and West Papua provinces. Within this framework we support the efforts of the authorities and civil society to address the needs and aspirations of the people both provinces. The Foreign Secretary has not discussed Papua with the Dutch Government.

**Ben Lake:**

[\[122851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Indonesian counterpart on self-determination in the territory of West Papua.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary discussed Papua with Foreign Minister Retno on 14 October. The UK Government fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia, which includes Papua and West Papua provinces. Within this framework we support the efforts of the authorities and civil society to address the needs and aspirations of the people both provinces.

#### ■ **Repatriation: British Nationals Abroad**

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[123584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much of the £75 million allocated to his Department to support the repatriation of UK citizens stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic has been spent.

**Nigel Adams:**

To date, we have spent just over £40 million gross and around £15.2 million net. A further £4.3 million, drawn from FCO Administration and the cross-HMG Conflict Stability and Security Fund, was spent in support of the earlier repatriations from Wuhan, Peru, and cruise ships.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[123585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to retain the remaining funds from the £75 million allocated to his

Department to support the repatriation of UK citizens stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic to repatriate such people during future waves of covid-19 infection.

**Nigel Adams:**

As noted in our response to the FAC report, the £75 million to support repatriation operations was a maximum limit, not a target to be met. In the event that we need to repatriate British travellers during a future wave of COVID-19 infection, we will look to find the funds within the department and, if appropriate, apply to the HM Treasury Reserve and draw down further funding up to the maximum of £75 million.

■ **Sanitation: Development Aid**

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[122797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget (a) from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent and (b) as a result of the UK's decreased GDP on Government support for programmes supporting people to gain access to clean water or improved sanitation.

**Wendy Morton:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic has forced us to take tough decisions, including temporarily reducing our aid budget. We will remain a world leading aid donor. We will spend more than £10 billion next year to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health. We will reform how aid is spent across Government to deliver even better results for the money we spend. Aid has too often lacked coherence, oversight or appropriate accountability. Combined with our wider diplomatic work, this will ensure we remain a force for good next year and beyond.

The Government is continuing to ensure that water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) plays a full role in contributing to our commitments. We will do this by supporting global leadership in the sector, strengthening sector systems, and ongoing COVID-19 response activities. Our work on WASH builds on existing progress and the UK Government can confirm that the target of reaching at least 60 million people with improved water or sanitation by December 2020 has been met.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Terrorism**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[122704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Saudi Arabia on the bomb attack at the Remembrance Day ceremony at a cemetery in that country on 11 November 2020.

**James Cleverly:**

I discussed the attack with the Saudi Ambassador to the UK on 17 November. I continue to have full confidence that the Saudi Authorities will investigate this attack and prosecute those responsible for this cowardly act.

## ■ Syria: Armed Conflict

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[121855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken towards supporting a stable end to violence in Syria; and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:**

On 22 October, the Foreign Secretary and like-minded counterparts issued a statement following a Ministerial meeting of the Syria Small Group: only a political settlement in line with Security Council Resolution 2254 can resolve the conflict. We regularly raise this matter in bilateral discussions and multilateral fora, including the UN Security Council. We call on all parties to the conflict in Syria to adhere to agreed ceasefires and abide by their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. We support the UN-facilitated political process to reach a lasting settlement to the Syrian conflict and a political settlement on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. To this end, we continue to support UN Syria Envoy Pedersen's efforts to convene the Constitutional Committee, most recently for a fourth round of talks in Geneva on 29 November. The UK remains a top donor to the Syria crisis. In June 2020 we committed at least £300 million at the Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region". This brings the UK's support to Syria and the region since 2012 to £3.3 billion, the UK's biggest ever humanitarian response.

## ■ Syria: Coronavirus

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[124225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help prevent the spread of covid-19 in Syria during the conflict in that country.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK has committed £3.3 billion to the humanitarian response to the Syria Crisis since 2012, this includes a pledge of at least £300 million this year to the Syria Crisis. Our delivery partners' ongoing activities include healthcare, water, hygiene and sanitation support, which help and will continue to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

The UK has provided £34 million in funding specifically to help partners respond to COVID-19 across Syria. This support includes interventions which target vulnerable Syrians and help to tackle the spread of the virus. These include training for health workers; food and water; and sanitation and hygiene support, including educational material to raise awareness of best hygiene practices.

**■ Syria: Detainees****Mr David Davis:**[\[123522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure families from the UK who are detained in North East Syria receive medical care, including in cases where there is a clear risk to life.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK has no consular presence within Syria, which makes it difficult to provide direct consular assistance, but we carefully consider whether and how we can help every British national who directly seeks our assistance. The provision of medical care within camps in North East Syria is a matter for the camp authorities, but UK aid is provided to those in acute need in these camps, including British nationals. For example, in Al Hol camp, we help fund a wide range of activities including basic, life-saving healthcare, food, hygiene products, child protection and shelter, in addition to informal education support. When the population substantially increased in early 2019, UK aid provided 1,300 tents to the camp. The UK's funding is flexible and allows partners on the ground to plan for spikes in need.

**Mr David Davis:**[\[123523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to facilitate welfare and proof of life checks for families from Britain who are detained in north-east Syria.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK has no consular presence within Syria from which to provide assistance. This makes it difficult to help but we take a case-by-case approach to any requests for assistance, which includes liaising with partners on the ground where feasible.

**■ Syria: Humanitarian Aid****Wayne David:**[\[124141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria is not (a) disrupted and (b) manipulated by the Assad regime.

**James Cleverly:**

FCDO have a zero tolerance approach to any suspicions, allegations or instances of aid diversion and have a number of steps in place to mitigate the risk of aid diversion in Syria. We have rigorous and robust checks to ensure aid goes to the people that need it, delivers value for money and protects against aid diversion. UK programmes are delivered by trusted partners with proven expertise. Robust due diligence checks on all partners are carried out by FCDO before entering into any agreements. We conduct regular performance reviews of our direct partners and we require all our partners to provide up to date information on the downstream partners they use. If partners fail to provide us with this information as per our agreements, then their funding can be suspended or permanently stopped. We also use third-party

independent monitors to support our delivery partners and verify that aid is being delivered as intended.

## ■ Syria: Overseas Aid

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[124224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's decision to cut international aid spending on the civilian victims of the conflict in Syria.

**James Cleverly:**

Tackling the humanitarian impact of the Syria Crisis remains a priority for the FCDO. FCDO is currently running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes, to ensure that every pound we spend goes as far as possible and makes a world-leading difference. We are in the process of assessing the impact of this decision on the UK's aid expenditure in Syria.

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

## ■ Syria: Peace Negotiations

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[124223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with international counterparts on securing a lasting peaceful political solution to the conflict in Syria.

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[124226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with the UK's international partners to secure a ceasefire in Syria which is upheld by all parties.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK continues to call on all parties to the conflict in Syria to adhere to agreed ceasefires and abide by their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. We regularly raise this matter in bilateral discussions and multilateral fora, including the UN Security Council. On 22 October, the Foreign Secretary and likeminded counterparts issued a statement following a ministerial meeting of the Syria Small Group: a political settlement in line with Security Council Resolution 2254, which calls for a nationwide ceasefire as part of a political process, is the only way to end the Syrian conflict. To this end, we welcomed UN Syria Envoy Pedersen's convening of the Constitutional Committee for a fourth round of talks in Geneva on 29 November, but regret that due to regime obstruction there has been little progress to date.

## ■ Syria: Political Prisoners

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[124227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the wellbeing of political detainees in Syrian prisons.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK has repeatedly condemned the illegal detention, torture and execution of detainees by the Assad regime, affiliated militias and proscribed terrorist organisations. We support the UN's call to the Assad regime and Syrian armed groups to release a sufficient number of detainees to prevent COVID-19 spreading in detention facilities, as well as their urgent request to allow humanitarian actors and medical teams unhindered access to prisons. The UK has raised the plight of detainees at the UN Security Council and at the UN Human Rights Council, which have included language on detainees in recent Syria Resolutions.

## ■ Syria: War Crimes

**Wayne David:**

[\[124140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with (a) international organisations and (b) other countries to ensure that those responsible for international war crimes in Syria are held to account.

**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. At the Human Rights Council, we have raised our concerns about war crimes being committed by Russian-backed regime forces and by terrorist groups citing reports by the UN Commission of Inquiry. 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. We have also called for follow up to the findings of the UN Board of Inquiry, created last year following UK-led lobbying. 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.

## ■ Travel Information: Coronavirus

**Chris Grayling:**

[\[122591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is his policy to amend international travel advice in line with the new quarantine restrictions being introduced on 15 December 2020.



**Nigel Adams:**

From 5 November, the FCDO stopped advising against all travel worldwide and reverted to country-based advice. FCDO travel advice remains under constant review and considers both epidemiological and non-epidemiological risks in each destination. When the FCDO no longer assesses the risks to British nationals to be unacceptably high, travel advice is updated accordingly.

**Paul Maynard:**[\[122655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department's travel advice will be updated to reflect changes in the Department for Transport's guidance on travel corridors.

**Nigel Adams:**

From 5 November, the FCDO stopped advising against all travel worldwide and reverted to country-based advice. FCDO travel advice remains under constant review and considers both epidemiological and non-epidemiological risks in each destination. When the FCDO no longer assesses the risks to British nationals to be unacceptably high, travel advice is updated accordingly.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[123587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what improvements he has made to the gov.uk travel advice pages to tackle the problems reported in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21, Flying Home: The FCO's consular response to the COVID-19 pandemic (HC 643).

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO is alert to lessons learned, including those highlighted by the FAC report, and has continued to update travel advice with tailored information as the coronavirus pandemic has affected travellers overseas. Each country page now has information specific to the challenges faced by travellers due to coronavirus such as the impacts to international and domestic travel, changes to entry requirements and quarantine rules. Where possible, we also provide British nationals with information on local restrictions in country and advice on how British people can comply with the rules.

We keep all of our travel advice under constant review and update it regularly. We encourage British nationals to monitor our travel advice when planning their trip.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[123588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21, Flying Home: The FCO's consular response to the COVID-19 pandemic (HC 643), whether he has plans in place to make travel advice for UK citizens abroad available and easily accessible for people without internet access.

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO's travel advice is the primary source for passing travel advice to British nationals, and is amplified by our teams in the UK and overseas to ensure it reaches as many people as possible. This includes engagement with local journalists,

honorary consuls and consular wardens where such networks exist. In addition to our travel advice, we provide a 24/7 telephone service for people to contact us if they do not have internet access.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Abortion: Disability

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[114187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it his Department's policy that (a) Down's syndrome, (b) cleft lip, and (c) cleft palate are disabilities that would meet the grounds for abortion under Ground E of the statutory grounds for abortion.

**Helen Whately:**

Under the Abortion Act 1967, a pregnancy may be lawfully terminated by a registered medical practitioner in approved premises, if two medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith, that the abortion is justified under one or more of grounds A to G. Ground E refers to cases where "there is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped". There is no official definition of seriously handicapped.

In 1990, when the grounds for abortion were amended, Parliament agreed that doctors were best placed to make these decisions with the woman and her family. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists issued guidance to doctors 'Termination of Pregnancy for Fetal Abnormality in England, Scotland and Wales' in May 2010 to assist doctors and other health professionals.

### ■ Abortion: Drugs

**Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:**

[\[115490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the 27 December 2018 approval of the home of a pregnant woman in England who is undergoing treatment for termination of pregnancy as a class of place where the second stage of treatment for early medical abortion may be carried out, how many maternal deaths occurred under the 27 December 2018 approval as a result of the second abortion pill taken at home in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020 to date.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 November 2020]:* It is not possible to identify the type of abortion performed from the mortality statistics. Mortality statistics published by the Office of National Statistics, show that for there was one death in 2018 where abortion was listed as the underlying cause of death on the death certificate. There were no deaths recorded in 2019. Data for 2020 is not available.

The Department is aware of reports of two women who died after seeking abortion treatment earlier this year. Both deaths have been appropriately investigated and in one case investigations are continuing. For the other case, the coroner concluded

that there was no evidence to suggest the pregnancy or abortion contributed to the death either directly or indirectly. Both women attended an abortion service in person and based on information provided to the Department, at least one of these women was supplied with pills to take at home under the 2018 approval.

**Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:**

[\[115491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many notification forms were received where the second abortion pill only was taken at home after 10 weeks, in 2019.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 November 2020]:* In 2019, the number of abortions where the Department was notified that prostaglandin was provided for home use is as follows:

- 52,309 at three to nine weeks gestation; and
- 37 at 10 weeks gestation and above.

The information presented is based on information contained in abortion notification forms (HSA4) submitted by clinics and hospitals to the Chief Medical Officer at the Department.

## ■ **Autism: Mental Health Services**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[114233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve access to personalised, evidenced, community-based mental health services as recommended in the National Autistic Society's Left Stranded report and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism's The Autism Act, 10 Years On report.

**Helen Whately:**

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year in mental health services by 2023/24 to support adults and children, including autistic people. This includes a focus on improving access to community mental health services.

We are currently developing a new cross-government all-age autism strategy, which will consider autistic people's mental health needs. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism's report informed the strategy's development, as did the National Autistic Society's Left Stranded report, which highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on autistic people.

## ■ **Bereavement Counselling: Suicide**

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[121891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to introduce specialist bereavement services for suicide.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, we have set out our plans to invest £57 million to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services in all areas of England by 2023/24.

We have committed that all local systems will have suicide bereavement support services providing timely and appropriate support to families and staff by 2023/24 and have provided funding to 40% of local systems in 2020/21 for them to establish and deliver such services. This is in line with the planning and delivery expectations set out in the Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20-2023/24.

**■ Brain: Injuries****Jeremy Hunt:**[\[122646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Spending Review 2020, if he will provide more detail on the pilots aimed at reducing incidence of birth-related brain injuries.

**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[122647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Spending Review 2020, what specific steps his Department is taking to improve maternity safety.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* £9.4 million has been provided to support maternity safety pilots through the 2020 Spending Review. The pilots will provide cutting-edge training and expert guidance, to improve practice and avoid harm to babies. This will include:

- Fresh learning from recent investigations and academic research to be used to improve clinical practice during childbirth;
- Pilots to provide cutting-edge training and expert guidance, to improve practice and avoid harm to babies; and
- Funding to also cover the costs of the final year of the Ockenden Review into maternity safety at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust.

The funding is in addition to existing funding to improve maternity safety by strengthening clinical leadership, implementing best clinical practice and fostering cultures of continuous learning for improvement through reviews and investigations.

**■ Cancer: Health Services****Martyn Day:**[\[121311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what fiscal steps he is taking to ensure sufficient staff in the NHS to (a) diagnose and (b) treat the backlog of cancer patients resulting from the outbreak of covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Spending Review 2020 provides £260 million to continue to grow the National Health Service workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan, including continuing to take forward the cancer workforce plan phase one.

Full details on funding allocations towards NHS workforce budgets in 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

**Care Homes: Coronavirus****Barbara Keeley:**[\[109251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his contribution of 19 October 2020, Official report, column 790, for what reasons directors of public health in Tier (a) 1 and (b) 2 covid-19 restriction areas do not have discretion to allow routine visits to care homes.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 4 November 2020]:* For visits to happen, a provider needs to assess and balance the risk of local prevalence and the ability of the care home to manage the visit safely. This dynamic risk assessment must formally take into account the advice of the local Director of Public Health.

On 5 November we published guidance to enable COVID-19-secure visits for care home residents while national restrictions are in place. The guidance will enable care home providers, families and local professionals 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.

**Alex Sobel:**[\[118571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason home care workers who visit multiple extremely clinically vulnerable people per week are not routinely tested for covid-19.

**Helen Whately:**

Home care workers employed by Care Quality Commission-registered organisations are able to access weekly PCR tests, which can be self-administered at home. This will help identify whether any home care workers have COVID-19 asymptomatically and thereby provide further protection – in addition to the use of personal protective equipment to those they care for.

**Carers: Coronavirus****Fleur Anderson:**[\[119405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what process is in place for carers who attend the homes of their clients to obtain regular covid-19 testing.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 26 November 2020]:* Home care workers employed by Care Quality Commission-registered organisations are able to access weekly PCR tests, which

can be self-administered at home. This will help identify whether any home care workers have COVID-19 asymptotically and thereby provide further protection – in addition to the use of personal protective equipment to those they care for.

## ■ Continuing Care

**Richard Fuller:** [\[109263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will review the effectiveness of the Decision Support Tool used for assessing Continuing Health Care eligibility.

**Richard Fuller:** [\[109264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to reduce the (a) length of time taken for the Continuing Health Care eligibility appeals process and (b) effect of that process on individuals and families going through it.

**Richard Fuller:** [\[109265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to (a) monitor the delivery of Continuing Health Care (CHC) assessments and (b) ensure that CHC assessments are carried out by an appropriately constituted multi-disciplinary team with adequate knowledge of the condition to make an informed decision.

**Helen Whately:**

There are currently no plans to review the effectiveness of the Decision Support Tool (DST). The DST was originally developed in 2007 and has been reviewed periodically since then, with the most recent iteration being published in 2018.

The National Framework for Continuing Healthcare (CHC) and NHS Funded Nursing Care (the Framework) encourages eligibility appeals to be processed in a timely manner. It also lays out the expectation for clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to engage in a person-centred approach, ensuring the individual, and/or their representative, is fully aware of, and involved in, the processes. Upon completion of the assessment, a clear explanation of how the decision of eligibility was reached should be provided, as well as an explanation of the appeals process.

There are Assurance Standards in place, which allow NHS England to monitor the performance of CCGs on the delivery of CHC assessments. The Framework sets out that CHC assessments must be undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team.

## ■ Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[109283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to gather and use information from covid-19 testing on viral load; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department does not gather information on viral load testing as it is not possible to accurately measure viral load when testing swabs. Semi-quantitative estimates of viral load are however used in quality assuring tests and in differentiation of early and convalescent COVID-19 infection as a part of the operation of NHS Test and Trace.

**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[109363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the statistics for people who have tested positive for covid-19 and have since recovered from that virus.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 4 November 2020]:* The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

**■ Coronavirus: Children's Play****Ms Angela Eagle:**[\[106902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific evidence base for the decision to close soft play centres in (a) tier 3 covid-19 local alert areas and (b) Liverpool city region during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 2 November 2020]:* Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle COVID-19.

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

Unfortunately, we know that the virus spreads readily in indoor environments where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together. These restrictions do not single out restaurants, pubs or gyms but apply to a wide range of settings where the risk of transmission is high.

**■ Coronavirus: City of York****Julian Sturdy:**[\[113075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department is making for the City of York to be placed in tier 1 local covid alert level when the November 2020 lockdown restrictions expire on 2 December 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Nationwide restrictions came into effect from 5 November due to exponential rates of infection across England. On 2 December, they will expire and we intend to return to a tiered system on a local and regional basis according to the latest data and trends and Parliament will have a vote to agree the way forward.



**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[113076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will publish the criteria which the City of York will have to fulfil to be downgraded from tier 2 to tier 1 local covid alert level when the national November 2020 lockdown restrictions expire on 2 December 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Nationwide restrictions came into effect from 5 November due to exponential rates of infection across England. The restrictions imposed by local COVID alert level regulations will be removed by the regulations imposing this new national intervention, so these reviews are no longer required. On 2 December, they will expire and we intend to return to a tiered system on a local and regional basis according to the latest data and trends and Parliament will have a vote to agree the way forward.

## ■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[100550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on NHS Test and Trace by region in England.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 12 October 2020]:* The information is not available in the format requested.

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[100893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of public procurement policy and Serco sub-contracting to Concentrix to provide staff for the contact tracing scheme.

**Helen Whately:**

Serco are required to appoint sub-contractors in line with the terms and conditions for the primary contract awarded under the CCS framework. The CCS guidance states that if a prime contractor wishes to enter into subcontracts or replace them, they must obtain the prior consent of the contracting authority. Serco have worked with the Cabinet Office and the Department to engage a spread of regional and national providers, including small and medium sized enterprises, who have been integrated, trained and supported by Serco to meet the Department's required delivery model.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[106293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many samples were lost from the test and trace programme in each of the last four weeks for which data is available; how many samples given to that programme it was not possible to test during those periods; and how many results within that programme were not sent to people who had been tested during those periods.

**Helen Whately:**

We do not publish data in the format requested.

**Kate Griffiths:**

**[115028]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that businesses (a) correctly display the QR code for the NHS Test and Trace app or (b) take contact details where use of that app is not possible.

**Helen Whately:**

Displaying an official National Health Service QR code poster and collecting contact details for NHS Test and Trace for certain venues is a legal requirement for designated businesses and venues in England. If a customer or visitor chooses to check in by scanning the NHS QR code, they do not also need to provide their contact details. Local authorities are enforcers of this regulation in England and have the power to issue fines starting from £1,000 for venues that are failing to comply. Fines will rise to £10,000 for repeat offenders. The police can be used as a last resort.

We have held stakeholder engagement meetings with each of the sectors in scope of the guidance to explain the policy and provide an opportunity for question. We have also published advice on how to print and display the official NHS QR code poster which is available at the following link:

<https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/article/KA-01258/en-us>

## ■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Paula Barker:**

**[121039]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling couples who live in separate households to see each other without the need for social distancing in tiers (a) two and (b) three at the end of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

From 2 December people should follow advice relevant to the Tier their area is in and some couples who live in separate households will be able to form a support bubble.

People do not need to socially distance from anyone they are in an established relationship with outdoors. If in the early stages of a relationship, particular care should be taken to follow the guidance on social distancing.

The Government will continue to review the measures and guidance, assessing them to ensure that they continue to be necessary and proportionate based on available scientific evidence.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Gyms and Leisure**

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

**[104058]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific evidence base for the decision to close gyms and leisure centres in (a) tier 3 covid risk areas and (b) Liverpool city region during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 20 October 2020]:* Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle COVID-19.

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

Unfortunately, we know that the virus spreads readily in indoor environments where members of different households and/or support bubbles spend time together. These restrictions do not single out restaurants, pubs or gyms but apply to a wide range of settings where the risk of transmission is high.

**■ Coronavirus: Havering****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[113508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to roll out lateral flow covid-19 testing in Havering.

**Helen Whately:**

The Borough of Havering made a request in the week of 9 November to be added to the Departmental list of participating local authorities.

We have received their request and will work with them as they prepare to receive lateral flow test to use as per their priorities.

**■ Coronavirus: Humber Bridge****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[110750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are employed (a) in total and (b) in each (i) age and (ii) gender category at the NHS covid-19 testing site at the Humber Bridge car park; and who their employer is.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[110751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are employed on (a) permanent and (b) agency contracts at the NHS covid-19 testing site at the Humber Bridge car park; and which agencies are used for those contracts.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[110752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff working at the NHS covid-19 testing site at the Humber Bridge car park have tested positive for covid-19 in each month since April 2020.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[110753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many members of staff working at the NHS covid-19 testing site at the Humber Bridge car park have had to self isolate since the site opened in April 2020.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[110754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many members of staff working at the NHS covid-19 testing site at the Humber Bridge car park have received contractual sick pay as a result of (a) having to self-isolate and (b) testing positive for covid-19 since the site opened in April 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

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

## ■ **Coronavirus: Kingston upon Hull**

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[117355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the letter of 13 November 2020 from the Leader of Kingston upon Hull City Council, Stephen Brady OBE, on the levels of covid-19 infection in the city, what plans he has to provide additional support and resources to the area's hospitals to help them tackle the increased levels of infection.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2020]:* We have recently announced £2.7 billion extra funding directly to local National Health Service systems to cover the second half of this financial year, to provide additional support for NHS organisations to manage ongoing COVID-19 pressures and resume routine activity. Systems are now working with NHS England to ensure they have right plans in place to maximise usage of that funding.

We also have provided funding to a £3 billion package of additional capacity initiatives to support the NHS through the winter, including keeping the Nightingale hospitals capacity available during winter, accessing increased capacity from independent sector providers, and supporting increased safe discharge of patients from NHS hospitals.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Laboratories**

**John Spellar:**

[\[93521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which university and college laboratories in the West Midlands have been commissioned by NHS Test and Trace to process covid-19 samples.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 25 September 2020]:* In the West Midlands, the University of Birmingham has joined the effort in increasing capacity to over 500,000 tests a day.

**■ Coronavirus: North West**

**Ms Angela Eagle:** [91571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 tests in (a) the North West, (b) Liverpool city region, (c) Merseyside, (d) Wirral and (e) Wallasey constituency; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 22 September 2020]:* We are increasing our testing capacity, both through current swab testing and new, rapid lateral flow tests to cut the spread of COVID-19 nationwide.

The United Kingdom's daily testing capacity passed the 500,000 mark on 31 October. Testing capacity in the UK across all pillars between 29 October and 4 November was at 4,367,049 tests, an increase of 21% compared to the previous week.

Our mass testing pilot in Liverpool continues and will help inform any future rollout of large-scale population testing. Any confirmed expansion will be announced in due course.

**■ Coronavirus: Public Houses**

**Marco Longhi:** [121925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of covid-19 transmission events in (a) wet only pubs and (b) as a proportion of total covid-19 cases.

**Marco Longhi:** [121926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the risk of covid-19 transmission in wet pubs with table only service with covid-safe, managed individual customers approaching bars for service in the same pubs.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Public Health England publishes weekly influenza and COVID-19 surveillance reports here and this includes data on suspected and confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks by setting which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

Table service will help reduce the likelihood of people in hospitality venues coming into close contact with others they would not normally meet, for example if queuing at a bar and waiting to collect orders. The Government keeps all of its COVID-19 restriction measures under review and will closely monitor the impact of this policy.

## ■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[117202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have accessed the isolation note service via the NHS 111 online service.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Data is not collected on the number of people accessing the isolation notice via the NHS 111 online service.

The isolation note service can be accessed from multiple originating sources - the NHS 111 online service, the National Health Service website and GOV.UK, which all link to the same landing page. By 23 November, 2,015,017 isolation notes have been issued in total.

## ■ Coronavirus: Screening

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[108287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many universities have been refused accreditation from his Department for pillar two covid-19 testing.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 2 November 2020]:* The Government does not publish this data in the format requested.

**Henry Smith:**

[\[109295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS staff working directly in the care and treatment of people who are immuno-compromised are being prioritised for covid-19 testing even when asymptomatic; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

Asymptomatic testing is currently mainly conducted for outbreak investigation and infection control - where prevalence is thought to be higher and/or where individuals are more at risk from COVID-19. This includes patients, National Health Service staff, care home staff and residents.

As capacity increases and new innovations come onstream, and as we gain new clinical and scientific evidence, we will continually review our approach to asymptomatic testing to ensure we are deploying it in the most effective way and expand our testing offer.

**Mr Marcus Fysh:**

[\[110866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the roll out of mass rapid testing for covid-19 over the next month on the number of positive tests being reported.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 November 2020]:* Our mass testing pilot in Liverpool continues and will help inform any future rollout of large-scale population testing. We are now

rolling out this localised approach to other areas. Eighty three local authorities have now signed up to receive regular batches of these new lateral flow tests, which can allow for results in minutes.

**Jim McMahon:** [\[82229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) T1 and (b) T2 covid-19 tests have been carried out, by local authority area per 100,000 population.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 3 September 2020]:* We do not publish data in the format requested.

**Jon Trickett:** [\[86542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which companies hold contracts with the Government for the management of covid-19 drive through testing centres; and whether they employ any subcontractors.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 11 September 2020]:* The Government does not publish this data in the format requested. All the Departmental COVID-19 contracts are, or will be, published on the GOV.UK's Contract Finder.

**Jon Trickett:** [\[86543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list the (a) location and (b) main contractor for each of the covid-19 drive through testing centres.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 11 September 2020]:*

THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PUBLISH THIS DATA IN THE FORMAT REQUESTED. ALL THE DEPARTMENTAL COVID-19 CONTRACTS ARE, OR WILL BE, PUBLISHED ON GOV.UK'S CONTRACT FINDER.

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**Jon Trickett:** [\[86545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many officials in his Department monitor the contracts for the covid-19 drive through testing centres to ensure all contractual obligations are met.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 11 September 2020]:* Currently 47 officials monitor the contracts for the COVID-19 drive through testing centres to ensure all contractual obligations are met. This figure is based on commercial and operational personnel.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[88403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of investing in the development of covid-19 breathalyser tests.



**Helen Whately:**

We are continuously exploring a wide range of technologies to improve the diagnostic testing we can offer. Breathalysers have been identified as one such testing solution to explore and we are considering where it would be most appropriate use this technology. A team has reviewed current breathalyser technology from a range of suppliers to ascertain which has the most potential to progress. We are now working with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority to issue a target product profile over the coming months.

**Coronavirus: Slough****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[105514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of covid-19 test results received within 24 hours from tests administered in Slough constituency.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 22 October 2020]:* We have been focused on improving test turnaround times alongside expanding capacity and these are getting significantly better. Three out of five people who were tested in-person received their test result the very next day. Between 29 October and 4 November, the median time taken to receive a test result for regional test sites decreased to 27 hours from 31 hours in the previous week.

Similarly, the median time decreased for local test sites to 29 hours from 33 hours and for mobile testing units to 25 hours from 29 hours during the same period

**Coronavirus: Teachers****Theresa Villiers:**[\[117955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that teachers are prioritised for covid-19 testing.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 November 2020]:* We are committed to supporting schools to stay open and as part of this, tests continue to be delivered to schools to allow teachers and pupils with symptoms to be prioritised for tests. The Government have developed a dedicated route to enable schools to order additional tests kits online via a replenishment portal which is available at the following link:

<https://request-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk>

**Dementia: Research****Munira Wilson:**[\[123715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to double dementia research funding.

**Edward Argar:**

In 2018-19, the most recent year for which information is available, total Government funding for dementia research was £82.9 million, ahead of the Government's commitment under the 2020 Dementia Challenge to spend £300 million over five years, or £60 million each year, on dementia research. The Department, through the National Institute for Health Research, spent £31.6 million on dementia research in 2018-19. Plans are being put in place for this to increase significantly over the current parliament to meet the Government's commitments.

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

**Philip Davies:** **[100314]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's internal guidance for officials on the drafting of answers to parliamentary questions; and if he will set out his Department's step by step sign off procedure before Ministerial approval is given to answers.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department's most recent internal guidance is attached.

The Office of the Leader of the House provides guidance to all departments on the practice of answering Written Questions. The full guide is available at GOV.UK at the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-parliamentary-work](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-parliamentary-work)

Answers are cleared by a senior member of the civil service responsible for the relevant policy areas. The answers are then reviewed by special advisers before submitting to the relevant Minister for final clearance.

**Sarah Owen:** **[105560]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 86764, tabled by the hon. Member for Luton North on 8 September 2020.

**Sarah Owen:** **[86764]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings he has had with families who have lost family members or relatives as a result of covid-19.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 22 October 2020]:* My Rt hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has met with a wide range of individuals who have been impacted in different ways by the COVID-19 pandemic to understand how they have been affected. This includes meetings with relatives of those who have sadly lost their lives to the virus.

**Gavin Robinson:**

**[124200]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to provide a substantive Answer to Named Day Question 115688, tabled by the hon. Member for Belfast East on 16 November 2020, on Coronavirus: Screening.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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

#### ■ **Diabetes: Medical Equipment**

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

**[123495]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the availability of medical supplies for diabetic insulin pumps sourced from overseas after the transition period.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department, in consultation with the devolved administrations and Crown Dependencies, and with partners across the health and social care sector, has made detailed plans to help ensure continued supply of medicines and medical products, including medical supplies for diabetic insulin pumps, to the whole of the United Kingdom from 1 January 2021.

The Department wrote to industry on 3 August 2020 and an updated letter on 17 November setting out the plans. The letters are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-3-august-2020/letter-to-medicine-suppliers-3-august-2020>

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

#### ■ **Disability: Coronavirus**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

**[114234]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that inquiries into covid-19 inequalities include the impact of that matter on disabled people.

**Helen Whately:**

We continue to review all available evidence and have commissioned new research to gain a greater understanding of the specific impact of COVID-19 for disabled people.

The Department has also commissioned research to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the wellbeing and lives of people with learning disabilities. This project is being led by researchers at the University of Warwick and Manchester Metropolitan University.

## ■ Doctors and Nurses: Vacancies

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[115695]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many vacant positions there are for (a) nurses and (b) doctors in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 November 2020]:* NHS England and NHS Improvement collect vacancy data for three staff groups; doctors, registered nurses and 'other staff'. These vacancy statistics are published by NHS Digital for England and at the regional level.

The latest quarterly vacancy data for June 2020 can be found in the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-vacancies-survey/april-2015---june-2020-experimental-statistics>

The latest statistics show that as at June 2020, there are 37,821 registered nursing vacancies and 8,278 medical vacancies in England, full-time equivalent (FTE). In the Midlands, there are 8,063 registered nursing vacancies and 2,421 medical vacancies, FTE. The data does not allow a differentiation between West and East Midlands.

The majority of these vacancies are filled by bank and agency staff.

## ■ General Practitioners: Coventry

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[120877]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support GP services in Coventry during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are working with their local practices and Coventry and Rugby GP Alliance to ensure that there is an appropriate 'hot hub' service for potential COVID-19 positive patients requiring a face-to-face consultation following clinical triage/consultation, so they can seek the treatment required or be referred onward. Transport is available for those who need it. The CCG have escalation plans in place to ensure appropriate capacity to respond to current pandemic demands.

Improvements have also been made to IT infrastructure, with the roll-out of several new systems, including GP Connect.

## ■ Health Services and Social Services: Staff

**Jeremy Hunt:**

[\[113524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) NHS workers and (b) social care staff have died from covid-19 since (i) March 2020 and (ii) September 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 November 2020]:* The Office for National Statistics publishes mortality data for deaths involving COVID-19 for healthcare workers and social care workers in England and Wales. The last iteration of this release showed that in England there were 305 deaths involving COVID-19 among healthcare workers and 307 deaths involving COVID-19 among social care workers.

These were registered between 9 March and 12 October 2020 in England, of those aged 20-64 years, using the last known occupation. The definition of healthcare workers used will include not only those employed in the National Health Service but wider healthcare sector workers.

## ■ Hospitals

**Tim Farron:**

[\[121223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospitals he plans to replace the Royal Preston and Lancaster Royal Infirmary hospitals with.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* The Health Infrastructure Plan set out the Government's approach to long-term investment in our healthcare system to ensure staff and patients continue to have access to world class facilities. In line with this, the Department provided both the Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust with £3.7 million each of seed funding to kick-start their schemes and to support both trusts in their development of plans for improving facilities for the staff and patients of the their communities, looking at potential rebuild options for the Royal Preston Infirmary, the Lancaster Royal Infirmary and Furness General Hospital.

The two neighbouring trusts have been, and continue to, work in close collaboration to develop different options for how to proceed that represent the best outcome for the area as a whole, which may include an option for two separate hospitals. These plans are in the early stage of their development and when developed further, will be subject to public consultation as an integral part in developing the collective and cohesive strategy.

## ■ In Vitro Fertilisation: Coronavirus

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[116588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend the patient age limit to ensure that all fertility patients in England will remain eligible for NHS-funded care despite delays caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2020]:* The Government expects clinical commissioning groups (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.

NHS England has agreed a joint statement with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, to encourage CCGs to give special consideration to the need for flexibility and sensitivity for individuals whose waiting times, investigations or planned treatment have been disrupted due to COVID-19. This is to ensure that all women and their partners seeking fertility treatment are treated fairly. The statement was sent to the National Health Service on 6 November 2020.

## ■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review

**Cat Smith:**

[\[122771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to respond to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review recommendations (a) holistically or (b) separately in relation to the three separate health issues, Sodium Valproate, surgical mesh and Primodos.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

All recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully. We will update Parliament before the end of the year.

## ■ Influenza: Vaccination

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[122891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that frontline health and social care workers in non-NHS settings are able to access free NHS flu vaccines for winter 2020-21.

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[122893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that frontline health and social care workers in specialist neurological care services are able to access free NHS flu vaccines for winter 2020-21.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* The flu vaccination is recommended for health and social care workers who have direct contact with patients and service users, so

they can protect themselves and the vulnerable people that they care for. This is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Responsibility for offering a free flu vaccination to frontline health and social care workers rests with their employers, as part of their occupational health responsibility. Where a workplace scheme is not available, social care workers can access the flu vaccine for free through their general practitioner or at most high street pharmacists, via the National Health Service complementary scheme.

This year we have also published guidance on flu vaccination for social care workers and made available letters for care workers and personal assistants if they need help to provide proof of entitlement to the free vaccination. These are both available on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-for-social-care-staff>

**Sarah Owen:**

**[122892]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the current shortage of flu vaccines for frontline health and social care workers in non-NHS settings.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* General practitioners (GPs) and community pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season. The Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available this winter for priority cohorts, including frontline health and social care workers. GPs, community pharmacists and trusts who have exhausted their own supply are now able to order from this central stock.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local areas to ensure that local providers are supported to meet increased demand for the flu vaccination this winter. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has granted dispensation to allow the movement of vaccines locally between practices and other National Health Service provider organisations this season, to help address local shortages.

## ■ Influenza: Vaccinations

**Helen Hayes:**

**[120934]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that frontline health and social care workers in non-NHS settings are able to access free NHS flu vaccines in winter 2020-21.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[120936]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that frontline health and social care workers in specialist neurological care services are able to access free NHS flu vaccines in winter 2020-21.



**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* The flu vaccination is recommended for health and social care workers who have direct contact with patients and service users, so they can protect themselves and the vulnerable people that they care for. This is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Responsibility for offering a free flu vaccination to frontline health and social care workers rests with their employers, as part of their occupational health responsibility. Where a workplace scheme is not available, social care workers can access the flu vaccine for free through their general practitioner, or at most high street pharmacists via the National Health Service complementary scheme.

This year we have also published guidance on flu vaccination for social care workers and made available letters for care workers and personal assistants if they need help to provide proof of entitlement to the free vaccination. These are both available on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-for-social-care-staff>

**Helen Hayes:****[120935]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the current shortage of flu vaccines for frontline health and social care workers in non-NHS settings.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* General practitioners (GPs) and community pharmacists are responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season. The Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available this winter for priority cohorts, including frontline health and social care workers. GPs, community pharmacists and trusts who have exhausted their own supply are now able to order from this central stock.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local areas to ensure that local providers are supported to meet increased demand for the flu vaccination this winter. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has granted dispensation to allow the movement of vaccines locally between practices and other National Health Service provider organisations this season, to help address local shortages.

**Helen Hayes:****[120937]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of health and social care workers who have received a winter 2020-21 NHS flu vaccine to date.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* The first provisional monthly influenza vaccine uptake data amongst frontline healthcare workers in England, published by Public Health England, is available at the following link:

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

The report covers data on vaccine uptake between 1 September 2020 and 31 October 2020 based on manual returns.

## ■ **Maternal Mortality: Ethnic Groups**

**Kate Osamor:**

**[122820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to introduce a target for the NHS to end the disparity in maternal mortality between Black women and white women.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

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

We have established the inequalities oversight forum, with a group of clinical experts, to understand the reasons why the death rate for black women in childbirth is five times higher than for white women and to find out what we can put in place to ensure that, by addressing those issues, we reduce the number of deaths.

## ■ **Maternity Services**

**Esther McVey:**

**[120037]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to recover the capacity of (a) antenatal care, (b) maternity units and (c) post-natal care in the NHS to pre-covid-19 outbreak levels.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Throughout the pandemic, NHS England and NHS Improvement have been guiding maternity services to prioritise maintaining safe and personalised maternity care by making adjustments to service provision only where necessitated by the local impact of COVID-19. Wherever possible, services have been asked to reinstate a fully personalised approach to meeting the needs of individual women and their families and the level of care contacts and choice options available to women and their partners across the maternity pathway.

Some changes have been made to the way that women receive their antenatal and postnatal care, however, women are still being offered their required number of appointments as per guidelines set by the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

## ■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus

**Esther McVey:**

**[120038]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department took to put in place precautionary measures to help protect (a) antenatal care, (b) maternity units and (c) post-natal care from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak during the covid-19 lockdown announced in (i) March 2020 and (ii) November 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement and its partners have published a range of guidance and public communication messages for pregnant women to help maternity services meet the challenge of the pandemic. In addition, 16,000 blood pressure monitors were procured for distribution free of charge to ensure blood pressure self-monitoring was available for all pregnancies with chronic hypertension, gestational hypertension or pre-eclampsia.

In March 2020, four healthcare professional regulators, including the Nursing and Midwifery Council, put in place emergency registers of former professionals in order to increase capacity during the pandemic. Emergency education standards were also introduced to enable students in the last six months of the final year of undergraduate midwifery degrees to be spent in supervised clinical placements.

These measures are continuing to help protect maternity services from the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## ■ Medicine: Innovation

**Anne Marie Morris:**

**[121260]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of different starting dates for regulatory data protection and Supplementary Protection Certificates as incentives for innovative medicines on (a) patient access to innovative medicines and (b) the UK's competitiveness as a destination for investment in life sciences.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* Rules on data exclusivity and Supplementary Protection Certificates fulfil two separate functions within the United Kingdom's intellectual property regime for medicines. These arrangements therefore necessarily have differing start dates. As such, the Government has not made a direct assessment of the potential effect of different starting dates for regulatory data protection and Supplementary Protection Certificates.

## ■ Mental Health Services

**Neil Coyle:**

**[121852]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT programme) as part of the White Paper on mental health.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* The White Paper will set out the Government's response to Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 and will concentrate on reform of the Act.

Over one million adults a year are now accessing Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services. Under the NHS Long Term Plan, access will be expanded to cover a total of 1.9 million adults a year by 2023/24.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[121890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure mental health data collection continues during winter 2020-21.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

All mental health data collections managed by NHS Digital have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue through the winter and into next year.

**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[91887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) protect mental health hospital capacity and (b) issue guidance on discharges from mental health services.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 11 November 2020]:* On 23 November, we brought forward our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19 which includes a commitment, backed by £50 million, to boost capacity and support good quality discharge for mental health service users from inpatient settings. Guidance on effective approaches to rapid discharge will be made available in due course.

**■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[121886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to people with mental health difficulties as a result of long covid.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

On 7 October NHS England announced £10 million of investment to establish a network of specialist clinics in England to support patients suffering from the persistent effects of COVID-19 or 'long COVID-19'.

These specialist clinics will support patients suffering from various symptoms of long covid including those relating to mental health. Every patient will undergo a psychological assessment to see if they are suffering from depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder or another mental health condition as a result of COVID-19. Further details on the location of the clinics will be announced shortly.

The National Health Service has also launched the ‘Your Covid Recovery’, an online rehabilitation service that provides personalised support to patients for both their physical and mental health.

#### ■ Mental Health Services: Hospital Wards

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[122832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has set a target date to end the use of shared sleeping arrangements in mental health wards.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* We recognise that every psychiatric inpatient deserves the dignity and privacy of their own room. We have committed to over £400 million over the next four years to support our plans to eradicate the use of shared sleeping arrangements in the mental health estate. This includes £250 million funding for 2020/21 and a further £165 million for 2021/22.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have a plan for the trusts and schemes that will take this work forward. No target end date has been set. However, we will deliver the first tranche of new accommodation this financial year.

#### ■ Mental Health Services: Internet

**Jamie Stone:** [\[122843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of developing an online and anonymous resource to enable people experiencing mental illness to find information on accessing appropriate services and support.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

There are a number of existing resources that people can access online and anonymously for information on accessing appropriate mental health services and support. These include GOV.UK, the National Health Service website and Every Mind Matters.

In addition, many mental health charities offer online and anonymous advice on how to find support for mental health issues.

#### ■ Mental Health Services: Training

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[121892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £500 million for mental health provided in the Spending Review 2020 will be spent on (a) services and (b) training.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[121894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £500 million for mental health provided in the Spending Review 2020 will be spent on (a) adult and (b) children and young people's services.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* Next year the National Health Service will receive around an additional £500 million to address waiting times for mental health services, following the reduction in referrals due to COVID-19, and give more people the mental health support they need. Some of the £500 million will be used for investment in the NHS workforce. Further detail will be set out in due course.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[121893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £260 million for Health Education England provided in the Spending Review 2020 will be spent on mental health education and training.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* The Spending Review 2020 provides £260 million to continue to grow the National Health Service workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan, including for mental health.

Full details on funding allocations towards NHS workforce budgets, including Health Education England, in 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

**■ Mental Health: Children and Young People****Tim Loughton:**[\[120767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many more children aged 0-2 are accessing specialist children and young people's mental health provision as at 25 November 2020 than were accessing such services at the time when the NHS Long Term Plan was published in January 2019.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* The information is not available in the format requested.

**■ NHS 111: Coronavirus****Kate Osamor:**[\[102136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will place in the Library a list of the private contractors used by his Department to deliver the NHS 111 covid-19 response service.

**Kate Osamor:**[\[105489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which private providers have been contracted to run the NHS 111 Coronavirus Response Service.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department has not awarded contracts for the delivery of the COVID-19 Response Service (CRS). The CRS is run by South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

Contracts for the CRS are held with Teleperformance, Sitel and Serco.

■ **NHS Pay Review Body****Justin Madders:**[\[115712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the remit letters for the NHS Pay Review Body for 2021-22 will be issued; and for what reasons they have not already been issued.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 November 2020]:* Due to the timing of the Spending Review this year, we currently expect to issue a remit letter for 2021-22 to the Pay Review Bodies in the coming weeks. The Government will carefully consider the Bodies' recommendations when we receive them.

■ **NHS: Coronavirus****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[111994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS employees in England have recovered from covid-19 after receiving a positive test result.

**Helen Whately:**

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

**Matt Western:**[\[88381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the percentage of NHS staff who have contracted covid-19.

**Helen Whately:**

We do not have the information in the format requested.

■ **NHS: Negligence****Jeremy Hunt:**[\[122645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Spending Review 2020, what steps the Government plans to take to tackle the rising costs of clinical negligence.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* The Department is working intensively with the Ministry of Justice, other Government departments and NHS Resolution and will publish a consultation on next steps in 2021.



## ■ Obesity: Children

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[120064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the childhood obesity rate is in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Jo Churchill:**

NHS Digital has published data on child obesity at local authority, region and England level as part of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). Data is not published by Parliamentary constituency.

The NCMP collects data on children aged four to five years (Reception) and 10-11 years (Year 6). For children aged four to five years the prevalence of obesity in 2019/20 was 11.7% in Coventry, 11.2% in West Midlands and 9.9% in England. For children aged 10-11 years the prevalence of obesity in 2019/20 was 25.5% in Coventry, 23.9% in West Midlands and 21.0% in England.

## ■ Period Poverty: Coronavirus

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[121153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the effect of covid-19 on levels of period poverty.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Government Equalities Office has responsibility for the period poverty taskforce. The Department, along with other Government departments, is committed to tackling period poverty. To support this, NHS England announced in March 2019 that it will offer period products to every hospital patient who needs them, this includes those suffering from COVID-19.

## ■ Physiotherapy

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[113142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of defining soft tissue therapy as a health service for the purposes of covid-19 restrictions.

**Edward Argar:**

No specific assessment has been made.

## ■ Public Health: Finance

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[121900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the formation of the National Institute for Health Protection on the allocation of public health grants to local authorities.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* We do not expect the formation of National Institute for Public Health to have an impact on 2021-22 local authority public health grant allocations. Local authority public health grant allocations for 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ **Pupils: Coronavirus****Margaret Greenwood:****[118012]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of transmission of covid-19 in (a) primary schools and (b) secondary schools for pupils (i) aged 11-16 and (ii) over 16.

**Jo Churchill:**

Public Health England (PHE) reports on the number of suspected and confirmed clusters and outbreaks linked to educational settings in the weekly surveillance report. PHE also publishes weekly COVID-19 surveillance data for 'educational-aged cohorts' alongside the COVID-19 weekly surveillance report. These are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

PHE is undertaking enhanced surveillance of COVID-19 in primary and secondary schools through a number of research studies. More information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-paediatric-surveillance#covid-19-surveillance-in-schools-in-england>

On 4 November the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies considered a paper prepared by the Children's Task and Finish Group summarising the latest evidence on the role children play in COVID-19 transmission, this included children aged 11-16 and those over 16 years. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tfc-children-and-transmission-4-november-2020>

■ **Respiratory System: Coronavirus****Dan Jarvis:****[51987]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase testing for covid-19 for patients recovering from (a) pneumonia and (b) other respiratory infections.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 4 June 2020]:* Since the start of the pandemic, we have ensured the following groups were prioritised:

- all patients in critical care for pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) or flu like illness;
- all other patients requiring admission to hospital for pneumonia, ARDS or flu like illness; and
- where an outbreak has occurred in a residential or care setting, for example in long-term care facility or prisons.

Testing for COVID-19 in clinical settings is based on the expertise and judgement of those delivering care. Those patients presenting in hospital with respiratory symptoms such as pneumonia are assessed by a clinician who decides if it is appropriate to test for COVID-19 as part of their care. Those recovering from respiratory conditions in the community should be vigilant and should they experience any of the three main coronavirus symptoms, they should seek a test as soon as possible.

## ■ Restraint Techniques: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:**

**[116584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) level and (b) appropriateness of use of (i) prone restraint and (ii) other forms of restraint on people (A) autistic people and (B) people with learning disabilities living in (I) residential care, (II) supported living and (III) hospital settings during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2020]:* The latest Mental Health Services Dataset on restrictive interventions for patients with a learning disability and/or autism in National Health Service-funded secondary mental health, learning disabilities and autism services in England shows a total of 4,810 restrictive interventions occurred in July 2020, with 310 being prone restraint. These figures are subject to data quality issues and should be interpreted with caution. Data is not available on restrictive interventions in other settings.

Restrictive interventions, or restraint, should only ever be used as a last resort using the least restrictive option, when all attempts to de-escalate a situation have been employed. The latest guidance is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/812435/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812435/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention.pdf).

## ■ Self-harm: Health Services

**Conor McGinn:**

**[122790]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated from the public purse to support self-harm prevention services in (a) St Helens and (b) England in each year since 2015.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* The date is not held in the format requested.

■ **Smoking****Alex Norris:****[120980]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 97688, how many times enforcement action for non-compliance with the requirements of the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 has taken place.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* Enforcement of the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations (TRPR) 2016 is carried out by local trading standards. The Department will be undertaking a post implementation review of TRPR shortly.

The Department has funded the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) to provide annual tobacco control surveys on trading standards activities relating to tobacco control legislation enforcement. The latest CTSI survey for 2019-20 is available at the following link:

<https://www.tradingstandards.uk/media/documents/news--policy/tobacco-control/ctsi-tobacco-report-2019-20.pdf>

It is too early to assess the level of compliance with the ban on menthol cigarettes which was introduced in May this year.

■ **Test and Trace Support Payment****Maria Eagle:****[117173]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people are eligible to receive the Test and Trace Support Payment if part of their period of self-isolation commenced before the scheme was introduced.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2020]:* The National Health Service Test and Trace Support Payment was a new scheme introduced on 28 September 2020, it is only for people who are told to self-isolate on or after this date and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

However, an individual may wish to make enquiries with their local authority about the discretionary fund available to individuals who do not qualify for the Test and Trace Support Payment but require corresponding financial support to self-isolate.

For both the Test and Trace Support Payment and discretionary payments, eligible individuals will receive their £500 payment on top of any benefits and Statutory Sick Pay that they currently receive.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[117340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications there have been for the covid-19 Test and Trace Support Payment; and how many of those applications have been successful.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2020]:* We are working closely with all 314 local authorities in England to collate information on the number of applications and successful applications for the Test and Trace Support Payment. We will publish this information in due course.

■ **Test and Trace Support Payment: North West**

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

[\[111430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are eligible for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment for self-isolating in (a) the North West, (b) Liverpool City Region, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey; and of those people so eligible how many of those people have (i) claimed and (ii) received that payment.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 November 2020]:* We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

**HOME OFFICE**

■ **Demonstrations: Coronavirus**

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[\[123582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will write to police forces to explain that political protests are allowed under the proposed tier system provided required risk assessments and precautions are taken; and if she will make a statement.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The College of Policing has provided police forces with guidance on the changes to Covid regulations which came into force on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. Protests will be able to take place if the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of coronavirus, including completing a risk assessment and following COVID-19 secure guidance. The police will engage with protest organisers and protesters to ensure that the rules are followed.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[\[123583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of an amnesty for people arrested as part of anti-lockdown protests during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The right to peaceful protest is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. However, in these unprecedented circumstances it is vital that everyone plays a part in controlling the virus.

The time-limited, national measures previously in place between 5 November-1 December, applied to protests and to all other gatherings, except for a few exemptions such as funerals. Everyone was required to follow these rules. It is for the Police, in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service to determine whether an action warrants possible criminal proceedings.

**■ Immigrants: Finance****Grahame Morris:****[124163]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for UK Visas and Immigration to process a Change of Conditions application to allow someone access to public funds.

**Kevin Foster:**

People with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application. This application can be made if a person is destitute or at risk of destitution, if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances.

Change of Conditions information is now part of the transparency data which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-november-2020>

The relevant data is in tab CoC\_01.

The published data shows the average time taken to decide a Change of Conditions request, for each quarter.

**■ Immigrants: Hong Kong****Stephen Timms:****[123508]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the successful integration of people arriving from Hong Kong into UK communities after the British National Overseas Passport route opens on 31 January 2021; and if she will make a statement.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office is working in collaboration with other Government departments including the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Devolved Administrations to plan for the arrival of British National (Overseas) citizens from Hong Kong, including their integration in the UK. We are also engaging with

local authorities via the regional strategic migration partnerships and interested civil society organisations.

## ■ Immigration: Commonwealth

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

**[124259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from Commonwealth countries who have served in the British armed forces (a) applied for and (b) were granted (i) indefinite leave to remain and (ii) British citizenship in each year since 2010.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

**[124260]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from the Commonwealth countries who have served in the British armed forces (a) applied for and (b) were refused (i) indefinite leave to remain and (ii) British citizenship in each year since 2010.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office does not hold published data on indefinite leave to remain applications, grants or refusals under the Appendix Armed Forces route. These are grouped together with other categories and published as 'other' in our published statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/how-many-people-continue-their-stay-in-the-uk-or-apply-to-stay-permanently>

It is not possible to identify those from Commonwealth countries who have served in the British armed forces in the data for British citizenship applications, grants or refusals. Commonwealth citizens are naturalised in the same way as other applicants and service is not recorded in Home Office records.

## ■ Young People: EU Countries

**Sarah Olney:**

**[124273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government will take to expand the UK's youth mobility partnerships with EU countries after the transition period.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Youth Mobility Scheme is a cultural exchange programme, allowing young people aged 18 to 30 from participating countries and territories to experience life in the UK for up to two years.

We currently have schemes with Australia, Canada, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Republic of Korea and Taiwan, and are open to discussing the introduction of other potential schemes, including with the EU or with individual member states within it if a collective agreement is not possible.



**HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ **Members' Interests****Dan Carden:****[123688]**

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will commission an independent review of the parliamentary Register of Members' Financial Interests to establish whether there is adequate disclosure of (a) trusts, (b) offshore holdings and (c) the financial interests of (i) spouses and (ii) other family members.

**Pete Wishart:**

I suggest that the hon. Member raise his concerns with the Committee on Standards. The Committee's remit, as set out in Standing Order No. 149, includes reviewing from time to time the form and content of the Register of Members' Financial Interests and any proposals for change from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. The Committee has recently launched a formal review of the Code of Conduct for Members. The accompanying Guide to the Rules contains the rules on registering interests. I understand that the Committee intends in 2021 to prepare a revised version of the Code and the Guide for the House to approve. That will give the House an opportunity to consider any recommended changes.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ **Building Safety Fund****Mike Amesbury:****[124308]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to provide an update on the number of decisions made on applications to the Building Safety Fund.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department will publish updated data on Building Safety Fund registrations and applications shortly. The previous published registration statistics as of 25 September is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>

■ **Buildings: Insulation****Peter Kyle:****[123639]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason tiling systems are classified as cladding according to his Department's Building Safety Programme guidance published on 21 Nov 2020; and if he will provide more information on the composition of the tiling systems which are regarded as (a) high and (b) low risk.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Analysis and definitions relating to estimates of EWS1 requirements on residential buildings in England can be found in this release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england>.

For the purposes of this analysis, materials classified as non-cladding focused on the traditional construction materials of brick, stone, concrete and glass. All other materials were classified as cladding. The risk of cladding systems has not been considered as part of this analysis, and is currently unavailable.

**Economic Growth****Andrew Griffith:****[121060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to promote local economic growth in (a) West Sussex and (b) England.

**Luke Hall:**

We are promoting local economic growth in West Sussex through:

- Over £16 million from the Getting Building Fund via the Coast to Capital LEP.
- Awarding the Coast to Capital LEP with £292 million over six years through the Local Growth Fund to drive regional development.
- Selecting Crawley as one of 101 places to develop a Town Deal with Government.

Across England, the Government is supporting local partners to deliver local economic growth through:

- A new £4 billion Levelling Up Fund for England. This will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery, with £600 million available in 2021/22.
- Providing £220 million additional UK funding to help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.
- 101 prospective Town Deals across England as part of the £3.6 billion Towns Fund to level up towns and regions across England.
- Allocating £1 billion of the Towns Fund to support the Future High Streets Fund competition, which aims to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth and ensures future sustainability.
- Delivering a minimum of 10 Freeports. Successful bidders will be announced in Spring 2021 and the first Freeports will be designated in late 2021.

## ■ Future High Streets Fund

**Anne Marie Morris:**

[\[124194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to notify applicants to the Future High Streets Fund of the outcome of their applications.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Now more than ever, it is vital that we continue to help our local economies by supporting town centres and high streets to recover, adapt and evolve. Our £1 billion Future High Streets Fund competition will help create jobs and build more resilient local economies and communities as we begin to recover from the impact of coronavirus. I am pleased to say we are in the final stages of assessing the proposals from the 101 shortlisted applicants and expect to announce the outcome of the competition soon.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation: Non-domestic Rates

**James Wild:**

[\[122908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the Business rates treatment of self-catering accommodation consultation published in November 2018.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government is grateful to those who responded to the consultation, and is considering how to address the questions raised. In doing so, it is taking into account the consequences for local authorities' income and the Exchequer, the deliverability of possible reforms, and the impact of coronavirus on the tourism industry in England.

The Government will set out its next steps in due course.

## ■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[123623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many hotel rooms have been provided to accommodate homeless people in each of the last 10 months in England.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

This Government has protected thousands of lives during the pandemic with targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from Covid-19.

We have published data in May and September this year on the numbers in emergency accommodation who had previously been rough sleeping or were at risk of rough sleeping. This is available publicly online. By September, through the 'Everyone In' campaign, we had supported over 29,000 vulnerable people with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support. Emergency accommodation provided includes

commercial hotels, B&Bs, hostels and other forms of self-contained temporary accommodation. Further information on the type of accommodation is not available.

This work is ongoing. Local authorities continue to support vulnerable individuals, including through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, which aims to prevent as many of those accommodated during the pandemic as possible from returning to the streets, and through the Protect Programme, which targets funding to the areas that most need additional support throughout winter.

## ■ Hostels and Night Shelters

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[123622]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of shelter beds that will be available in (a) hostels and (b) emergency night shelters during winter 2020-21.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Homeless Link provide information on the number of hostels in their annual review of single homelessness - <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/our-research/annual-review-of-single-homelessness-support-in-england>.

The Department are monitoring the opening of shelters. Our expert rough sleeping advisers are working closely with local authorities to monitor the plans of shelter providers across the country and ensuring that they offer Covid-secure services, should their local authority deem it necessary for them to open.

We are working closely with all local authorities to ensure that they have the necessary winter provision available.

## ■ Leisure: Coronavirus

**Sarah Owen:**

**[123725]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local councils have adequate funding to sustain (a) leisure centres and (b) sports clubs through the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:**

At the Spending Review on 25 November the Chancellor announced estimated funding of around £3 billion of additional support for Covid-19 pressures next year. This takes the total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of Covid-19 to over £10 billion. In addition to this, the Government is providing a £100 million package to support the leisure sector in meeting the challenges brought about by the pandemic and local restrictions. This will be led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and they will provide more details in due course. We fully recognise that the facilities that will be supported by this funding will play a vital role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of the nation, and the contribution they play in building community cohesion and participation in sport.

## ■ Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[121913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent progress he has made on the (a) High Street Fund and (b) the distribution of that funding to local authorities throughout the country.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Now more than ever, it is vital that we continue to help our local economies by supporting town centres and high streets to recover, adapt and evolve. Our £1 billion Future High Streets Fund competition will help create jobs and build more resilient local economies and communities. We are in the final stages of assessing the proposals from the 101 shortlisted applicants and expect to announce the outcome of the competition soon.

## ■ Test and Trace Support Payment

**Dan Carden:** [\[123686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on additional funding to enable local authorities to administer effectively discretionary payments under the covid-19 self-isolation support scheme.

**Luke Hall:**

Policy and funding for the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme is the responsibility of the Department for Health and Social Care. MHCLG Ministers and officials regularly engage with counterparts in HMT and with local authorities on matters relating to local authorities' finances.

## ■ Towns Fund

**Jon Trickett:** [\[121154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the criteria for the Towns Fund selection process.

**Luke Hall:**

The National Audit Office report – the Review of the Town Deals Selection Process – sets out the Towns Fund selection process in detail, and can be found here:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Review-of-the-Town-Deals-selection-process.pdf>.

## ■ Towns Fund: West Midlands

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what projects he (a) has approved and (b) is considering for financing through the Towns Fund in the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

**Luke Hall:**

Seven towns in constituent authorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority – Dudley, Wolverhampton, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, West Bromwich, Bloxwich and Walsall – have been invited to develop proposals for Town Deals.

Three further towns from non-constituent authorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority – Nuneaton, Redditch and Telford — have also been invited to develop proposals.

Each of these 10 towns are at various stages of developing their proposals for Town Deals.

All 10 towns received accelerated funding in September 2020 for capital projects that would make an immediate difference in the town, helping recovery from the impact of Covid-19. We are continuing to work with the towns as they develop proposals and turn their plans into reality.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Animal Products: Imports****Emily Thornberry:****[120835]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she (a) has and (b) is putting in place overseas to assess the equivalence of production and welfare standards of products of animal origin intended for export to the UK.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

A number of the trade agreements we have signed, or agreed in principle – including the United Kingdom-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement – contain commitments to enter into consultations with the aim of achieving agreements on recognition of the equivalence of specified sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures. We shall be free to pursue those and other opportunities arising from future agreements and our membership of the World Trade Organisation, following the end of the Transition Period.

HM Government remains committed to promoting robust food safety standards nationally and internationally, to protect consumers by making sure they can have confidence in the food they buy. From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021, the United Kingdom will assess and inspect trading partners who apply to import live animals and their products, to make sure that our import conditions for products of animal origin are properly met.

Assessments will be coordinated by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and will be based on the risk associated with a specific import. This will secure the United Kingdom's high level of protections for its citizens and businesses.

**■ Chemicals: Expert Trade Advisory Groups****Emily Thornberry:****[122637]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the membership of her Department's Expert Trade Advisory Group on chemicals that was disbanded in July 2020.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

There are no plans to publish membership of the former Expert Trade Advisory Group (ETAG) on chemicals.

However, membership of the new Trade Advisory Group (TAG) on chemicals can be found on GOV.UK ( [here](#) ).

**■ Eggs: USA****Sarah Champion:****[122715]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if her Department will (a) protect the British egg industry's current standards in trade negotiations with the US and (b) prevent tariff-free access for eggs and egg products that are produced from hens kept in barren battery cages and similar systems.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government has made it clear that any future deal with the US must work for UK consumers, farmers and food manufacturers, as well as protect the UK's high standards of food safety, animal welfare and environmental protection. The UK's Food Standards Agencies will continue to ensure that all imports meet domestic standards, and the EU Withdrawal Act will transfer all existing provisions onto the UK statute book.

**■ Infant Foods: Import Duties****Caroline Nokes:****[122672]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of tariffs on infant formula and baby foods on consumers.

**Greg Hands:**

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

**■ Sparkling Wines: Australia****Darren Jones:****[122849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the economic and environmental benefits of allowing Australian wine to be



carbonated in the UK and labelled as Australian sparkling wine; and if she will ensure that any future trade deal with Australia will permit that process.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government is aware of interest in this subject, which has been raised in our ongoing stakeholder engagement. We are working hard for an agreement which works for both British businesses and consumers.

We have recently completed our third round of negotiations with Australia, including positive and detailed discussion on technical barriers to trade. We will continue to engage with wine producers, exporters, and distributors to address issues relating to trade in wine between the UK and Australia – including the agreement the Government has already reached with Australia to secure ongoing trading terms for wine.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Animal Welfare: Prosecutions

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

**[124349]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions were made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 relating to the use of inhumane animal traps across (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since 2015.

**Chris Philp:**

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions and convictions made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales, up to December 2019 in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx)

Offences under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 relating to the use of inhumane animal traps are included within the offences 'Causing, permitting or failing to prevent unnecessary suffering' and 'Carrying out, permitting, causing to be carried out or failing to prevent prohibited procedure on protected animal'. It is not possible to disaggregate the requested offence from within these general offences. Offences specifically related to inhumane animal traps may be held on court record but can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Using the data tool linked above, enter the following Home Office offence codes into the 'Offence code' filter, in order to isolate data on prosecutions associated with each offence:

- 108/29 - Causing, permitting or failing to prevent unnecessary suffering,
- 108/30 - Carrying out, permitting, causing to be carried out or failing to prevent prohibited prohibited procedure on protected animal.

In order to identify breakdowns across England and Wales, use the 'Police Force Area' filter and select either all areas of Wales, or all of England.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

**[124352]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions have been made under Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act each year since 2015.

**Chris Philp:**

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions and convictions made under Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales, up to December 2019 in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx)

Offences contrary to Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act include:

- Causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal
- Aiding and abetting the causing of unnecessary suffering to a protected animal
- Responsible person failing to prevent the causing of unnecessary suffering to an animal

These are collectively housed under the Home Office offence code 108/29. In the data tool above, enter '10829' into the 'Offence code' filter in order to see prosecutions under this offence, in Row 31, each year since 2013.

## ■ Family Courts: Coronavirus

**Karen Bradley:**

**[123592]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the backlog of child access cases in family courts following the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

The protection of children, in particular those who are most vulnerable, is a priority for this government and this has never been more important than during the Covid-19 pandemic. I am extremely grateful for the dedication of family justice professionals at this unprecedented time.

The family courts have been quick to respond to the pandemic. The cases deemed to be most urgent are being prioritised, and where suitable, cases are being heard remotely to allow this vital work to continue during lockdown periods. Hundreds of courtrooms have since reopened to allow face-to-face hearings, and a record number of sitting days were used in June and July 2020 with family judges sitting more days than previously planned before the pandemic.

We are continuing to work across the family justice system to boost the throughput of cases, building on steps already taken such as enhancing the role of legal advisors and encouraging the more effective triaging and routing of cases according to type.

## ■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Finance

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

[\[123733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much and what proportion of the £80 million of additional covid-19-related funding for HM Courts & Tribunals Service announced on 6 September 2020 is planned to be spent on (a) criminal court services, (b) civil court services, and (c) tribunal services.

**Chris Philp:**

A jurisdictional breakdown of forecast expenditure in relation to the additional covid-19-related funding for HM Courts & Tribunals Service announced on 6 September 2020 is provided below.

The financial forecast is provisional, as at 30th November, and reflects latest projections of judicial demand and supply, physical court room capacity and current recovery trajectories. This forecast remains subject to change during the recovery phase, as resources are deployed in line with HMCTS recovery priorities.

JURISDICTION	£000's	% OF TOTAL
Crime	27,515	34%
Civil and Family	14,116	17%
Tribunals	3,364	4%
Probate	400	0%
Multi-Jurisdiction	35,351	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,738</b>	

\*Multi-jurisdiction includes services accounted for at a national basis, for which a jurisdiction is not identifiable in the financial system – examples include resources working across jurisdictions to manage priorities and demand, corporate services, telephone conferencing.

## ■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Weapons

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[122689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many weapons in each category were confiscated on the HM Courts and Tribunals Service estate in each of the last three years.

**Chris Philp:**

HM Courts and Tribunals Service has embedded a series of measures designed to keep its buildings, and the people within them (including staff, judiciary, contractor, jurors, and users) safe and secure. Among other things, security search on entry procedures are in place to ensure risks to personal safety are minimised. Details of

the [policy](#), including information on [items not allowed](#) into court and tribunal buildings are available online.

In each of the last three complete financial years, the numbers of confiscated weapons are as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	KNIVES (BLADE UNDER 3")	KNIVES (BLADE OVER 3")	OTHER BLADES	FIREARMS (GENUINE)	FIREARMS (OTHER)	SHARPS	OTHER WEAPONS
17/18	8621	467	N/A*	2	35	16,232	N/A*
18/19	10,027	553	2322	0	32	16,124	507
19/20	8075	598	4188	2	24	14,277	1081
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,723</b>	<b>1618</b>	<b>6510</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>46,633</b>	<b>1588</b>

\* Category introduced in 2018/19

#### ■ Parole: Coronavirus

**Peter Kyle:** [\[123640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number prisoners who met the criteria for parole but who could not be released as approved premises were not accepting referrals as a result of covid-19 restrictions, in the last nine months.

**Peter Kyle:** [\[123641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has put in place to allow prisoners eligible for parole to access approved premises and leave prison during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Approved Premises contribute to the management of high and very high-risk offenders to support their resettlement into the community. We have continued to accept referrals to Approved Premises throughout the pandemic. A priority referral allocation process is in place which includes the prioritisation of high and very high-risk parole cases. Where appropriate, those whose release has been directed by the Parole Board with a condition that they reside in an Approved Premises upon release have been accommodated in Approved Premises throughout the pandemic.

#### ■ Prison Accommodation

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[121212\]](#)

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 make an estimate of expected aggregate Certified Normal Accommodation in (a) youth custody,

(b) women's prisons and (c) men's prisons for (i) September 2021, (ii) September 2022, (iii) September 2023, (iv) September 2024, (v) September 2025 and (vi) September 2026.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Prison numbers can fluctuate, which is why we have a robust set of plans in place to ensure we will always have enough places for offenders sent to custody by the courts.

Over the next six years, additional capacity will come in to use for a range of reasons. These reasons include new build prison accommodation, existing accommodation returning to use following the completion of essential maintenance or places coming into use following a change in function. We have committed over £4 billion capital funding to make significant progress in delivering 18,000 additional prison places across the prison estate by the mid-2020s.

These 18,000 prison places includes the 10,000 places being made available through the construction of four new prisons, the expansion of a further four prisons, refurbishment of the existing prison estate and the completion of our ongoing prison builds at HMP Five Wells and Glen Parva. New programmes will also provide additional prison places and contribute to the 18,000.

We also continue to progress work to establish our first secure school in Medway. These places are separate to the 18,000 additional prison place programmes.

Places can also be taken out of use for a number of reasons, including deterioration in the standard and condition of the accommodation. Other decreases are the result of accommodation being taken out of use for essential maintenance/refurbishment.

■ **Prisoners: Ethnic Groups**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[121827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Offender Equalities Annual Report 2019-20, published on 26 November 2020, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for a higher proportion of (a) Black or Black British, (b) mixed and (c) Chinese or other ethnicity prisoners being on a Basic Incentives status than White or Asian or Asian British prisoners.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[121828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Offender Equalities Annual Report 2019-20, published on 26 November 2020, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for a higher proportion of (a) Jewish and (b) Muslim prisoners being on a Basic Incentives status than the average for prisoners of all religious groups.

**Lucy Frazer:**

In line with recommendation 24 of the Lammy review, to increase the fairness and effectiveness of the Incentives system, the new Incentives Policy Framework requires Governors to establish Incentive Fora involving both staff and prisoners.

These fora must review the fairness and effectiveness of the local Incentives policy, including the efficacy of the incentives offer. Fora must involve staff as well as white, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Gypsy, Traveller and Romany prisoners and all prisoner groups with protected characteristics where present in the local population. Where data indicates disproportionate outcomes for BAME prisoners or people with other protected characteristics, the Governor is required to take steps to investigate and explain why these discrepancies exist and set out what reforms or actions are to be put in place to address such discrepancies.

A central quality assurance process has been introduced to monitor the new Incentives Forums and their outcomes. This will ensure that Prison Governors will be accountable in instances where the data indicates potential disproportionate outcomes for BAME service users.

### ■ Prisons: Locks and Keys

**Mr David Lammy:** [\[124106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much has been spent from the public purse on replacing lost prison keys in each year since 2010.

**Mr David Lammy:** [\[124107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost of replacing lost prison keys in each year since 2010.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Security is paramount within prisons and it is important that the risk of any potential key compromise is addressed as quickly as possible in order to protect the public. When a key/lock incident is reported an immediate investigation is undertaken to assess the risk and unless it is clear that security has not been compromised, locking mechanisms and keys will be replaced and/or other necessary remedial action will be taken.

The cost of a relock will depend upon the size of the prison establishment and on which keys have been lost or compromised. If a complete set of keys are lost, a full relock of the prison will be undertaken, whereas if a single key is lost only a partial relock will be needed, incurring a lower cost.

We hold contingency funding for key/lock incidents and the cost is met from individual Prison Group directorate budgets. The costs of relocks within private sector prisons are met in full by the private contractors at nil cost to the public purse.

The table below reflects the cost of full and partial relocks to the public purse each year since 2010.

TIME FRAME	TOTAL COST TO THE PUBLIC PURSE (EXCLUDING VAT)
2010 - 2011	£337,552
2011 - 2012	0
2012 - 2013	0
2013 - 2014	£28,812
2014 - 2015	£46,396
2015 - 2016	£117,212
2016 - 2017	0
2017 - 2018	£441,649
2018- 2019	0
2019 - 2020	£344,456
2020- 04 December 2020	£2,821

#### Notes

1. Figures include re-locks arising from loss of keys and where keys have been forcibly taken from staff.

2. The figures quoted have been drawn from live administrative databases and may subsequently be amended. Due care is taken during processing and analysis, but the detail is subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

#### ■ Remand in Custody

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[121215]**

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 increase in the use of remand reflects departmental policy.

**Chris Philp:**

The prison remand population is projected to increase after September 2021 due to the impact of the planned recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers and the additional 3,400 officers already recruited through precept funding, which are likely to increase charge volumes. The data does not anticipate any changes in either policy or judicial behaviour.

The decision to remand an individual in custody or to grant bail is entirely a matter for the courts acting in accordance with the law. The Bail Act 1976 creates a presumption in favour of bail for all defendants involved in criminal proceedings. The



court will decide, by carrying out a risk assessment and on a case by case basis, whether the defendant presents such a bail risk to the public or the administration of justice as to warrant a remand in custody.

### ■ Youth Custody: Coronavirus

**Peter Kyle:**

[\[123643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that children in youth custodial settings do not have to spend Christmas alone as a result of ongoing covid-19 restrictions.

**Lucy Frazer:**

We are very aware of the difficulties many children in custody will have experienced as a result of Covid-19 and the need to follow physical distancing, and that feelings of uncertainty may be heightened over Christmas. During the Covid-19 period, 'SECURE STAIRS' - the integrated framework of care jointly led by NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Youth Custody Service (YCS) - has adapted its approach to meet the needs of children focusing on the importance of connectivity, whilst adhering to physical distancing principles.

The YCS continue to look to enhance regime opportunities, in a manner which is safe for children and staff. This will continue over Christmas, with staff working hard to ensure children have sufficient time out of their rooms with peers and staff (whilst complying with Covid-19 requirements), access to entertainment, phone calls and other activities over this period.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### ■ House of Commons: Credit Unions

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[121792\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, whether he plans to require his Department 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 Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. member to the response to his question to the Cabinet Office (121122).

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Abortion: Northern Ireland

**Mrs Pauline Latham:**

[\[121837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the commissioning of abortion services in Northern Ireland, whether he is taking steps to ensure UK

compliance with the recommendations of the 2018 report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Regulations we made, consistent with the duty placed on the Government under section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2019, have been in place since 31 March 2020. The Regulations provide a new framework for lawful access to abortion services in Northern Ireland. The Regulations deliver equivalent outcomes in practice to the rest of the UK so that women and girls can enjoy similar rights in accessing abortion services locally in Northern Ireland.

Since April 2020, some service provision has commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health clinics across most Health and Social Care Trusts. According to figures released by the Department of Health in October 2020, over 719 abortions have been provided to women and girls locally in Northern Ireland.

My Department and I are continuing to engage and work with the Northern Ireland Health Minister and the relevant Northern Ireland departments, in implementing the remaining CEDAW recommendations on matters for which they are responsible, including the full commissioning of abortion services in line with the Regulations we made, at the earliest opportunity.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[122630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many women have not been able to access in-country care as a result of the cessation of abortion services by the Northern Trust.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

I am pleased that since the Regulations we made came into effect from 31 March 2020, some abortion service provision has commenced on the ground in Northern Ireland through existing sexual and reproductive health clinics across most Health and Social Care Trusts. According to figures released by the Department of Health in October, over 719 abortions have been provided in Northern Ireland. The collection of notification forms, and relevant data, in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland Department of Health.

Informing Choices Northern Ireland has been acting as the Central Access Point in order to provide a local pathway to this abortion care. Women and girls resident in Northern Ireland also continue to have access to safe, fully-funded abortion services in England through the Government-funded scheme and remain able to contact the Central Booking Scheme for support and advice on options available in this regard.

The health and safety of women and girls remains paramount in accessing abortion services, and my department is continuing to engage closely with the Northern Ireland Health Minister and his department on progressing with the full commissioning of abortion services, consistent with the Regulations we made, at the earliest opportunity.

**■ Endometriosis: Northern Ireland****Karin Smyth:**[\[123629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has had made of the implications for his policies of the findings on pages 24 and 26 of the APPG on Endometriosis Inquiry Report 2020 entitled Endometriosis in the UK: time for change, that suggests prior to covid-19, a person suffering from endometriosis in Northern Ireland will wait on average more than 2 years for a laparoscopy, compared to 4 months in England, and what steps he is taking to address this.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Executive's focus, rightly and understandably, has been on Covid-19. But the pandemic has highlighted the need for urgent health reform in Northern Ireland and as a result, the Rebuilding Health & Social Care Strategic Framework was published by Minister Swann on 9 June.

The UK Government supports the Executive's commitment to health and social care reform and the £2 billion committed over five years to facilitate NDNA commitments includes around £245m to support the transformation of public services.

As the hon Member will be aware, health and the allocation of funding for public services are devolved matters, within the competence of the Northern Ireland Executive. This includes consideration of the APPG's recommendations on diagnosis times and surgery waiting times.

**■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland Office****Louise Haigh:**[\[120913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how the £7.3 million increase in spending for the Northern Ireland Office under the Comprehensive Spending Review will be spent.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

The Northern Ireland Office welcomes our departmental settlement for 2021/2022. It will use this funding to support the work on this Government's strategic priorities for Northern Ireland, including working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive and external partners to ensure good governance, help Northern Ireland address the legacy of the past and make Northern Ireland more prosperous and safe. Our settlement also includes time-limited funding which will support implementation for aspects of the New Decade, New Approach agreement and mark the Northern Ireland Centenary in 2021.

**TRANSPORT****■ Aviation: Finance****Damian Green:**[\[124097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish any impact assessment on the Government's decision to provide financial support to the aviation industry but not to the international sector.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Government has been engaging closely with transport providers across the UK since the outbreak of Covid-19 earlier this year to understand and monitor the impact and will continue to do so.

Companies across the UK economy, including those in the transport sector, are able to draw on an unprecedented package of support including the Bank of England's Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, two business interruption loan schemes and flexibilities with tax bills.

**■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Complaints****Drew Hendry:**[\[124239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the average time taken by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to respond to complaints.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The average time taken by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to respond to complaints in November 2020 was six working days.

**■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Staff****Drew Hendry:**[\[124240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of staffing in the DVLA.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has a range of services available online which offer the quickest, easiest and often cheapest way to transact. The DVLA's staff have ensured these online services have worked well throughout the pandemic, allowing businesses and motorists to transact with DVLA at a time and place that suits them.

All DVLA staff who can work from home continue to do so as office space has been prioritised for operational staff who have to be on-site to process paper applications.

The health and safety of DVLA staff is a priority. In line with the relevant guidance, the DVLA is employing shift patterns, staggered start times, weekend working and other measures to ensure that social distancing can be maintained.

**■ Driving Instruction: Coronavirus**

**Jane Stevenson:** [\[123695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether driving (a) lessons and (b) tests can resume in Tier 3 areas from 2 December 2020.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Driving lessons resumed in all areas in England on 2 December 2020. Driving tests restarted in tier 1 and 2 areas in England on 2 December 2020, and in tier 3 areas on 3 December 2020 with additional mitigations. Theory tests restarted in all areas in England on 2 December 2020.

**■ Garden Bridge: Disclosure of Information**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[121927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will review the decision to publish the report on the London Garden Bridge.

**Rachel Maclean:**

A number of reports about the Garden Bridge project have been published, including by the National Audit Office, Charity Commission and an independent review led by Dame Margaret Hodge. These reports are publicly available.

**■ High Speed 2 Railway Line**

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[R\] \[124191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the benefits of the eastern leg of Phase 2b of High Speed Two on the economies of (a) the north of England, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber and (c) the Sheffield City Region.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The High Speed Two (HS2) Phase Two business case, published in July 2017, sets out the benefits of the phase 2b route from the West Midlands to Leeds (Eastern Leg), including an assessment of the value for money of the route. On the Eastern leg, the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) will consider how to sequence its delivery to ensure benefits are realised sooner and to ensure it is integrated with plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and other rail investment projects, to get the best out of the significant investment in rail.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[R\] \[124192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the economic effect of delays to the eastern leg of Phase 2b of High Speed Two.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The last economic assessment of Phase 2b was in the 2017 Phase 2 Business Case. The IRP and future business cases will lay out the economic benefits of Phase 2b/ Eastern leg including the impacts of delays to the scheme.

## ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: North of England

**Dan Jarvis:**

[R] [\[124190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of delays to High Speed Two on Northern Powerhouse Rail.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Department for Transport and Transport for the North are continuing to make good progress in developing a revised Strategic Outline Case for Northern Powerhouse Rail, which is due to be submitted in 2021 as planned. The Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North will consider the scoping and sequencing of HS2 alongside other major rail investment, including NPR, to ensure transformational rail improvements are delivered as quickly as possible.

## ■ Jet Zero Council

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[124145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many times the Jet Zero Council has met since its establishment.

**Robert Courts:**

The Jet Zero Council met for the first time on 22 July 2020. The date for the second Council meeting will be confirmed shortly.

In addition, the Jet Zero Council Sustainable Aviation Fuels delivery group met for the first time on 23 November 2020.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Safety

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[121840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage lorry drivers on long journeys to take frequent rest breaks to improve safety on public roads.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The UK has one of the best road safety records in Europe. Lorry drivers must take rest breaks further to statutory drivers' hours and other rules. Enforcement of these rules is an important priority, including for DVSA, to reduce the risk of drivers being involved in fatigue-related accidents.

The Government has also taken actions to help the supply of parking spaces for lorries. For example, in 2018 it revised the National Planning Policy Framework to strengthen policy on overnight lorry parking.

The Department has completed the first stage of a review of lorry parking policy and interventions, including stakeholder involvement. Work is ongoing to develop further measures in line with the review.

**■ Members: Correspondence****David Linden:** [\[123683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to respond to the letter of 15 June 2020, reference DL6304, from the hon Member for Glasgow East.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department has no record of the correspondence being received. If copy can be provided a response will be prepared as a priority.

**■ Motorways: Finance****Sarah Champion:** [\[124195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has spent on retrofitting smart motorways with additional safety measures since the publication of his Department's report entitled Smart Motorway Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan, published on 12 March 2020.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Since the publication of the Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan in March 2020, Highways England has spent £26.4 million on safety measures identified in the action plan. The work undertaken includes constructing new emergency areas and making all emergency areas more visible, starting programmes of work to install stopped vehicle detection technology in additional locations and works to upgrade 66 miles of dynamic hard shoulder motorways to all lane running. Highways England has also been creating a national targeted campaign to increase road user confidence and awareness of what to do in the event of a breakdown on a motorway and working to update the Highway Code.

**■ Railway Stations: Birmingham****Liam Byrne:** [\[121810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to approve his Department's component of the funding package for three new railway stations on the Camp Hill line; what financial contributions the project's partners will make; and what the timetable is for each partner signing off their final contributions.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Camp Hill Line in Birmingham is strongly advocated by Mayor Andy Street, as part of his economic plan for the region. The government is supportive of these plans and is willing to provide a contribution to the development of the three new stations mentioned in the question. The full business case has been received by the Department and officials are working through the funding and timetabling of the proposed scheme. The balance of the funding will be raised and approved locally, and is a matter for West Midlands Combined Authority.



## ■ Railways

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[124207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to publish the Integrated Rail Plan by the end of 2020.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

We are expecting the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment report shortly and the Integrated Rail Plan will follow once Ministers have considered this advice.

## ■ Railways: Biodiversity

**Rachel Reeves:**

[\[123576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that Network Rail takes biodiversity into account when undertaking lineside work.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Network Rail targets have been set to achieve no net loss of biodiversity by 2024 and biodiversity net gain by 2035. Network Rail have committed to publishing a national biodiversity standard by the end of 2021 and will establish a biodiversity baseline, map all relevant data and make that available to their supply chain by 2024.

**Rachel Reeves:**

[\[123577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that Network Rail implements the recommendation of the Varley Report 2018.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Following the Varley Report, a target of no net loss by 2024 and biodiversity net gain by 2035 has been set by Network Rail. Network Rail set out further targets on lineside vegetation and biodiversity in their recently published Environmental Sustainability Strategy and will publish detailed plans on meeting these targets and how they are addressing other recommendations in the Varley Report in their forthcoming Biodiversity Action Plan.

## ■ Railways: Bradford

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[124209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Bradford is included on the preferred route for the Manchester to Leeds corridor of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[124211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential effect of including Bradford on the Manchester to Leeds corridor of the Northern Powerhouse Rail route on (a) regional connectivity and (b) the regional economy.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Northern Powerhouse Rail aims to transform connectivity and economic growth. The assessment of proposals therefore includes their comparative connectivity and

economic outcomes. Work to assess options is ongoing, including options serving Bradford. The Government is providing up to £500,000 funding to Bradford City Council to develop the city's regeneration and development plans to support that work. We are currently awaiting the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment for the North and Midlands, which will inform the Government's Integrated Rail Plan.

## ■ Railways: North of England

**Judith Cummins:** [\[124208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the preferred route for the Manchester to Leeds corridor of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

**Judith Cummins:** [\[124210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Transport for the North on the preferred route for the Manchester to Leeds corridor of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Secretary of State has had regular discussions with Transport for the North about Northern Powerhouse Rail, most recently in September. The Secretary of State also has regular conversations with Northern Leaders in his role as the Northern Powerhouse Minister, including several in preparation for the next Northern Transport Acceleration Council meeting.

In the Integrated Rail Plan, the Department will set out how projects, including HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, can be connected strategically to deliver the train services that people need and deserve, as effectively as possible. We are expecting the National Infrastructure Commission's Rail Needs Assessment report shortly and the Integrated Rail Plan will follow once Ministers have considered this advice.

## ■ Trams: Birmingham

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will approve the business case for the East Birmingham tram.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Transport for the West Midlands (part of the West Midlands Combined Authority) has recently confirmed that the East Birmingham to Solihull tram extension scheme is in development, and it is for them to develop a business case.

As announced at Budget and confirmed in the Spending Review, the government is investing £4.2 billion in the transport networks of eight city regions across England from 22/23, including West Midlands Combined Authority area.

**TREASURY**■ **Business: Coronavirus****Darren Henry:**[\[124326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available for businesses whose profits have been adversely affected by lower footfall as a result of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions who are ineligible for Government support since they are deemed to be essential businesses.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

We have a substantial support package available for businesses regardless of whether they are open or closed. The Chancellor recently announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended until the end of March 2021. This provides businesses with a grant to cover 80% of the wages of their employees. We have added additional flexibility so it can be used to cover reduced hours as well as for businesses that are closed. To date CJRS has support 9.6 million jobs at the cost of roughly £41.9bn

Likewise, for businesses that remain open but are severely affected by restrictions, the Local Restrictions Support Grant (open) provides up to £2,100 of support per month. They can also access one-off funding through the Additional Restrictions Grant, worth £1.1bn nationally and is distributed by local authorities.

In addition to this support, businesses have also benefited from the access to finance schemes, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs). Under the BBLs, the government provides lenders with a 100% guarantee to enable them to provide loans between £2,000 and £50,000 to the smallest businesses across the UK with a simple, streamlined application process.

Moreover, all eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors will pay no business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April 2020. Businesses will also benefit from the reduced rate of VAT for tourist attractions and goods & services supplied by the hospitality sector.

■ **Capital Investment: West Midlands****Liam Byrne:**[\[121807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to section 4.1 of the 2020 spending review, what the value is of the accelerated capital spending projects awarded within the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

**Steve Barclay:**

In June this year, the Prime Minister announced that the Government would accelerate over £5 billion of infrastructure projects. When taken together with the Plan for Jobs, this means that Government is accelerating £8.6 billion of capital spending.

This accelerated capital spending includes the £900m Getting Building Fund, from which West Midlands Combined Authority received an allocation of £66 million. The funding will support projects such as the University Station development, the Very Light Rail Innovation Centre, and the Precision Health Technology Accelerator.

### ■ Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit: Overpayments

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[121793\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) Working Tax Credit and (b) Child Tax Credit claims in (i) total and (ii) as a percentage of total claims in each of have incurred an overpayment in each of the last five years.

**Jesse Norman:**

The table below summarises the number of personal tax credits overpayments as a percentage of all personal tax credit claims for the most recent 5 years for which data is available. HMRC are unable to break down the figures to Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit because a case may involve both.

#### ESTIMATED NUMBER OF WORKING TAX CREDIT AND CHILD TAX CREDIT CLAIMS AND OVERPAID CLAIMS BETWEEN 2013/14 TO 2017/18

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>Estimated number of Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit claims (000s)</b>	5,564	5,406	5,271	4,988	4,600
<b>Total number of overpaid Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit claims (000s)</b>	1,685	1,535	1,396	1,572	1,445
<i>Overpaid Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit awards as a % of all</i>	30%	28%	26%	32%	31%

## ESTIMATED NUMBER OF WORKING TAX CREDIT AND CHILD TAX CREDIT CLAIMS AND OVERPAID CLAIMS BETWEEN 2013/14 TO 2017/18

*Working Tax  
Credit and  
Child Tax  
Credit awards*

Source: These figures have been taken from HMRC's annually published Child and Working Tax Credits statistics: finalised annual awards, supplement on payments for 2013/14 – 2017/18, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/personal-tax-credits-statistics>

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[121794]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many claims of (a) Working Tax Credit and (b) Child Tax Credit have received a sanction or other financial penalty after incurring an overpayment in (i) total and (ii) as a percentage of total claims in each of the last five years.

**Jesse Norman:**

**HMRC do not impose sanctions but do charge penalties. HMRC are unable to break down the figures to Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, as a case may involve both.**

YEAR	NUMBER OF PENALTIES	LIVE CLAIMS (MILLIONS)	PERCENTAGE
2014/15	14,335	4.7	0.30%
2015/16	16,266	4.4	0.37%
2016/17	13,135	3.7	0.36%
2017/18	11,524	3.8	0.30%
2018/19	11,793	3.1	0.38%

### ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[123599]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making it a mandatory requirement that employers make available the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to their employees.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been extended from 1 November until March 2021 and will be reviewed in January.

The scheme is designed to support anyone who would otherwise have been made unemployed as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. The furloughing of staff through the CJRS is a voluntary arrangement entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees. It is not for the Government to decide whether an individual firm should put its staff on furlough or take its staff off furlough; that is a decision for the employer, in consultation with the employee.

Employers can claim up to an 80% grant for the hours not worked by an employee up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. Employers will not be required to contribute or top-up for the hours not worked. Employers will still need to pay employer National Insurance contributions and employer pension contributions.

Under the CJRS extension, employers can flexibly furlough their employees, which means employers can furlough employees for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim CJRS grant for the hours not worked, and there will not be a minimum furlough period.

**Sarah Olney:**[\[124274\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support people who have been excluded from the extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme because they became employed in mid-October 2020 and their employer did not submit the payroll before midnight 30 October 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

Furloughed employees must have been on their employers' PAYE payroll between 20 March and 30 October and HMRC must have received an RTI (Real Time Information) submission notifying payment in respect of that employee between 20 March and 30 October. The CJRS had to be set up to operate at very significant scale, quickly and with limited manual intervention. The use of RTI allows HMRC to verify claims in the most efficient and timely way, ensuring payments can be made quickly while reducing the risk of fraud.

The CJRS is only one element of a substantial package of support for businesses and individuals, including a package of temporary welfare measures, which includes increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, which mean over one million households who rent privately will gain an average of £600 per year; a relaxation of the Universal Credit minimum income floor; and measures to make access easier to Statutory Sick Pay and new style Employment and Support Allowance.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Seasonal Workers

**Greg Clark:**

**[123552]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to ensure that seasonal workers are not disadvantaged under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has ensured that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is available for as many people as possible. Hence, employees can be on any type of contract and be eligible to be furloughed under the CJRS.

The CJRS has been available to all employers with a PAYE system and all employees on PAYE regardless of their employment contract, enabling millions of people to remain employed.

Further information on eligibility for the CJRS can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-which-employees-you-can-put-on-furlough-to-use-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

**Liam Byrne:**

**[121802]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much money has been allocated through the (a) Small Business Grant Fund, (b) Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and (c) Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund by region.

**Jesse Norman:**

Separate data is not held for the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund. The data for these schemes have been grouped together.

- East Midlands: local authorities distributed over £911 million from the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF). They also allocated over £47 million to businesses from the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF).
- East of England: local authorities distributed over £1.1 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £59 million from the LADGF
- London: local authorities distributed over £1.6 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £79 million from the LADGF
- North East: local authorities distributed over £512 million from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £25 million from the LADGF
- North West: local authorities distributed over £1.5 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £77 million from the LADGDF
- South East: local authorities distributed over £1.6 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £82 million from the LADGF



- South West: local authorities distributed over £1.3 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £73 million from the LADGF
- West Midlands: local authorities distributed over £1.1 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £56 million from the LADGF
- Yorkshire and the Humber: local authorities distributed over £1.2 billion from the SBGF and RHLGF. They also allocated over £60 million from the LADGF.

## ■ Directors: Coronavirus

**Angela Crawley:** [\[121863\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of potential merits of introducing the Directors Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given on 24 November to UIN 115585.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[123646\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of employees of small limited companies whose jobs are at risk as a result of the ineligibility for covid-19 related financial support of directors who are paid through dividends.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government prioritised delivering support to as many people as possible as quickly as possible, while guarding against the risk of fraud or abuse. The Government takes an evidence-based approach when developing policy. This meant making difficult decisions, and the Chancellor has acknowledged that it has not been possible to support everyone as they would want.

Dividends are not covered by the CJRS. Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages. Under current reporting mechanisms it is not possible for HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources, and between dividends in lieu of employment income and as returns from other corporate activity. Those who pay themselves a salary through their own company may be eligible for the CJRS. The CJRS is available to employers, including personal service companies, and individuals paying themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme are eligible.

HMRC designed the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) using information already in hand, in order to make it deliverable quickly and to minimise the risk of fraud. Expanding the scope would have required HMRC to collect new information that they would not be able to manageably or consistently verify in order to ensure that payments were made to eligible companies and for eligible activity.

It is important to secure the SEISS against fraud risk and misuse.

The CJRS and SEISS are only two elements of a substantial package of support for businesses and individuals. There is access to affordable, Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for large firms, along with the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises. Over £65 billion (as of 15 November) has been dispensed through these schemes.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[123647\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to provide support to directors of small limited companies who are unable to trade on a financially viable basis during the (a) national covid-19 restrictions and (b) tier system of local covid alert level restrictions from 2 December 2020.

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[123648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support directors of small limited companies who are unable to trade on a financially viable basis during the (a) current national restrictions and (b) tier system of local covid alert level restriction from 2 December 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has acknowledged that it has not been possible to support everyone as they might want. The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include directors of limited companies in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), namely the inability of HM Revenue and Customs to verify the source of their dividend income without introducing unacceptable levels of fraud risk, still remain. This issue prevents implementing an alternative scheme specifically for limited company directors.

Company directors who pay themselves a salary through PAYE are able to apply for CJRS support, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of the scheme. Directors may also be eligible for other elements of the wider package of financial support available, including the Local Restrictions Support Grants, Government-backed loan schemes, tax deferrals, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and increased levels of Universal Credit to reflect lower earnings.

## ■ Directors: Finance

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[123616\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to provide financial support to company directors who do not qualify for assistance under the CJRS and the SEISS; and what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of the exclusion of company directors from these schemes.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government prioritised delivering support to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible while guarding against the risk of fraud or abuse. The

Government takes an evidence-based approach when developing policy. This meant making difficult decisions, and the Chancellor has acknowledged that it has not been possible to support everyone as they would want.

The CJRS and SEISS are only two elements of a substantial package of support for businesses and individuals. There is access to affordable, Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for large firms, along with the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises. Over £65 billion (as of 15 November) has been dispensed through these schemes.

At the Winter Economy Plan, the Government also announced that it would give businesses which deferred VAT due in March to June 2020 the option to spread their payments over the financial year 2021-2022 under the VAT deferral 'New Payment Scheme'. Over half a million businesses deferred VAT payments, a cash injection of £30 billion into the UK economy when it needed it most.

The Government has also implemented a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element. The £20 per week uplift is one part of a package of temporary welfare measures, which also includes increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, which mean over one million households who rent privately will gain an average of £600 per year.

## ■ Employment: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:**

**[123645]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with (a) the Department for Work and Pensions, (b) the Health and Safety Executive and (c) other Departments on organisations' duty of care to employees with underlying health conditions who are refused furlough.

**Jesse Norman:**

The furloughing of staff through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a voluntary arrangement entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees. That means it is not for the Government to decide whether an individual firm should put its staff on furlough.

Treasury ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors (including MPs, businesses, professional representative bodies, and the unions) throughout the development of the COVID-19 support package, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[123649\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the average loss of earnings for people who work through a mixture of both PAYE and self-employment during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Jesse Norman:**

In the three months to September, whole economy total pay growth (incl. bonuses) rose by 2.6ppts on the quarter to 1.3% and in real terms total pay rose by 0.7%. In the three months to September, regular pay growth (excl. bonuses) rose by 1.9ppts to 1.9%, and in real terms regular pay rose by 1.3%. Information on self-employed incomes involves a time lag and therefore existing data does not include recent months

This is a challenging time for many individuals and the Government has provided substantial support for those who have been disrupted by COVID-19.

The Chancellor extended both the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has helped to pay the wages of people in 9.6 million jobs across the country protecting jobs that might otherwise have been lost, and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which has supported the livelihoods of 2.6 million self-employed workers

Analysis published earlier this year shows the interventions made have significantly protected people's incomes, with the least well off in society supported the most.

## ■ Job Creation

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[121808\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the average number of jobs created by every £100 of public capital spending.

**Steve Barclay:**

Infrastructure investment in the UK supports hundreds of thousands of jobs a year in the construction sector. Spending Review 2020 set out ambitious plans for capital investment across the UK to support jobs— from investment in the next generation of hospitals and upgrades to our roads and railways, to energy efficiency retrofits and tree planting.

HM Treasury worked closely with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) at SR20 to scrutinise the deliverability of schemes to ensure that investment can support jobs as quickly as possible. As set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy, HM Treasury strongly encourages all government departments and their agencies to progress approved and funded projects into procurement and contract without delay (subject to good project discipline). This is supported by the IPA publishing a comprehensive National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline, providing certainty to the market about planned procurement. The next update to the pipeline will be in Spring 2021. The government is also urging local authorities to take steps to support

construction jobs in their areas by progressing funded projects as soon as practicable.

■ **Levelling Up Fund: West Midlands**

**Liam Byrne:** [\[121813\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to section 4.2 of the Spending Review 2020, what proportion of the £4 billion Levelling Up Fund will be spent in the West Midlands Combined Authority area.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Levelling Up Fund will be open to all local areas and allocated competitively. To support levelling up opportunity across the country, we will prioritise bids to drive growth and regeneration in places in need, those facing particular local challenges, and areas that have received less Government investment in recent years.

We are making up to £600m available in 2021-22, and will publish a prospectus for the fund and launch the first round of competitions in the New Year.

■ **Overseas Aid**

**Sir Oliver Heald:** [\[123496\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy that a reduction to the 0.7 per cent UK Aid commitment is time-bound to 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Oliver Heald:** [\[123497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has a timetable for reinstatement of the 0.7 per cent UK aid commitment to be reinstated.

**Steve Barclay:**

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

■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[121798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support he plans to provide to public houses that (a) do not provide a food service and (b) are in the very high tier of covid-19 restrictions.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[121799\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) pubs, (b) breweries and (c) clubs affected by the December 2020 tiered system of covid-19 restrictions.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's hospitality and leisure sectors, and it recognises that the hospitality and leisure sectors have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry and work with businesses and representative groups to ensure that support provided is right for this industry and the economy as a whole.

The Government has acted to deliver support to these sectors by extending the CJRS until March and provided cash grants of up to £3,000 per month to help businesses that are closed with their costs. The Government has also announced an additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs' in tiers 2 and 3 who will miss out on business during the busy Christmas period.

In addition, the Government has provided £1.1 billion of Discretionary Grant funding for local authorities to target support to the businesses that are most important to their local economy. Closed businesses are also still able to access wider support, including:

- o Affordable, Government-backed finance through loan schemes extended until the end of January 2021 and 'Pay as You Grow' options for businesses which have taken out loans, to make repayments over the long term;
- o A VAT deferral for up to 12 months;
- o A 12-month business rates holiday;
- o A moratorium on evictions to protect commercial tenants;
- o Targeted support through the temporarily reduced rate of VAT (5%)

**■ Public Sector: Pay****Liam Byrne:****[121803]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to section 2.7 of the Spending Review 2020, how many public sector employees will be affected by the pause in pay awards in 2021-22.

**Steve Barclay:**

The government expects there will be around 1.3m public sector employees in direct scope of the temporary pause in pay uplifts. This is the sum of the workforces for which central government is responsible for setting pay.

Within this number, those earning less than £24,000 on a full-time equivalent basis will still receive a pay rise, of at least £250.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development

**Dan Jarvis:**

[R] [123598]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what funding has been awarded to each (a) nation and (b) region as part of the Government's levelling up agenda during the 2019 Parliament.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

This Government is committed to levelling up opportunity across all regions and nations of the United Kingdom, including by spreading funding across the UK. For example, as confirmed at the recent Spending Review, the government is investing to drive growth and regenerate places through the new Levelling Up Fund worth £4 billion for England, delivering a Shared Rural Network to extend 4G mobile coverage to 95% of the UK, and increasing the total Barnett Block Grant by £2.4bn for the Scottish Government, £1.3bn for the Welsh Government and £0.9bn for the Northern Irish Executive.

## ■ Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

**Stephen Morgan:**

[121914]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Spending Review 2020 on local authorities' access to and receipt of funding from the High Street Fund.

**Steve Barclay:**

This government recognises the importance of ensuring that high streets remain at the heart of our local communities. This is why Government continues to support local areas and high streets adapt to shifting consumer demands. The Future High Streets Fund, part of the government's broader Towns Fund, is designed to help places renew and reshape their town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves experience, and ensures future sustainability. The list of eligible towns is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-fund-to-revitalise-country-s-high-streets> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-billion-future-high-streets-fund-expanded-to-50-more-areas>.

## ■ Research: Expenditure

**Grahame Morris:**

[124161]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much the Government has allocated to Research and Development in each of the last five years.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Office for National Statistics publish official data based on the Government Research and Development Survey. Data until 2018 are available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/researchanddevelopmentexpenditure>



## ■ Research: Finance

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[124162\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much of the £14.6 billion announced in the Spending Review 2020 for research and development is new funding which had not previously been announced.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

In the Spending Review the government announced, for the first time, that it will be investing £14.6bn in Research and Development in 21/22 to forge the UK's future as a global scientific superpower.

## ■ Revenue and Customs Digital Technology Services: Tax Avoidance

**Allan Dorans:**

[\[123692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Loan Charge, who the deemed employer or promoter was of loan schemes used by Revenue and Customs Digital Technology Services (RCTDS)-employed contractors post 2017; for what reason use of those schemes reportedly continued for three years after the enactment of the Finance Act 2017; and whether the then Comptroller and Auditor General of the National Audit Office audited and signed off RCTDS accounts in 2018.

**Jesse Norman:**

Revenue and Customs Digital Technology Services Limited (RCCTS) has never participated in disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes, for example by remunerating contractors through loans or payments to trusts. Since RCCTS engages contractors via agencies or via companies providing services, it is possible for contractors to use disguised remuneration without the participation or knowledge of RCCTS.

It is not possible for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to provide details of any employers, promoters or schemes due to their statutory duty of confidentiality.

Use of disguised remuneration schemes continued after the enactment of the Finance Act 2017 because promoters continued to sell them, despite the clear view of HMRC that these schemes do not work.

Any RCCTS contractor identified in the course of HM Revenue and Customs' compliance work as using a disguised remuneration scheme would be investigated in the same way as any other contractor. Where the use of disguised remuneration is found to be current, the relevant engagement is terminated with immediate effect.

The Revenue and Customs Digital Services Ltd accounts ending 31 March 2018, 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2020 were audited by the NAO under Statute.

## ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Landlords

**Martyn Day:**

**[121867]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will reassess the eligibility criteria of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to include landlords previously excluded from that scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) is targeted at those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income. It applies to individuals who complete the self-employment pages of the Self-Assessment return, or partnership trading pages. These pages exclude income from property, which is distinct from trading income.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed. Those ineligible for the SEISS 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. 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.

## ■ Service Industries: Coronavirus

**Emma Hardy:**

**[121905]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect on local (a) retail, (b) hospitality and (c) live performance industries of being placed in a tier 3 covid-19 area.

**Jesse Norman:**

On 30 November, the Government published 'Analysis of the health, economic and social effects of COVID-19 and the approach to tiering':

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/939876/Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_health\\_economic\\_and\\_social\\_effects\\_of\\_COVID-19\\_and\\_the\\_approach\\_to\\_tiering\\_FINAL\\_SofS\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/939876/Analysis_of_the_health_economic_and_social_effects_of_COVID-19_and_the_approach_to_tiering_FINAL_SofS_.pdf). As stated in this analysis, it is not possible to forecast the precise economic impact of a specific change to a specific restriction with confidence, but it is clear that restrictions to contain COVID-19 have had major impacts on the economy and public finances.

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors, and recognises that these sectors have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The Government continues to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on these sectors and on the economy as a whole and is working with businesses and trade groups to inform its efforts to support these businesses.

## ■ Towns Fund

**Liam Byrne:**

**[121812]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to section 4.2 of the Spending Review 2020, if he will publish the 167 projects approved by his Department for financing through the Towns Fund.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Towns Fund delivers on our promise to level up the country and create more places across the UK where people want to live and can thrive. Eligible towns for the Towns Fund can all be found on the government's website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/100-places-to-benefit-from-new-towns-fund>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-fund-to-revitalise-country-s-high-streets>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-billion-future-high-streets-fund-expanded-to-50-more-areas>), and allocations are ongoing. Barrow-in-Furness, Blackpool, Darlington, Peterborough, Norwich, Torquay and Warrington are the first places to be offered a Town Deal and work will now begin with these areas to confirm final funding.

## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: West Midlands

**Liam Byrne:**

**[121814]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Box 3.1 in the Spending Review 2020, if he will set out the proportion of the UK shared prosperity fund which will be allocated to the west midlands combined authority area.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Spending Review sets out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms (Box 3.1). The government will then publish a UK-wide investment framework in 2020, provide further detail in a prospectus in the New Year, and confirm multi-year funding profiles for the UKSPF at the next Spending Review.

## ■ Welfare Tax Credits: Overpayments

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[121795]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to prevent tax credit claimants incurring overpayments in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC have built on existing measures to address the risk of tax credits claimants incurring overpayments. This activity incorporates improvements to education and guidance, including to identify and address error and fraud at an earlier stage.

HMRC have delivered an ambitious training programme in 2019-20 to equip frontline staff with a wider range of tools and skills to help claimants maintain their correct entitlements. This includes continuing development of prompts to support conversations with claimants to keep their awards on the right footing.

HMRC have extended the range of their education and reminder campaigns to promote the correct reporting of the various factors that affect a claimant's entitlement: for example, targeted letters to increase understanding of the criteria for single or joint claims or how to declare self-assessed income.

HMRC have also put measures in place to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 on claimants' lives. In recognition that many claimants are not able to work their normal hours (including because they have been furloughed) the Government has legislated to suspend the eligibility criteria on "hours worked" in Working Tax Credit for claimants temporarily affected by the pandemic. This eliminates a potential source of overpayments.

For overpayments resulting from error and fraud, in five of the last six years for which results are available, HMRC have met the target set by ministers to restrict outturn levels to below five per cent of total expenditure. This includes 4.9% in 2018-19, the latest year for which HMRC have published Official Statistics; details of these can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/920091/child\\_and\\_working\\_tax\\_credits\\_EF\\_2018-19\\_first\\_release.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920091/child_and_working_tax_credits_EF_2018-19_first_release.pdf)

HMRC continue to develop options to challenge losses from error and fraud, including working with their counterparts across Government and the wider public sector.

## ■ Welfare Tax Credits: Scotland

**Neil Gray:**

**[123612]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that recipients of the Scottish Government's health and social care £500 bonus payment who receive tax credits will be able to keep the full amount of that bonus payment.

**Steve Barclay:**

COVID-19 is the biggest threat the UK has faced in decades. Key workers, including NHS staff and social care workers, have already demonstrated remarkable commitment to keeping the public safe in the continuing fight against the virus. The Government hugely values and appreciates these vital contributions to the COVID 19 response.

Under the longstanding rules any payments made in connection with an employment are chargeable to income tax and National Insurance Contributions. They also count as income for the purposes of calculating entitlement to certain benefits. This was the case when the Welsh Government announced similar payments earlier this year.

We've provided over £8.2billion of extra funding for the Scottish Government this year to support people, businesses and public services.

If it is their intention for NHS staff and social care workers in Scotland to benefit by at least £500, the Scottish Government has the powers and funding to gross up the payments.

## ■ West Midlands Combined Authority: Borrowing

**Liam Byrne:**

**[121800]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the borrowing capacity of the West Midlands Combined Authority is and what portion of this capacity has been used.

**Steve Barclay:**

HM Treasury agreed debt caps with several Mayoral Combined Authorities in 2018.

These caps place a limit on long-term external debt in each financial year, and for the West Midlands this cap is:

£	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
WMCA long-term external debt	546,744,807	783,049,523	1,041,974,844

Figures published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government detail outstanding debt on a quarterly basis for each local authority and combined authority. This is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-local-government-finance>

## WALES

## ■ Agriculture: Wales

**Ben Lake:**

**[123676]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Welsh farm payments prior to the 2020 Spending Review.

**Simon Hart:**

I had regular discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a wide range of subjects prior to Spending Review 2020, including future agriculture funding.

This Government stood on a clear manifesto commitment to guarantee the current annual budget to farmers in every year of this Parliament. We fulfilled this commitment for 2021-22 in the Spending Review. We have provided new Exchequer funding on top of the remaining £97 million of EU funding to ensure that £337 million of support continues to go to Welsh farmers this year. We remain committed to our manifesto pledge for the remainder of this Parliament.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Access to Work Programme**

**Stephen Timms:** [\[123505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much has been spent on promoting the Access to Work scheme in the 2020-21 financial year.

**Stephen Timms:** [\[123506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the amount her Department will have spent on promoting the Access to Work scheme in the current financial year, 2020-21, by the end of the financial year.

**Stephen Timms:** [\[123507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's promotion of Access to Work in the current financial year on the number of applications to that scheme.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Department delivers regular communications about Access to Work support using a variety of high reach channels including social media, proactive press releases explaining the support available and how to apply via Gov.uk. Activity also includes working with a variety of organisations to increase awareness of Access to Work support among disabled employees, including the Disability Confident network of more than 19,000 employers, and regular stakeholder communications to encourage them to promote Access to Work to their clients. Remploy and Ingeus deliver Access to Work Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) on the Department's behalf. The Department works with those providers to support activity to promote their Access to Work Mental Health Support Services externally using their communications channels to reach customers experiencing mental health issues or conditions within the workplace. All promotional activity delivered by Access to Work MHSS providers has to be approved by the Department.

The Department also targets information about Access to Work at the point of need where it can have maximum impact, for example when someone is offered a job, or develops a health condition that impacts their work. This means using key touch points with disabled people, including employers, Jobcentre work coaches, Disability Employment Advisers and partners who engage directly with disabled people.

This approach has been highly effective as Access to Work is supporting thousands more people with disabilities and health conditions than ever before. In the most recent official statistics published in September 2020, Access to Work funded tailored and flexible support for 43,000 people in 2019/20, a 20% increase on the previous year, demonstrating the Department's approach to promoting Access to Work continues to be highly effective. Access to Work support has also led to increased take up among underrepresented groups including those with Mental Health

conditions, with **8,710** successful applications in 2019/20, almost double the number compared to the previous year and the highest ever.

The increased consumption and reach of digital channels, in particular social media, and the Department's extensive reach with employers and stakeholder organisations means that key audiences can be reached in a much more cost-effective way than previously. However, to ensure that Access to Work information reaches as many people as possible, the Department is planning to supplement this already extensive promotion with paid advertising from January 2021. Final proposals are currently being worked on for the paid advertising campaign and detailed media planning will determine final spend, therefore at this stage we are unable to confirm the final spend estimate.

### ■ Food Banks: Coronavirus

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[123613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of foodbank use in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

**Will Quince:**

There are no official statistics on the number or use of food banks, which are independent, charitable organisations

### ■ Health: Unemployment

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[122611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential health effects on the general population of the Office for Budget Responsibility's forecasted rise in unemployment to 7.5 per cent in 2021.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

A range of evidence shows that being unemployed can negatively affect an individual's health. Several studies of the UK recession following the financial crisis in 2008 associated it with a rise in health problems, particularly mental health problems. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many factors apart from labour market conditions may affect population health.

The Government has put in place a variety of support to help people stay healthy and to help people who may be experiencing health problems to stay in work or find work. On 23 November, we published our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support plan for COVID-19, which sets out the support available for people in the context of a second wave and the winter months.



**■ Kickstart Scheme: Local Government**

**Alison McGovern:** [\[124173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on local authorities making applications to the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

We are pleased to see the significant interest in the Kickstart Scheme from local authorities and recognise the excellent position they are in to support local opportunities.

We regularly meet with ministerial colleagues and our officials have engaged with local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and the mayoral combined authorities throughout the Kickstart Scheme development process.

**■ Kickstart Scheme: Private Sector**

**Alison McGovern:** [\[124172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of applications to the Kickstart scheme have come from the private sector, to date.

**Alison McGovern:** [\[124175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been made to the Kickstart scheme from the charity sector, to date.

**Alison McGovern:** [\[124176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been made to the Kickstart scheme from public sector organisations.

**Mims Davies:**

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

**■ Local Housing Allowance**

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[124184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will raise Local Housing Allowance to ensure it covers housing costs.

**Will Quince:**

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were increased in April 2020, costing almost £1 billion and providing 1.5 million claimants with on average an extra £600 more housing support per year than they would otherwise have received.

In 2021/22 all LHA rates will be maintained at their increased level, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector will continue to benefit from the significant increase in the rates applied this year.

For those who require additional support with housing costs Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. Since 2011 we have provided over £1 billion in DHP funding.

### ■ **Personal Independence Payment**

**Drew Hendry:**

**[124241]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment her Department has made of the average time taken for a claimant to receive a personal independence payment in November (a) 2020 and (b) 2019.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) clearance times for both PIP New Claims and Reassessments from Disability Living Allowance is published. This covers each stage of the customer journey for the period covering April 2013 – July 2020 (latest available data). This can be found in Tables 2A – 2A(vi) for Normal Rules claims and 2B for claims made under Special Rules for the Terminally Ill in the following published statistical tables:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/917471/tables-pip-statistics-to-july-2020.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/917471/tables-pip-statistics-to-july-2020.xlsx)

### ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

**Apsana Begum:**

**[123727]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has of the number of cases who have not been notified of automatic extensions of their PIP awards due to covid-19, where those awards were first instated at First Tier Tribunal.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Department has been automatically applying extension of awards of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for all decisions in scope of the Covid-19 easements including those decisions first instated at First Tier Tribunals. All customers receiving an extension will be notified of their new award end date early 2021, the planned completion date for all extension activity.

### ■ **Restart Programme**

**Liam Byrne:**

**[121804]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to section 2.9 of of the Spending Review 2020, if she publish the value of the average job subsidy in the Restart programme.

**Mims Davies:**

The chancellor announced at Spending Review £2.9bn for three years of referrals to Restart. Restart will provide intensive, tailored employment support to help over 1 million people back towards sustained employment.

There will be no job subsidies paid as part of the Restart programme. Further detail on the scheme will be announced in due course.

## ■ **Sharing Economy: Industrial Health and Safety**

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[123620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with devolved Administrations on an adequate response to the November 2020 High Court finding that the Government has failed properly to implement measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety and set minimum health and safety requirements for use of personal protective equipment for limb b workers including those in the gig economy and other precarious occupations.

**Mims Davies:**

Health and safety is a reserved matter for Scotland and Wales. However, health and safety is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland. The Health and Safety Executive has discussed this case with the Northern Ireland Office and they are aware of the need to make corresponding legislative changes in order for the UK as a whole to give effect to the judgment and ensure proper implementation of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Regulations.

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[124215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the Government's timescale is for bringing forward legislative proposals to increase health and safety protections for workers in the gig economy following the judgement of High Court of 13 November 2020 in the case of R (Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and another.

**Mims Davies:**

Following the High Court Judgment of 13 November 2020, the Health and Safety Executive is now preparing the necessary legislative changes to the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 1992 and will implement them as soon as possible.

## ■ **Social Security Benefits: Appeals**

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[124204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many cases there have been in which people have been declared fit for work and then went on to win an appeal against her Department in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last three years.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Statistics on Employment and Support Allowance Work Capability Assessment (WCA) outcomes are published quarterly. The latest figures covering the outcome of completed initial and repeat WCAs, including appeals decisions and mandatory reconsiderations, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessment>

Additional geographical breakdowns of the ESA WCA figures can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The information requested for Universal Credit is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

## ■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[123540]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into potential maladministration in her Department's communication of changes to women's State Pension age.

**Guy Opperman:**

No discussions have taken place.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

**[124183]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the legislation introduced in response to the Court of Appeal judgment of 22 June 2020 in the case of *Johnson and Others*, whether it is her Department's policy that people in receipt of early pay before Christmas will not see their universal credit claim affected should they receive two payments within one assessment period.

**Will Quince:**

HMRC provide guidance for employers on reporting PAYE information when early payments are made at Christmas. This is to help protect their employees' eligibility for Universal Credit.

Where two monthly payments in one assessment period still occur, the legislation we introduced to remedy the Court of Appeal Judgment in the case of *Johnson and others* will allow monthly earnings to be reallocated to another assessment period, which means that only one set of earnings will be taken into account rather than two, and claimants will be able to benefit from any applicable work allowance.

**■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

**Steve McCabe:** [\[123518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have not received a decision on their universal credit claim because they require a face-to-face work capability assessment.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

No claimants have not received a decision on their Universal Credit (UC) claim because they require a face to face Work Capability Assessment (WCA).

UC claimants do not have to wait for a WCA before they can be awarded UC. Depending on the outcome of the WCA, some UC claimants may then be entitled to an additional amount.

**■ Universal Credit: Scotland**

**Neil Gray:** [\[123611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that recipients of the Scottish Government's health and social care workers £500 bonus payment who are in receipt of universal credit are able to keep the full amount of that payment.

**Will Quince:**

The Government recognises the vital role that all key workers including health and social care workers continue to play.

Universal Credit (UC) is designed to ensure that people are better off in work by reducing their UC by less than they are earning. Bonuses are treated as earnings in Universal Credit and the taper is applied when the UC award is calculated.

**■ Work Capability Assessment**

**Steve McCabe:** [\[123516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many decisions have been reached based on paper-based work capability assessments since March 2020.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The specific information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**Steve McCabe:** [\[123519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average cost is of undertaking a paper-based work capability assessment.

**Steve McCabe:** [\[123520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average cost is of undertaking a telephone work capability assessment.

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[123521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average cost is of undertaking a face-to-face work capability assessment.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Health and Disability Assessment Services (HDAS) Contract is let on a target cost of service basis alongside performance incentives and remedies rather than on an output cost per assessment or administrative task basis. Therefore, we are unable to provide an average cost per assessment undertaken for paper based, telephone or face to face work capability assessments.

■ **Work Capability Assessment: Coronavirus**

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[123515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have been assessed as needing face-to-face work capability assessments since March 2020.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The information requested is not held.

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[123517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many decisions have been reached based on work capability assessments made by telephone since March 2020.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The specific information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Commonwealth Games 2022: Dudley

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[121383\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 3 December 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**Nigel Huddleston:**

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

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

**We are working with the local Chamber of Commerce's and other West Midlands business groups to promote procurement opportunities locally.**

### FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

#### ■ Developing Countries: Health Services

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[91913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Government's response to the Fifth Report of the International Development Committee, HC246 of Session 2014-15 on Strengthening Health Systems in Developing Countries, when his Department plans to publish its position paper on health systems strengthening.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 11 November 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**Wendy Morton:**

~~National authorities in Central America mobilised swiftly to respond to the emergency, but they have struggled to deal with the scale of the impacts, mainly due to~~



challenges in accessing remote areas. Only Honduras has so far made a formal appeal for support to the international community, and Nicaragua and Guatemala are expected to follow suit shortly. FCDO Humanitarian Response Group are leading on the UK humanitarian response.

Beyond the assistance above, MOD will deploy Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel "Argus" to the coast of Honduras to provide assistance to US relief efforts. The ship will arrive on 13 November and provide refuelling for US helicopters delivering supplies to Honduras. UK helicopters on the ship will be made available for the same task. We are not in a position to message publically about this until we receive permissions from Honduras.

**Our support for low-income countries to scale up quality health services and achieve universal health coverage is central to the UK government's manifesto commitment to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn babies and children by 2030. We expect to publish a health systems strengthening position paper in 2021. This will be a central part of the government's wider approach to ending preventable deaths and will take account of the lessons learnt from the response to COVID-19 in order to build resilient systems.**

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ The UK's new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)

**Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):**  
[\[HCWS624\]](#)

On Friday 4 December the Prime Minister announced the UK's new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. This commits the UK to a new ambitious target to reduce the UK's emissions by at least 68% by the end of the decade, compared to 1990 levels.

This is a step forward in our ambition to tackle climate change over the next ten years as we accelerate towards meeting our legally-binding commitment to reach net zero by 2050. Just as the UK led the way as the first major economy to legislate for net zero, our NDC raises the bar for global climate ambition by committing the UK to the highest level of emissions reductions by 2030 of any major economy, compared to 1990 levels. The level of the UK's NDC is consistent with advice from the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC). It is a significant step up from the level of the UK's previous target as a contributor to the EU's NDC, which was equivalent to around a 53% UK reduction over the same time period.

As the UK looks ahead to hosting COP26 (the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties) in Glasgow next year, in partnership with Italy, we are urging all countries to follow suit and come forward with ambitious new NDCs and transformational Long-Term Strategies towards next zero emissions, in order to ensure that this will be a decade of ambitious climate action. The Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December, which the UK is co-hosting with France and the UN in partnership with Chile and Italy, provides an excellent opportunity for countries to come forward with new commitments across the three pillars of the Paris Agreement: mitigation, finance and adaptation.

Tackling climate change will remain a top priority for the Government. In November, the Prime Minister announced his Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution. Ahead of COP26, we intend to publish a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy, setting out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK.

The UK intends to communicate its NDC to the UNFCCC by the 12 December Climate Ambition Summit. This will include the technical annex, known as Information to Facilitate Clarity, Transparency and Understanding (ICTU), which will set out the detail underpinning the UK's headline 2030 target. The UK also intends to communicate an Adaptation Communication and Finance Biennial Communication to the UNFCCC.

Once formally communicated to the UNFCCC, I will lay the NDC in Parliament and will follow up with letters to relevant Select Committees.

**DEFENCE****■ Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2020****Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):****[\[HCWS626\]](#)**

Today, I am laying before Parliament the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2020. The pandemic has seen our Armed Forces once again step onto the front line to protect our nation, from leading mass testing in Liverpool to constructing NHS Nightingale Hospitals. Such contribution demonstrates that the Armed Forces Covenant is as important today as it was in 2011 and we are therefore proud to lay this report before Parliament.

The Government has built its support for Armed Forces families in 2020 with the launch of a wrap-around childcare pilot at test sites across the UK. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has also been awarded £7.2M to 60 projects for military families. As well as the MOD's investment of £123M to Service Families Accommodation, we have committed an extra £200M to improve MOD accommodation to support the regeneration of the UK economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have also extended the Forces Help to Buy scheme until December 2022, giving more Service personnel and their families the opportunity to buy a home of their own.

Partners across the UK, in the public, private and charitable sectors, have been working hard to support those who serve or have served, and their families, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The private sector has continued to demonstrate its support for the Armed Forces Community, with the total number of Armed Forces Covenant signings rising to over 5,800 by the end of September.

Ensuring that all veterans' healthcare needs are met remains crucial. The number of GP practices accredited as Veteran Friendly has more than tripled to over 800. The Defence Recovery Capability Review made 42 recommendations about future Defence Recovery Pathways for our wounded, injured and sick personnel, and in April we launched HeadFIT, an important tool to support mental fitness in the Armed Forces and to promote the good management of mental health.

While progress has been made, both this year and in previous years more still needs to be done. Next year, the Government will honour our Manifesto commitment to further strengthen the Covenant in law. The Government, with partners across all levels of Government in the UK, Service charities and the private sector, will continue to mitigate disadvantage wherever it is found within the Armed Forces community, seeking special considerations where appropriate.

This report is a collaborative effort. I would like to thank colleagues across Government, the Devolved Administrations and Local Authorities, and partners across the UK who are continuing to drive forward the work of the Covenant. I am also grateful to the external members of the Covenant Reference Group for their involvement throughout the process and for their independent observations.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Transparency and Scrutiny Arrangements for New Free Trade Agreements****Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss):****[[HCWS623](#)]**

I am today setting out transparency and scrutiny arrangements for our new international trade deals with the United States, Australia, New Zealand and for the UK's proposed accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). This includes a clear statement of intent by the Government and reflects our commitment to transparency and effective scrutiny of our trade agenda. Furthermore, my department will continue to work closely with the International Trade Committee and the International Agreements Sub-Committee to review these intentions.

We have committed to publishing the objectives for new Free Trade Agreements and scoping assessments at the outset of negotiations. The Government led a comprehensive public consultation before commencing its negotiations with Japan, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Just as happens in the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand systems, the Government has kept Parliament updated on negotiations as they progress, including close engagement with relevant Select Committees.

The Government will continue to keep Parliament and the public informed of progress for these negotiations through the publication of 'Round Reports'. The Government will also continue to hold regular briefings for Parliamentarians so that they are kept informed and can ask questions of Ministers. We will work constructively with the relevant Select Committees to keep them apprised of negotiations, including through public and private briefings with Ministers and Chief Negotiators.

The Government has further built on commitments to transparency and scrutiny through the recent announcement of the extension of the Trade and Agriculture Commission. The Trade and Agriculture Commission will now be placed on a statutory footing in the Trade Bill. It will provide advice on the impacts on farming and animal welfare arising from these new Free Trade Agreements before they are laid in Parliament, under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 procedure.

In addition, the Government will work with the International Trade Committee and International Agreements Sub-Committee to ensure they have treaty text and other related documents or reports on a confidential basis, a reasonable time prior to them being laid or deposited in Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act procedure. This is to enable the Committees, should they decide to do so, to produce a report on these new Free Trade Agreements. As with the Japan agreement, this will provide Parliamentarians with an additional reference point on which to scrutinise what we have negotiated.

When a signed treaty text is laid in Parliament, it will be accompanied by an Explanatory Memorandum and the Government will publish an independently verified impact assessment which will cover the economic and environmental impacts of the deal. Parliament will then have 21 sitting days to scrutinise the deal. Should the International Trade Committee or International Agreements Sub-Committee recommend a debate on

the deal, the Government will seek to accommodate such a request subject to Parliamentary time. The Government wants these agreements to be examined by Parliamentarians and effectively scrutinised.

Widespread prior consultation and the publication of detailed impact assessments and objectives upfront allow informed debate at the start of the negotiations. Extensive stakeholder engagement on the detail of the negotiations as they proceed, and confidential briefing of relevant Committees, combined with the confidential sharing of text at the end of negotiations mean the Government will have provided Parliament with the information to provide effective scrutiny at all stages of the negotiations. This approach to transparency and openness to scrutiny by Parliament and other stakeholders is at least as strong as any other Westminster-style democracies such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

These arrangements are appropriate to the UK's constitutional makeup and separation of powers. Ultimately if Parliament is not content with a trade deal, it can raise concerns by resolving against ratification and delay any implementing legislation indefinitely.

This Government is committed to ensuring that no trade deal undermines key industries or lowers standards for consumers. The Government is concluding Free Trade Agreements that benefit all parts of the UK by creating opportunities for our world-leading industries, and maintaining high standards while increasing choice for consumers.

To ensure that the arrangements set out today remain fit for purpose and enable the International Trade Committee and the International Agreements Sub-Committee to conduct their important scrutiny role effectively, the Government will work with the Committees to review further the detail behind these arrangements. For trade agreements beyond the scope of this statement, the Government will always ensure that the appropriate transparency and scrutiny procedures are put in place and will provide further clarification at the appropriate time.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Human Rights Update

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):**  
[\[HCWS625\]](#)

I am today announcing the creation of the Independent Human Rights Act Review. This review extends from our Manifesto commitment and will take the form of an independent advisory panel which will provide the Government with options for updating the Human Rights Act (HRA). As Lord Chancellor, I am committed to upholding the UK's stature on human rights. The UK contribution to human rights law is immense and founded in the common law tradition. We will continue to champion human rights both at home and abroad, and we remain committed to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The HRA has been in force for 20 years, and therefore it is timely to undertake a review into its operation. The UK's constitutional framework has always evolved incrementally over time, and it will continue evolving. We need to make sure that our human rights

framework, as with the rest of our legal framework, develops and is refined to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the society it serves. The review will examine two key areas outlined in detail in the Terms of Reference, which will be deposited in the libraries of each House. Broadly, the panel will consider the following themes:

- i) The relationship between domestic courts and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)
- ii) The impact of the HRA on the relationship between the judiciary, the executive and the legislature

The examination of the Act will consider the approach taken by domestic courts to jurisprudence of the ECtHR, and whether the HRA currently strikes the correct balance between the roles of the courts, Government and Parliament.

As part of its work, the Review will also examine the circumstances in which the HRA applies to acts of public authorities taking place outside the territory of the UK, with consideration of the implications of the current position, and whether there is a case for change. The Review is limited to consideration of the HRA, which is a protected enactment under the devolution settlements.

It is my intention that the panel shall consider these questions independently, thoroughly, and put forward options for reform to be considered by myself. The panel will report back in Summer 2021 and their report will be published, as will the Government's response.

The following people will become members of the panel. They have been selected on the basis of their wealth of experience, coming from senior legal and academic backgrounds. They have the breadth and depth of expertise required to consider the issues highlighted within the Terms of Reference effectively. The panel members are:

- Sir Peter Gross – Panel Chair
- Simon Davis
- Baroness O'Loan
- Sir Stephen Laws QC
- Professor Tom Mullen
- Professor Maria Cahill
- Lisa Giovannetti QC
- Alan Bates