



## Daily Report

Tuesday, 8 December 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:32 P.M., 08 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

#### ■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[122919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has issued loans via the British Business Bank to subsidiaries of (a) Stagecoach, (b) National Express, (c) Go-Ahead, (d) First Group, (e) Serco, (f) Arriva and (g) Abellio in response to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on (i) revenue streams and (ii) operational matters.

**Paul Scully:**

The British Business Bank is the UK's development bank, providing finance for small businesses via lending partners across a range of programmes. Part of the Bank's wider role includes accrediting lenders for the Covid Support Schemes on behalf of Government.

The British Business Bank does not issue any loans directly to businesses. All credit decisions are delegated to accredited lenders in accordance with the rules set out under the terms of the three Covid Support Schemes.

Details of individual aid awards under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme will be published where required via the European Commission's Transparency Aid Module in due course.

#### ■ **Business: Christmas**

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[122898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage consumers to support local businesses during the Christmas 2020 trading period.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to supporting local businesses during this crucial trading period. BEIS and MHCLG have been working closely with retailers and Local Authorities for a safe and successful reopening of non-essential retail on 2 December.

In order to further support retailers, planning rules limiting opening hours will be eased to allow shops to be open for longer Monday to Saturday from 2 December, giving consumers greater flexibility to choose when they shop. These measures will run through the January sales.

We have modified the closing time for hospitality to last orders at 10pm and closing time at 11pm. This allows customers to depart gradually and provides greater flexibility.

The excellent Small Business Saturday UK event took place on the 5 December and was a great way to celebrate small and micro businesses across the UK, raise awareness of the importance of SME's to our local communities and help them get back on their feet.

My ministerial colleagues across Government and I were delighted to be able to take part on the day itself to champion our small businesses and draw attention to the brilliant campaign.

## ■ Climate Change Convention

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[124877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what process was used to select the members of the UK COP26 team; what assessment he has made of the effect of that process on gender balance in that team; and what plans his Department has to review the selection process to ensure better representation of women in future COP teams.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The UK is committed to championing diversity and inclusion throughout our COP26 Presidency and all civil servants in the Cabinet Office COP26 Unit have been appointed in line with Civil Service guidance and rules.

Forty five percent of the Senior Management Team in the COP26 unit are women. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently appointed my Hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed as the COP26 Adaptation and Resilience Champion.

## ■ Conditions of Employment: Disability

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122754\]](#)

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

**Paul Scully:**

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



Officials are discussing this employment rights guidance with disability groups to ensure the published material continues to meet the needs of disabled workers and their employers.

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

## ■ Copyright

**Julian Knight:**

[\[122741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the introduction of an international copyright regime on UK (a) authors and (b) publishers.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is currently considering all options for the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime. The Government is aware of many of the arguments in favour and against an international exhaustion of IP rights regime, but will be consulting on the potential impact of different exhaustion of rights regimes in early 2021. Information from that consultation will be taken into account before the Government makes any decisions on a future regime.

**Julian Knight:**

[\[122742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will hold discussions with the Intellectual Property Office on the potential role of a national copyright exhaustion regime in supporting the UK's (a) publishing industry and (b) other creative exports.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO), an executive agency of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, is already considering the UK's future exhaustion of intellectual property rights regime. The Department will work with officials at the IPO and stakeholders to assess the potential impact of the different exhaustion of IP rights regimes that could be implemented in the UK. This will include consideration of impacts on the publishing industry and exports of goods in the secondary market, including goods from the creative industries.

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Ian Paisley:**

[\[122697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether any aborted fetuses material has been used in the development of any covid-19 vaccines.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

At the time of a marketing authorisation, the Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) will include a full list of the drug substances and excipients. There are statutory requirements for what is required in an SmPC document and we will follow those for Covid-19 vaccines. More information is available in the "Guideline on Quality Aspects Included in the Product Information for Vaccines for Human Use".

■ **Energy: Arrears****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[124767\]](#)

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 number of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that have fallen into arrears with their energy supplier; and what steps his Department is taking to protect vulnerable households in energy arrears during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government has introduced a number of financial support mechanisms to support households who may be under greater financial pressure due to Covid-19.

On top of the support to household incomes, including uplift to Universal Credit and the wage support schemes, the £2 billion Green Homes Grant will support domestic energy efficiency measures, and the Energy Company Obligation scheme provides around £640 million per year to help fuel poor and low income households stay warm while reducing their energy bills.

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

■ **Environment Protection: Wolverhampton South East****Stuart Anderson:**[\[122880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many jobs the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will create in Wolverhampton South West constituency.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

As we rebuild, we must build back better, greener, and faster. This means supporting green jobs, levelling up, accelerating our path to net zero, and creating long-term advantage for the UK.

Spanning clean energy, buildings, transport, nature and innovative technologies, the Ten Point Plan will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030. In doing so we will plan will we will support a further 90,000 green jobs across the UK by 2024, and up to 250,000 by

2030, building on the 460,000 jobs that already exist in the low carbon economy today.

Support for green jobs across the UK, including the West Midlands, will be delivered by:

- Investing £1 billion to make our homes, schools and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient, supporting around 50,000 jobs across the UK
- Doubling the Green Recovery Challenge Fund with an extra £40 million
- Backing our world-leading automotive sector, including in the West Midlands and North East and Wales to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles, and transforming our national infrastructure to better support electric vehicles. To support this acceleration, nearly £500 million will be spent in the next four years for the development and mass-scale production of electric vehicle batteries, and other strategic technologies as part of our commitment to provide up to £1 billion, boosting international investment into our strong manufacturing bases such as in the Midlands and North East, and safeguarding 169,000 jobs in the automotive sector.

The Ten Point Plan is the foundation towards a green industrial revolution in the UK. We will set out further measures as we run up to COP26 to support the growth of the low carbon economy – starting with the Energy White Paper.

## ■ Housing: Electrical Control Equipment

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[124656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the extent to which utility companies have responsibility to replace worn-out cut-out fuses in domestic properties; and if he will make a statement.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Fuses and the fuse box (consumer unit) are the responsibility of the property owner, but some customers may have included maintenance of the consumer unit as part of a contract for the supply of electricity, or as a separate contract.

The regional Distribution Network Operator is responsible for maintenance of the main cut-out fuse (usually a 60, 80 or 100 amp fuse).

## ■ Hydrogen

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[124747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the financial effect of gas transmission network costs on the hydrogen producers required to help deliver his ten point plan for a green industrial revolution.

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[124748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Policy paper entitled The ten point plan for a green industrial revolution, updated on 18 November 2020, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of the gas transmission network costs on hydrogen production and transmission capacity.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Hydrogen could provide a clean source of fuel and heat for our homes, transport and industry and, working with industry, we are aiming for the UK to have 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. To support this, work is on-going to consider options for policy support for hydrogen production as well as blending of hydrogen into the gas transmission grid. This is alongside additional work on the long-term future of the gas grid and potential conversion to hydrogen.

■ **Innovate UK: Grants**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[121351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications for Innovate UK Smart Grants were received from businesses in Weaver Vale constituency since 28 August 2020; and how many of those applications were successful in receiving grant money.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[121352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications for Innovate UK Smart Grants for businesses in Weaver Vale constituency have been rejected since August 2020; and what the primary reason was for each of those rejections.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Innovate UK Smart grants are an opportunity for UK registered organisations to apply for a share of up to £25 million from Innovate UK (part of UK Research and Innovation, UKRI) to deliver disruptive R&D innovations that can significantly impact the UK economy.

The August 2020 competition for Innovate UK Smart Grants opened to applications on 28<sup>th</sup> August and closed to applications on 25<sup>th</sup> November.

Applicants are not required to include their postcode until after an offer is made. Identification of applications from the Weaver Vale has been undertaken based on postcode information voluntarily provided by applicants for the organisations' registered addresses and/or the work location addresses. 17 applications involving one or more applicants in the Weaver Vale constituency have been identified.

Applications that do not fulfil the competition criteria are classed as ineligible and many applicants with ineligible applications will have been informed of this already. As of 30<sup>th</sup> November, 3 of these applications are ineligible. Two of the applications exceed the allowed project costs for the project duration and the other is a project

over 18 months in duration that does not fulfil the need to be a collaborative project. These eligibility criteria are applied transparently and equally to all applications.

This competition will go into the assessment phase shortly with the funding decisions expected in February 2021.

#### ■ **Mobile Phones: Materials**

**Carol Monaghan:**

[\[124781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure mobile phones sold in the UK contain only ethically sourced materials.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government expects all our businesses, including mobile phone suppliers and manufacturers, to behave throughout their operations and supply arrangements in environmentally responsible and ethical ways.

#### ■ **Natural Gas: Energy Supply**

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[124746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Ofgem on (a) the effectiveness of the new gas transmission charging regime introduced in October 2020 and (b) progress on proposals to introduce a short haul tariff.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

BEIS have been in regular discussion with Ofgem regarding their assessment of the proposals to introduce a short-haul tariff to the new gas transmission charging regime introduced in October 2020. BEIS will continue to work closely with Ofgem whilst respecting its responsibility as an independent regulatory authority.

#### ■ **Nuclear Power: Finance**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[122876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) effect on public health and (b) resulting costs to the taxpayers of the Government's future financing of nuclear projects.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Nuclear safety is a top priority for the Government and is kept under regular review. We have a world class regulatory system, and all operators are answerable to robust and independent regulators – the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the relevant environmental regulators. If the ONR consider that any nuclear reactor is not safe it will not be allowed to be built. Proposed new nuclear projects must also represent clear value for money for both consumers and taxpayers.

**■ Nuclear Power: Waste****Afzal Khan:**[\[122877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what level of expenditure his Department has assessed to be necessary to ensure the safe storage of additional waste arising from higher burn nuclear fuel in future nuclear projects; who will incur those costs and for how long.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Higher activity radioactive waste created by future nuclear projects will be disposed of in a geological disposal facility. Geological disposal is internationally recognised as the safest available option for disposing of higher activity waste. Operators of new nuclear power stations will have a statutory requirement to ensure adequate financing arrangements are in place to meet the full costs of decommissioning and their full share of waste management and disposal costs.

**■ Research: Public Expenditure****Chi Onwurah:**[\[124750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what effect the 2020 Spending Review will have on the proportion of GDP spent on research and development.

**Amanda Solloway:**

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. This investment supports our commitments set out in the R&D Roadmap and helps consolidate our position as a science superpower as we build towards UK R&D investment of 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

Leveraging investment from the private sector that we will reach the target. By increasing public investment in R&D, we will attract further private sector investment. On average, £1 of public investment in R&D eventually leverages around £2 of additional private sector investment.

The UK already has world-class science and research and is ranked as one of the most innovative countries in the world, investing 1.7% of GDP in 2018. The first figures reflecting the proportion of GDP invested in R&D in 2020 are expected to be released in Spring 2022.

**■ Sanitary Protection: Labelling****Hywel Williams:**[\[122584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with (a) officials within his Department, (b) Cabinet colleagues and (c) other stakeholders, on the Senate Bill S2387 passed by the New York State Senate which relates to menstrual product labelling and which mandates the disclosure of

ingredients used to make menstrual products on the packages or boxes that they are sold in.

**Paul Scully:**

The safety of sanitary products is regulated by the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR), which require a product to be safe in normal or reasonably foreseeable use when placed on the market. Under the GPSR, manufacturers are not required to list ingredients for their product. But the law is clear that any sanitary products placed on the UK market must be safe for use.

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

■ **Science: Research**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[124749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made in achieving the target of 2.4 per cent of GDP spending on science research; and what proportion of spending since the introduction of that target has been in the (a) public, (b) charity and (c) private sector.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The latest data published by the Office for National Statistics is for 2018, showing UK Gross Expenditure on R&D at 1.71% of GDP, an increase on the previous year's figure. ONS plans to release data for 2019 in spring 2021.

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.

Private investment is a major part of UK R&D spend and leveraging this investment will be key to achieving the 2.4% target. In our R&D Roadmap, published in July 2020, we set out our priorities for boosting R&D across the economy.

■ **Seabed: Bomb Disposal**

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[122654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals requiring unexploded munitions on the seafloor to be disposed of by the process of deflagration as used by the Royal Navy and recommended by a BEIS funded study on the Characterisation of acoustic fields generated by UXO removal, published June 2020.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government recognise the potential for significant impact of underwater noise from unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance on vulnerable marine species and is taking active steps to manage and reduce the risk. Two phases of a Department for



Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) funded project to characterise and contrast the acoustic fields generated by UXO clearance using high order detonation and using low-order deflagration have been completed and reported on.

A third phase has now been initiated to further improve the information base, allowing further assessment of the clearance options. A potential 4th phase of the work involving offshore field work is also being actively explored in which comparative noise measurements would be made during actual UXO clearance campaigns using both deflagration and high order detonations. This would require cooperation and active support from industry (windfarm developers) and the regulatory authorities.

The outcomes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> phases would allow an informed discussion and consideration of the adequacy of evidence by regulatory authorities and the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies. It will be for the regulatory authorities and the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies to consider the best available scientific evidence when providing advice on these matters.

#### ■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[122625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to bring forward the payment date for recipients of the Warm Home Discount who are not in receipt of Pension Credit, to account for increased utility costs arising as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Participating energy suppliers are obligated to pay their customers by the end of March 2021, however they are encouraged to make these payments as soon as the relevant checks on eligible customers have been completed.

Administering the Warm Home Discount is a large undertaking. We estimate that around 2.2 million households will receive a rebate this winter with around 1.2 million applying via the Broader Group. Due to the volume of rebates and the time needed for the implementation process outlined above, it would not be possible to bring forward the delivery timetable for this scheme year.

In addition, the Voluntary Agreement that BEIS negotiated in March with energy suppliers remains in force, where suppliers agreed to a set of principles to support customers impacted by Covid-19 who may be struggling with energy bills and help to keep them on supply.



## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ National Security

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[122606\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the effect on national security of the establishment of front organisations in the UK by overseas political parties.

**Chloe Smith:**

The Intelligence and Security Agencies produce and contribute to regular assessments of the threat posed by Hostile State Activity, including around potential interference in UK democratic processes. We keep such assessments under review and, where necessary, update them in response to new intelligence.

It is and always will be a priority for this Government to secure the UK's democracy against all forms of interference, whilst welcoming transparent political participation and debate. The Defending Democracy programme brings together government, civil society and private sector organisations. As announced in the Queen's Speech, we will bring forward new legislation to provide the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to disrupt hostile state activity.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Civilians

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[124753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the Draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas published on 17 March 2020; and if he will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

Her Majesty's Government officials have played a key role in the development of the political declaration. Covid-19 restrictions mean that in-person discussions are currently unable to take place, although the UK continues to engage civil society and states bilaterally.

### ■ Armed Forces: Mortgages

**Mark Pritchard:**

[\[125224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will hold discussions with the Council of Mortgage Lenders on improving the treatment of mortgage applications submitted by armed forces personnel.

**Johnny Mercer:**

There are no plans to discuss this matter with the Council of Mortgage Lenders. Most major banking institutions are signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant and, as such, should treat mortgage applications from Service personnel in accordance with its principles. Defence Officials regularly meet representatives from the Financial Services sector and can discuss issues regarding Service personnel accessing financial products should they arise. Mortgages tailored to those Serving in the Armed Forces are available from several mortgage providers. These make special allowance for the unique circumstances of Service personnel, as it is recognised these can sometimes impede the ability to access a conventional mortgage. Support is also available via the Forces Help To Buy Scheme, extended until December 2022.

**Bomb Disposal: Seabed****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[122664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of whether using the Deflagration system to disarm unexploded ordnance on the seabed is as effective as total destruction.

**Jeremy Quin:**

It has been assessed that both High Order and Low Order techniques are effective at disarming unexploded ordnance on the seabed and have been considered by the Royal Navy to meet the requirements in the underwater environment. Techniques used will vary based on the size, type and age of the ordnance that is being disarmed.

While both High Order and Low Order techniques can render safe unexploded ordnance in the underwater environment, High Order procedures significantly reduce the likelihood of a partial disposal of an item. This not only reduces the chances of environmental residue on the seabed but also significantly reduces the explosive risk to the returning diver or Remotely Operated Vehicle that must confirm that Explosive Ordnance Disposal action has been completed. In the event that a partially disposed item is displaced from its original resting place and obscured in the underwater environment, there is a risk that the explosive remnants will be re-discovered inadvertently by the general public (fishing industry and civilian diving) creating a further disposal task.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[122665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the comparative cost is of using (a) the Deflagration system and (b) explosive destruction to disarm unexploded ordnance on the seabed.

**Jeremy Quin:**

While High Order charges are significantly more expensive than Low Order the cost of the charge itself represents a relatively small element of the overall cost of executing the mission. The employment of Deflagration systems and explosive destruction techniques for destruction or disarmament of unexploded ordnance are

conducted by either a Royal Navy Mine Countermeasures Vessel or a Clearance Diving Unit. Both of these have comparable overheads representing the substantial proportion of the overall mission costs.

## ■ Fleet Solid Support Ships

**John Healey:**

[\[124670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost has been of the public tender process for the Fleet Solid Support Ships to date.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heappey) on 30 January 2020 to Question 8160 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones).

### Attachments:

1. 8160 - Royal Fleet Auxiliary Procurement [8160 - Royal Fleet Auxiliary.docx]

## ■ Military Aid

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[124300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Military Aid to the Civil Authorities requests he has submitted since March 2020.

**James Heappey:**

Since March 2020, there have been 436 Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) requests received into Standing Joint Command (UK). As of 7 December, there are currently 70 open MACA tasks.

## ■ RAF Scampton

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

[\[124110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to progress the development of the RAF Scampton site; if he will engage with potential developers or purchasers for the site; and what steps he is taking to ensure that the disposal of the site is undertaken in such a way as to maximise public benefit for Lincolnshire.

**Jeremy Quin:**

RAF Scampton will be disposed of in accordance with Treasury guidelines following the closure of the site, which is currently planned for 2022. The Ministry of Defence is aware of the interest in the future of the site and will continue to engage with the local authority as plans develop.

## ■ Type 31 Frigates

**John Healey:**

[\[124668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many export orders have been made for Type 31e.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Type 31 frigate is the UK variant of the Arrowhead 140 (AH140) design. No export orders have currently been placed for AH140, but UK industry in partnership with the UK Defence and Security Exports (UKDSE) and MOD are actively pursuing a number of campaigns.

**John Healey:**[\[124669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many export orders were envisaged for Type 31e by his Department at the end of the concept phase.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Work to evaluate the potential scope of the general purpose frigate market was conducted prior to the T31 procurement being launched. This research helped to inform the development of the T31 evaluation criteria. As part of the Design & Build contract, Babcock is required to generate a strategy which outlines their approach to exporting the T31. There has been healthy international interest so far in the Type 31. The MOD has been supporting UK Defence and Security Exports and Babcock in actively pursuing a number of these opportunities.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Bowling: Coronavirus****Mr Clive Betts:**[\[124667\]](#)

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

**Nigel Huddleston:**

My Department is taking a number of steps to support bowling centres impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Bowling centre operators can 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.

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.

## ■ Broadband

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[124651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to publicise the (a) legal right for households to have an internet connection of at least 10Mbps and (b) entitlement to an upgrade to a fibre connection if other interventions fail; and if he will make a statement.

**Matt Warman:**

The Universal Service Conditions set out by Ofcom require the two Universal Service Providers (BT and KCOM in the Hull area) to take 'reasonable steps... to raise awareness of the potential availability of Broadband Services under these Conditions among members of the public'. As of September 2020, BT had directly contacted 47,000 premises that are eligible for the Universal Service Obligation.

In addition, Ofcom, who are responsible for implementing the Universal Service Obligation, are taking their own steps to publicise it through both their website and a localised, geo-targeted social media campaign.

The Universal Service Obligation is technology neutral. It provides a legal right to request a decent broadband connection delivering a minimum 10Mbps download speed. It does not limit the technologies that can be used by the Universal Service Provider to deliver the minimum specification or provide a legal right for consumers to request an upgrade to a fibre connection. That said, the Universal Service Providers have provided fibre connections under the Universal Service Obligation where this is the most efficient technology solution.

In addition, the government has a number of other programmes to help people upgrade to gigabit capable connections, including the rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme for example. This is in addition to our commitment to invest £5bn from April 2021 to bring gigabit coverage to the hardest to reach areas as part of the UK Gigabit Programme.

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[124652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of households with an internet connection with a speed which cannot exceed 10Mbps; and if he will make a statement.

**Matt Warman:**

Ofcom's Connected Nations Report 2019 estimated that the number of households that could not receive a 'decent' broadband service providing at least 10Mbps download speeds from either a fixed line or Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) connection, and are therefore potentially eligible for a connection under the Universal Service Obligation, was 189,000 premises. Ofcom's Connected Nations Report 2020 is due to be published before the end of the year, and we expect to see a further reduction in the number of premises that cannot access a broadband service that meets the specification under the Universal Service Obligation.

**■ Culture: Coronavirus****Fabian Hamilton:** [\[124684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that covid-19 related funding allocated to cultural organisations is distributed equitably.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Rigorous criteria have rightly been applied to all applications made to the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), to ensure we are supporting organisations that have national and local importance, and those that play a key role in the levelling up agenda. Additionally, decisions on larger grant payments have been scrutinised by the independent CRF Board. The Board also takes decisions on the repayable finance element of the Fund. This adds additional assurance that funding decisions are fair and unbiased.

To date over £500 million has been allocated to over 2,000 organisations across England, and 70 per cent of the latest round of Culture Recovery funding was awarded outside London.

**■ Gambling****Jim Shannon:** [\[122703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the planned timescale is for bringing forward proposals to reform gambling legislation.

**Jeff Smith:** [\[123634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Advertising Standards Authority on rules on gambling advertising prior to the announcement of the Gambling Review; and if he will make a statement.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[123707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his timescale is for his Department's review of the Gambling Act 2005.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The government has committed to reviewing the Gambling Act 2005 to ensure that it is fit for the digital age. Further details will be announced in due course.

As set out in the answer to Question 118541, ministers have met with a range of stakeholders ahead of the Gambling Act Review. Details of ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the government's website at:

[https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content\\_store\\_document\\_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport](https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport).

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport engages regularly with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the UK's independent regulator of advertising, including on matters relating to gambling advertising. The ASA is currently consulting

on proposed changes to the advertising codes aimed at further restricting the potential for gambling adverts to appeal to children or vulnerable people.

■ **Gambling: Coronavirus**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[122608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when adult gaming centres will be able to re-open in tier three local covid-19 alert level areas.

**Philip Davies:** [\[R\] \[122643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what opportunity the Government made available to (a) adult gaming centres, (b) bingo halls and (c) casinos to adopt covid-secure measures as a condition of re-opening in areas subject to Tier Three covid-19 restrictions from 2 December 2020.

**Philip Davies:** [\[R\] \[122644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what evidence his Department received on the rate of covid-19 transmission in (a) adult gaming centres, (b) bingo halls and (c) casinos to support the decision for those businesses based in tier three local covid alert level areas to remain closed from 2 December 2020.

**Scott Benton:** [\[122915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he had with adult gaming centres on covid-secure measures prior to the decision to close those centres under tier three covid-19 restrictions.

**Scott Benton:** [\[122916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what impact assessment he has made of the decision to not allow adult gaming centres to reopen in tier three covid-19 local lockdown areas.

**Mark Pawsey:** [\[124735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he took to provide adult gaming centres with the opportunity to adopt similar measures to licensed betting offices in order to re-open in tier 3 areas from 2 December 2020.

**Graham Stringer:** [\[125212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what evidence his Department received on the rate of covid-19 transmission in adult gaming centres to justify keeping such centres closed in areas with tier 3 restrictions in December 2020.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The government, with advice from SAGE, reviewed the impact of the previous tiering arrangements and decided that unfortunately stricter rules on tier 3 closures would be necessary to have an impact on the rate of transmission in very high alert areas. This led to the decision that all hospitality and indoor entertainment venues in tier 3 areas would have to close, including casinos, bingo halls and adult gaming centres. SAGE



advice is independent and published on a regular basis on:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies)

The government has continued to engage with the land-based gambling sector throughout the pandemic, including with its trade associations the Betting and Gaming Council, Bacta and the Bingo Association. The Minister for Sports, Heritage and Tourism has had a series of roundtable discussions with the industry to discuss the impact of Covid-19, including representatives from two of Britain's largest AGC operators. DCMS officials have been in regular contact with the representative trade associations and fed their views into the government decision-making process, and they are continuing to do so.

Government has set out an analysis of the health, economic and social impacts of the tiered approach, which can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-economic-and-social-effects-of-covid-19-and-the-tiered-approach>. As on previous occasions, local data packs have also been published.

Epidemiological data and projection models on local restriction tiers, including commentary on individual tier allocation decisions, can also be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938964/Coronavirus\\_England\\_briefing\\_26\\_November.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938964/Coronavirus_England_briefing_26_November.pdf).

## ■ Leisure: Coronavirus

**Emma Hardy:**

**[122864]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance he has published on (a) dance, (b) yoga and (c) swimming and (d) other group indoor sessions for people living under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

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

As the Prime Minister said on 23 November national restrictions will end on Wednesday 2 December, and gyms and sport facilities including swimming pools will reopen across all tiers. Under Tier 3, gyms and sports facilities will be open for individual exercise and exercise in single households or support bubbles only. Indoor group activities and exercise classes should not take place. You can continue to do unlimited exercise alone, or in an outdoor public place in groups up to 6.

There are exceptions, however, which can take place in any number for disability sport, sports as part of the curriculum in education and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s (including those who were under 18 on 31 August 2020).



Government has published overarching guidance for grassroots sport but doesn't publish guidance for individual sports. It is for the National Governing Body of the sport to consider the steps that would need to be taken, and the conditions that would need to be met, for their activity to resume. The National Governing Body should also publish relevant guidance.

## ■ Sports: Coronavirus

**Mr Clive Betts:**

[\[124662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2020 to Question 120773 on Ice Skating: Coronavirus, what sports he classifies as having elite athletes.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Elite and professional athletes may continue to use facilities to train and to compete. It is set out in regulation and in guidance that an 'elite athlete' is defined as a person who is:

- an individual who derives a living from competing in a sport
- a senior representative nominated by a relevant sporting body
- a member of the senior training squad for a relevant sporting body
- on an elite development pathway.

It is for the relevant governing body to set their own guidance and define the threshold at which these criteria are met in their sport.

## ■ Telecommunications

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[124751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for the diversification of the fibre supply chain as part of removing Huawei from UK fibre networks.

**Matt Warman:**

Government is clear that market consolidation is also a prominent issue affecting the supply chain for fixed access networks. As we announced in July, we are conducting a technical consultation which will inform our approach to accelerating diversification within fixed networks. We will set out our plans to diversify the fixed access supply market after the consultation has concluded.

We continue to work closely with network operators to support the introduction of alternative suppliers as soon as possible. We have said from the start that we will seek to incentivise existing scale players to enter the market and we remain committed to that. We welcome the progress of operators who are already taking steps to bring in new scale vendors.

**■ Television Licences: Non-payment****Kevin Brennan:**[\[124142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he intends to publish his response to his Department's consultation on decriminalising TV licence evasion, which closed in April 2020.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The consultation closed in April this year after receiving over 150,000 responses.

The government has been listening carefully to those that have responded before setting out our next steps.

The government intends to publish its response to the consultation shortly.

**■ UK Safer Internet Centre: Finance****Chris Elmore:**[\[124817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to progress funding for the UK Safer Internet Centre in 2021.

**Chris Elmore:**[\[124818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans the Government has to allocate funding to the UK Safer Internet Centre in 2021.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The government is committed to ensuring children are protected online and this remains at the heart of our online harms agenda, and wider government priorities. The government recognises the important role the UK Safer Internet Centre plays in improving online safety in the UK, particularly for children.

Officials engage regularly with the Centre, including on its funding position following the UK's exit from the EU. The government has also written a letter in support of the Centre's application for further EU funding from the Connecting Europe Facility programme for 2021. We understand the Centre will know the outcome of this application shortly.

**EDUCATION****■ Apprentices****Karin Smyth:**[\[122782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the effect on the (a) quality and (b) quantity of apprenticeships of allowing levy-paying employers to choose which non-levy employers to transfer their unspent levy funds.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Levy-paying employers can transfer funds to any employer, including smaller employers, apprenticeship training agencies and charities, to support high-quality

apprenticeship training. Transfers enable levy-paying employers to support employers in their supply chains, address local skills needs, and help sectors build sustainable capability for the future.

Apprenticeships funded by transfers are on the same high-quality employer designed standards and are delivered only by providers that are approved to deliver apprenticeship training. All apprenticeships must last a minimum of 12 months and provide a minimum of 20% off-the-job training to ensure that every apprentice develops the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for them to achieve full occupational competence. This is confirmed by a rigorous and independent end-point assessment.

In April 2019, the department increased the amount that levy payers could transfer and are seeing numbers of transfers rise steadily. The latest figures show that in the 2018/19 academic year, 670 apprenticeship starts resulted from transferred commitments. This increased to 4,630 starts in the 2019/20 academic year. We publish further detail on apprenticeship transfers here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2019-20>.

As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, set out in the Spending Review, the department will be making it easier for employers who pay the levy to find and transfer unspent levy funds to small and medium sized enterprises, with the development of a new online matching service and the facility to pledge funds in bulk from August 2021.

This work will build on initiatives, such as the Health Education England scheme and the successful regional levy transfer pilot led by West Midlands Combined Authority, where we are already seeing the benefits of work being undertaken to bring large and small employers together.

**Karin Smyth:**

**[122784]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that traineeships and placements under the Kickstart scheme lead to an opportunity of an apprenticeship.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The government's Plan for Jobs was announced in July 2020 and set out several key policy initiatives to support individuals and employers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>. This included the introduction of a new £2 billion Kickstart scheme to create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people across the country. We also announced a £111 million investment to triple the scale of the existing Traineeship programme in the 2020-21 financial year, ensuring more young people have access to high-quality training.

In addition, the government has scaled up support for businesses to enable more people to benefit from training opportunities, and introduced payments for employers taking on new apprentices, with businesses now able to access payments of £2,000

for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25 and £1,500 for new apprentices over 25 from 1 August 2020 to 31 March 2021. This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment we already provide for new 16 to 18-year-old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Traineeships already deliver good outcomes for young people. In the 2017-18 academic year, 66% of learners completing a traineeship had a sustained positive destination, with almost a quarter (24.9%) progressing to an apprenticeship before the end of the 2018-19 academic year: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-outcome-based-success-measures/2017-18>. We will strengthen progression to apprenticeships as a destination through the new sector-specific traineeships we are currently developing with employers. These will act as a direct pipeline to real apprenticeship opportunities, in addition to the engagement activity we are planning to target towards young people, employers, and training providers.

We have already amended our funding rules to ensure that employers supporting a Kickstart individual to begin an apprenticeship can still benefit from the apprenticeship incentive payment.

Together with the Department for Work and Pensions, we will be engaging with employers to encourage them to create new apprenticeship opportunities for the young people on their Kickstart placements. We know that many employers have already expressed an interest in creating apprenticeship placements for existing Kickstart participants, but we want to support more businesses, large and small, to take advantage of the opportunity this scheme represents for investing in their skills needs as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 outbreak.

**Karin Smyth:**

**[122786]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of paying apprenticeship providers upon delivery of training.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Apprenticeship training providers are paid retrospectively for the training they have delivered. The department pays 80% of the cost of training in equal monthly instalments according to the planned duration of the apprenticeship. The remainder is paid on completion of the apprenticeship. The way that providers are paid is set out in the apprenticeship funding rules for main providers:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/928015/2021\\_Provider\\_Rules\\_Version\\_2\\_v1.0\\_FINAL\\_published.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928015/2021_Provider_Rules_Version_2_v1.0_FINAL_published.pdf).

Like other apprenticeship policies, the department will continue to keep this under review, as we encourage greater use of innovative apprenticeship training models, such as the front-loading of off-the-job training as set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the Spending Review 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>.

**Karin Smyth:**

**[123628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October to Question 100465 on Apprentices; how many apprenticeships were available at (a) level 2 and (b) level 3 through apprenticeship (i) standards and (ii) frameworks in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The number of learners starting apprenticeships for the 2019/20 academic year in England is published here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>. The table attached provides figures for level and type of apprenticeship.

**Attachments:**

1. 123628\_table [123628\_table\_showing\_apprenticeship\_availability.pdf]

■ **Apprentices: Small Businesses**

**Karin Smyth:**

**[122781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support SMEs in hiring apprentices before the introduction of the extended apprenticeship employer incentives announced in the Spending Review 2020.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department recognises the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to the UK economy. We will make sure that training for apprentices in smaller employers is properly funded, to drive up the number of apprenticeship opportunities available in SMEs across the country.

SMEs are a priority focus as we look to rebuild the economy from the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, and to increase opportunities for young people and people from disadvantaged areas to embark on apprenticeships. The department is making sufficient funding available this year and next to enable smaller employers to access the apprenticeships they need, as they move onto the apprenticeship service and gain greater control over their apprenticeship choices. From August 2020, as outlined in the Plan for Jobs, we introduced payments of £2,000 to employers in England for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and a payment of £1,500 if they are aged 25 and over: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>.

In January 2020, the department expanded access to the full functionality of our flagship apprenticeship service to include employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy. SMEs can now make up to 10 reservations through the service (increased from 3), enabling them to recruit more apprentices and claim incentive payments through the service. Moving onto the service also increases their choice of training provider and puts them in control of managing their apprenticeships. Further guidance about the incentive payments available for hiring a new apprentice is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/incentive-payments-for-hiring-a-new-apprentice>.

Smaller employers can also benefit from transfers from levy-paying employers which do not count towards the reservation cap. In April 2019, the department increased the transfer allowance from 10% to 25% of the annual value of funds entering the apprenticeship service account of levy-paying employers. From August 2021, employers who pay the apprenticeship levy will be able to transfer unspent levy funds in bulk to SMEs with a new pledge function. We will also introduce, from August 2021, a new online service to match levy payers with SMEs that share their business priorities.

The department will continue to work with smaller employers to give them the confidence and support to take on new apprentices. As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in the recent Spending Review, the eligibility period for these incentives has been extended to the end of March 2021, to continue to support employers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

### ■ Apprentices: Taxation

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[122783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what amount of apprenticeship levy funding expired each month since January 2020.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The funds in apprenticeship service accounts are available for levy-paying employers to use for 24 months before they begin to expire on a rolling, month-by-month basis. This means the expiry figures in the months from January to October 2020 relate to the funds which entered levy-paying employer accounts from January to October 2018.

£1,961 million entered employer accounts between January and October 2018 and between January and October 2020, £1,038 million expired. This accounts for 53%. The table below provides a monthly breakdown.

MONTH	LEVY EXPIRED (IN MILLIONS OF POUNDS)
Jan-20	£91
Feb-20	£92
Mar-20	£96
Apr-20	£140
May-20	£96
Jun-20	£98
Jul-20	£105
Aug-20	£104

MONTH	LEVY EXPIRED (IN MILLIONS OF POUNDS)
Sep-20	£105
Oct-20	£110
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,038</b>

The figures in the table refer to the total value of expired levy funds in accounts registered with the apprenticeship service. Levy-paying employers are not obliged to register for an account. Expiry in January 2020 relates to unused levy declared in January 2018. Levy declarations in April 2018 were higher than prior months, as employers made upwards adjustments in this month to correct the total levy declarations for the 2017-18 financial year. This therefore results in a higher amount of expired funds in April 2020.

We do not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds in their accounts, though they are able to do so. Funds raised by the levy are used to support the whole apprenticeship system. This means that employers' unused funds are not lost, but are used to support apprenticeships in smaller employers and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training,

The apprenticeship budget is not affected by the value of any funds which may expire from employers' accounts each month. As my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, set out in the Spending Review, we will again be making available £2.5 billion for investment in apprenticeships in the 2021-22 financial year, which is double that spent in 2010-11.

## ■ Children: Day Care

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[124787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to provide additional funded childcare places in areas subject to Tier 2 and Tier 3 local covid alert level restrictions to help support parents and carers with work commitments.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government continues to support families with their childcare costs, and we are planning to spend over £3.6 billion on our early education entitlements during the 2020/21 financial year. The early years entitlements include 15 hours a week of childcare for disadvantaged 2 year olds, 15 hours a week for all 3 and 4 year olds and an additional 15 hours a week for 3 and 4 year old children of eligible working parents. Parents' eligibility to the early years entitlements is not affected by being in a tier 2 or tier 3 area.

On 20 July 2020, we announced that we will continue to pay local authorities for the childcare places that they usually fund, for the autumn term. This will give nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of whether fewer children are attending because of the COVID-19 outbreak.



At the Spending Review, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a further £44 million investment for 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.

## ■ Children: Mental Health Services

**Jim Shannon:**

**[122934]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to reduce anxiety in children; and what discussions he has had with (a) the NSPCC and other children's charities on that matter.

**Vicky Ford:**

The Department for Education works closely with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and its agencies, including Public Health England (PHE), on action to promote good mental health and wellbeing. On 8 September, PHE launched a mental wellbeing campaign for children and young people. It expands PHE's Better Health-Every Mind Matters website with content specifically for children and young people and their parents and carers.

We know that the COVID-19 outbreak is having a particular impact on children and young people's wellbeing and mental health. DHSC have published a mental health and wellbeing support plan, setting out a wide range of actions that the government is supporting across the NHS and wider services to support mental health and wellbeing recovery, including for children and young people. This can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-mentally-well-winter-plan-2020-to-2021/staying-mentally-well-this-winter>.

The plan highlights the importance of the action that we have taken to ensure that pupils are able to return to school. It also sets out a range of actions that have been taken by the department to support schools, and specific groups of children and young people. This includes the £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme, providing schools and colleges with the knowledge and access to resources to support children and young people, teachers and parents.

The department engages regularly with key children's charities and has valued the insight and challenge from charities in shaping our response to supporting children through the COVID-19 outbreak. Our focus has been to ensure that, together, we support as many children as possible. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak we have met monthly with the NSPCC, and several other key children's charities, to understand key issues facing the system, the challenges facing vulnerable young people, and to ensure a coherent response to providing support.

Additionally, to inform our work to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, my hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health, and I held a roundtable in July, attended by stakeholders from NHS mental health services, local government, and the voluntary



and community sector, including Childline. This was conducted to explore ways of mitigating the mental health impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on children and young people and strengthen partnership working between schools, mental health services, and local organisations.

To increase support further in the long term, we remain committed to our joint green paper delivery programme with DHSC and NHS England, including introducing new mental health support teams linked to schools and colleges, providing training for senior mental health leads in schools and colleges, and testing approaches to faster access to NHS specialist support.

## ■ Children: Terminal Illnesses

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[122917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to provide funding for short breaks and holidays for children who are seriously ill.

**Vicky Ford:**

Supporting the most vulnerable children and young people is a priority for us, especially at this time. We know that this period is particularly hard for families caring for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and those with serious illness.

Short breaks (or 'respite care'), including holidays for respite purposes, are funded opportunities for children and young people to be cared for in or away from the family home. Local authorities have a statutory duty to assess the social care needs of disabled children and categories of seriously ill children and young people, and to provide respite care where necessary.

Local authorities have been allocated a further £4.6 billion this year to help their communities through the COVID-19 outbreak. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the priorities of their local area.

Supporting councils to maintain critical mainstream services continues to be our key priority. The Spending Review 2020 confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.5% in cash terms, which is a real terms increase. This package means that local authorities will be able to access an estimated additional £2.2 billion to support adult and children's social care and to maintain services, including respite.

This year, we have also committed £37.3 million (including £10 million in response to the COVID-19 outbreak) to the Family Fund, which provides grants to low income families caring for disabled children or seriously ill children, including for family breaks.

## ■ Curriculum

**Holly Mumby-Croft:**

**[121406]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adjusting the curriculum to be covered by students for exams in 2021 to better reflect the academic potential of students rather than the extent of the curriculum they have been able to cover in that year.

**Nick Gibb:**

Examinations and assessments are the best and fairest way of judging students' performance. Next year's GCSE, AS level and A level examination series will go ahead with a number of measures in place to ensure that all students have a fair chance to show what they know and can do.

The Department's priority is that there is a consistent approach to what is taught and will be assessed across schools. Schools will be making every effort, including in areas where there is high prevalence of COVID-19, to deliver high quality teaching, including through remote education. In recognition of the disruption which many students are experiencing because of COVID-19, Ofqual will work with exam boards to provide students with advance notice of some exam topic areas and exam support materials. These will be published by the end of January and will reduce the pressure for students, helping them to focus revision.

Combined with our £1 billion catch-up package, including a catch-up premium worth a total of £650 million, these changes give young people the best chance of being ready for their exams without undermining the value of the qualifications they receive.

## ■ First Aid: Secondary Education

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[122603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making first-aid training a compulsory part of secondary education.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department wants to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe, and to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society.

The new curriculum for Relationships, Sex and Health Education became mandatory from September 2020 and, as part of Health Education, schools must have regard for the new statutory guidance that includes teaching first aid at primary and secondary school. The content at secondary school includes how to administer CPR and the purpose of defibrillators.

Schools will have the flexibility to determine how the content is taught, including options to work with expert organisations such as the British Heart Foundation, St John Ambulance, and the British Red Cross, who offer a range of specialist lesson plans, some of which may result in a recognised qualification.

As part of a wider support package for schools, a new training module covering first aid is available for schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher->

[training-basic-first-aid](#). This can be used alongside the statutory guidance on teaching first aid: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>. Schools can adapt this training module and tailor it to meet the needs of their pupils.

## ■ Further Education: Disadvantaged

**Karin Smyth:**

[122776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to ensure that disadvantaged students without laptops and IT software studying at further education colleges are not digitally excluded.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have encouraged further education providers to use their 16-19 bursary funding to purchase devices and connectivity for disadvantaged students aged 16-19 where this is a barrier to learning. Earlier in the year, additional funding was made available to further education providers via a business case process, to support them with additional costs arising from students participating in education online. In addition, in August 2020, we announced that colleges can access help with device needs for students aged 14-16 attending a further education provider through the 'Get Help with Technology' service.

For adults aged 19 and over, we introduced a change to the Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020/21 academic year to enable providers to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices for disadvantaged students to help them meet technology costs. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, mayoral authorities determine adult student support arrangements.

In addition, where further education providers are supplementing their on-site education with online learning, our guidance asks colleges to preserve provision on-site for all learners who need it, including learners without access to devices or connectivity at home.

**Karin Smyth:**

[122777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on enabling greater flexibility to the rules on capital grants for further education colleges to allow that funding to be spent on laptops and IT software provision for disadvantaged students who require them in order to effectively continue their studies.

**Gillian Keegan:**

All further education colleges and designated institutions eligible to receive the Further Education Capital Allowance grant were asked to sign up to the terms and conditions as set out in their grant letter. The terms of this capital grant were negotiated between Her Majesty's Treasury and the Department for Education and were clear. Funding should be used to address condition improvement of substandard or deteriorating buildings in the college or institution estate identified in the Further Education Condition Data Collection (undertaken by the department) or

through a college's own more detailed survey. This includes IT infrastructure, where identified as requiring remedial action. Hardware and software (including laptops) do not constitute IT infrastructure and are therefore are not eligible for capital spend under the terms of this grant.

However, further education providers have been able to use their 16-19 bursary funding to purchase devices and connectivity for disadvantaged students aged 16-19 where this is a barrier to learning. Earlier in the year, additional funding was made available to further education providers via a business case process, to support them with additional costs arising from students participating in education online. In addition, in August 2020, we announced that colleges can access help with device needs for students aged 14-16 attending a further education provider through the 'Get Help with Technology' service. For adults aged 19 and over, we introduced a change to the Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020/21 academic year to enable providers to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices for disadvantaged students to help them meet technology costs. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, mayoral authorities determine adult student support arrangements.

#### ■ Further Education: Finance

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[122778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reversing the decision to clawback any capital grant allocation allowance given to further education providers that has not been spent by 21 March 2021.

**Gillian Keegan:**

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced in June that an initial £200 million of the £1.5 billion capital funding to upgrade the further education estate was to be brought forward to this year. This was paid to all eligible further education colleges and designated institutions in September 2020. This Further Education Capital Allocation is supporting further education colleges to undertake immediate remedial work in this financial year to upgrade the condition of their estate and is providing a boost to the economy by supporting the pipeline of new work for our construction sector. Details of the wider Further Education Capital Transformation programme, which will invest the remaining £1.3 billion over the coming 5 years, to upgrade the further education estate, will be announced in due course.

We are pleased that the majority of colleges have identified immediate projects to improve the condition of the estate. Some colleges have identified there would be an operational benefit to being able to carry out works at Easter or during the summer holidays next year. We are engaging with Her Majesty's Treasury on this matter and will inform colleges of the outcome in due course.

**Karin Smyth:**

[122779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on further education college finances of the extra intake of 16 to 18 year old students in academic year 2020-21 and Education and Skills Funding Agency lagged funding methodology which means colleges will not receive additional income for those students until next year.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The 2020/21 academic year has seen a significant boost to levels of funding for 16-19 education. In August 2019, the government announced that it would invest an extra £400 million in 16-19 education in the 2020-21 financial year. This is the largest injection of money in a single year since 2010, and represented an increase of 7% in overall 16-19 funding. In November 2020, an additional £291 million was announced for 16-19 education in the 2021-22 financial year, building on the £400 million made available in 2020-21. The base rate of 16-19 funding has increased by 4.7% this academic year, up from £4,000 to £4,188. Further guidance about 16-19 education funding is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-how-it-works>.

The lagged funding methodology allows us to make clear allocations based on data about students and the courses they study. The department recognises that there can be a financial pressure on institutions if they recruit significantly more students in an academic year than allowed for in their allocation. However, the current funding process does provide for exceptional in-year growth funding to be made available to colleges or other educational providers, with significant increases in student numbers over and above the lagged calculation, subject to affordability. The department will consider the affordability of exceptional in-year growth funding for the 2020-21 academic year in light of student recruitment by colleges and other providers.

## ■ Outdoor Education: Coronavirus

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[124901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has held with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on providing additional financial support to outdoor education providers following the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government has introduced an unprecedented and comprehensive package of support, worth more than £200 billion, to help as many individuals and businesses as possible during this difficult period. This includes small business grants, the coronavirus loan guarantee schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the deferral of VAT and income tax payments, and more. The measures introduced have been designed to be accessible to businesses in most sectors and across the UK.

Further measures have been announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that build on the significant support already available and set out how

current support will evolve and adapt. These measures include the extension of the CJRS until the end of March 2021, the extension of the deadline for applications for the Bounce Back Loan scheme and other loan schemes until 31 January 2021, and increased support for the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) grants. Further guidance about how the Government is supporting businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

Furthermore, businesses in England that are forced to close due to national or local restrictions will receive up to £3,000 per month. Local authorities in England will also receive one-off funding of £1.1 billion to support businesses more broadly over the coming months as a key part of local economies.

The Government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, business representative organisations, and the financial services sector to monitor the implementation of current support and understand whether there is additional need. Businesses can also access tailored advice through the Freephone Business Support Helpline, online via the Business Support website or through their local Growth Hubs in England.

#### ■ Private Tutors: Coronavirus

**Matthew Pennycook:**

**[122824]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the guidance, local restriction tiers: what you need to know, published on 23 November 2020, whether it is permissible for private tutors to use their own homes to provide tuition to individual pupils.

**Nick Gibb:**

As of 2 December, providers offering out-of-school activities to children, including private tuition, are able to open for both indoor and outdoor provision in areas at all restriction tiers, with safety measures in place. We have updated our guidance for providers of after-school and holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings on the measures they should put in place to ensure they are operating as safely as possible. For example, the guidance advises that private tutors working from their own home should consider whether a specific, well-ventilated room could be designated for lessons. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. If a private tutor normally offers provision in their own home or students' homes, they should also refer to the government guidance on 'Working safely during coronavirus in other people's homes', available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[120820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of starting (a) primary and (b) secondary school Christmas holidays a week earlier than planned to allow families to isolate as a unit at home to reduce the risk of transmission of covid-19 during the period of relaxed restrictions over Christmas 2020.

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

Schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise risk of 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.

**Paul Blomfield:**

[\[122674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the additional costs incurred by schools as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

Ministers and officials continue to engage regularly with school leaders and their representatives on a wide range of issues around COVID-19, including discussions in relation to costs faced by schools at this time.

Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Following last year's Spending Round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. This increase in funding will help schools with costs associated with the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Department has announced a new COVID-19 workforce fund for schools and colleges to help them to remain open. It will fund the costs of teacher absences over



a threshold in schools and colleges with high staff absences that are also facing significant financial pressures. Guidance on the claims process will be published shortly so schools and colleges have confidence in the costs they can incur and be eligible to reclaim.

Schools have already received payments of £102 million for exceptional costs during the summer months, and there will be a further opportunity later in the year for schools to claim for any costs that fell between March and July in the same approved categories, for which they did not claim during the first window.

To support schools in making up for lost teaching time, there is a £1 billion catch up package for schools, which includes a universal £650 million 'Catch Up Premium'. Our expectation is that this funding will be spent on the additional activities required to support children and young people to catch up after a period of disruption to their education. Alongside this, the catch up package includes the National Tutoring Programme for disadvantaged 5 to 16 year old pupils. This scheme will provide additional, targeted support for disadvantaged pupils who need the most help to catch up.

The Department has also provided support for schools to deliver remote education. In October 2020, the Department announced a support package to help schools meet the remote education expectations set out in the schools guidance for full opening, including access to the right technology to deliver remote education, as well as curriculum guidance and resources. As part of over £195 million invested to support access to remote education and online social care, over 340,000 laptops and tablets are being made available this term to support disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 whose face to face education may be disrupted. Since September 2020, over 100,000 of these have been delivered to schools.

## ■ Schools: Sports

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[124764]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the average number of hours per week of sport and physical activity undertaken by pupils in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in each of the last five years; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of sport and physical activity participation in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department does not collect information from schools on the time pupils spend each week on sport and physical activity.

Sport England's annual Active Lives Children's Survey collects information on the proportion of pupils who do 30 minutes or more of physical activity in school each day. It was first carried out in the 2017/18 academic year. The most recent survey is available here: <https://www.sportengland.org/news/active-lives-children-and-young-people-survey-academic-year-201819-report-published>.



The results of the 2019/20 Active Lives Children's Survey will be published in the new year and will include information on the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport, and physical activity will be provided during the COVID-19 outbreak, whilst following the measures in their system of controls. The Department recognises that the COVID-19 outbreak has had an impact on schools' ability to teach PE and to provide opportunities to take part in sport. This is especially the case for swimming, where access to venues has been restricted due to water safety measures. To help schools provide the best possible range of activities, the Department's guidance for the full opening of schools refers to more detailed advice and support from organisations such as the Association for PE, Youth Sport Trust, Sport England, and Swim England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

### ■ Students: Coronavirus

**Wes Streeting:** [124801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will list the members of the expert group set up to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country.

**Wes Streeting:** [124802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the expert group set up to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country was established.

**Wes Streeting:** [124803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many times the expert group set up to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country has met to date.

**Wes Streeting:** [124804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how often and how many times the expert group set up to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country plans to meet.

**Wes Streeting:** [124805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the expert group set up to look at differential learning and monitor the variation in the impact of the pandemic on students across the country will report its findings.

### **Nick Gibb:**

The Department recognises the challenges faced by schools, teachers, and students, and knows that disruption has been felt differently across the country, between schools and colleges in the same area, and between students within individual institutions. In addition to the package of measures announced to ensure exams are

delivered fairly next summer, the Department has also confirmed the launch of an expert group to monitor and advise on lost and differential learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department is working to finalise the membership of this group and will ensure that membership is representative of the sector, and geographically diverse. The group is expected to make initial recommendations in the early spring and remain in place to monitor the ongoing situation due to the COVID-19 outbreak for the rest of the academic year, reporting regularly.

The package of measures to ensure the fair delivery of exams can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-support-the-summer-2021-exams>.

### ■ Students: Employment

**Emma Hardy:**

**[124852]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the potential loss of earnings to students prevented from returning to their term-time jobs by plans for a staggered return to universities in the 2021.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We are committed to prioritising education and want to enable all students who have travelled home for the winter break to return to their universities and resume blended learning. While we are confident that face-to-face teaching as an element of blended learning can be done in COVID-secure environments, the mass movement of students across the country has been identified as a possible transmission risk by public health experts. In order to manage this risk whilst reducing disruption to education, we advise that students return to university during a period staggered over five weeks. Further details can be found in the 'Students returning to higher education for spring term guidance' published on 2 December and available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/students-returning-to-higher-education-from-spring-term>.

We realise that this year has been incredibly difficult for students and we are aware of the disproportionate impact the crisis will have on some students. In these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. Students experiencing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19 should contact their higher education provider.

The department has worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to clarify that providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £23 million per month for April to July this year and £256 million for academic year 2020/21, towards hardship support. On 2 December, we announced that we will be making available up to £20 million on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students. Further detail will be set out in due course, and we will work with the OfS to do this.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Animal Welfare: Standards****Stuart Anderson:**[\[122881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve animal welfare standards.

**Victoria Prentis:**

This country has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world. Having modernised standards for dog breeding, pet sales and other licensed activities involving animals, the Government is planning further improvements in a number of areas, some of which are manifesto commitments. On 30 November we published plans to deliver a better and fairer farming system in England that will help farmers adapt and plan for the future.

The proposals will transform the way we support farmers, in the most significant change to farming and land management in 50 years. This includes the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, which we are co-designing with industry, to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals at a level beyond compliance with current regulations. A consultation on plans to ban the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening was launched on 3 December along with proposals to better protect animal welfare during transport.

On 6 December we launched a call for evidence exploring options consistent with World Trade Organisation rules to address the shark fin trade. The UK has a strong track record in marine conservation and has been pressing for stronger international action to protect sharks against unsustainable fishing practices and shark finning. We want to better understand shark fin trade and its impacts both in the UK and overseas.

We are also committed to legislating for animal sentience, to tackling puppy smuggling, to banning primates as pets and to increasing the maximum custodial penalty for animal cruelty from six months' imprisonment to five years. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, currently before Parliament, will achieve this increase and has the support of Government as it makes its way through Parliament.

**■ Animals: EU External Trade****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[124715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total volume was of live animal exports from the EU to each (a) nation and (b) region of the UK in each financial year since 2015.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The following table shows the volume of live animal exports from the EU to the UK in each financial year since 2015.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TONNES
2015/16	77,800
2016/17	56,100
2017/18	59,000
2018/19	52,800
2019/20 (provisional)	50,700

The data provided for live animal imports 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

## ■ Animals: Exports

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[124716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the outcome of trade negotiations with the EU on the volume of live animal exports from (a) Wales and (b) the UK to the EU.

**Victoria Prentis:**

My department has not made an assessment of how the volume of live animal exports might change based on the possible outcome of the trade talks with the EU. Trade negotiations with the EU are ongoing, and we will always look to agree the best deal for British producers and businesses. We want to maintain a relationship with the EU which is based on friendly cooperation between sovereign equals, and centred on free trade. We are continuing to work closely with traders and are implementing processes to ensure that exporters understand the requirements they need to meet to continue trading within the EU following the end of the Transition Period, including for live animal exports.

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[124717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of ending live animal exports for slaughter and fattening that begin in or transit through England or Wales on farmers in (a) Wales and (b) England.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We have prepared a provisional impact assessment to estimate the potential impact on businesses of our proposals to end live animal exports for slaughter and fattening and introduce further improvements to animal welfare during transport. This will be made available during the consultation period.

## ■ Clothing: Labelling

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the fashion industry to improve the clarity of information and labelling on the sustainability of clothing.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In the Resources and Waste Strategy the Government committed to providing consumers with better information on the sustainability of their purchases, including through better product labelling. In the Environment Bill, currently being taken through Parliament, we are seeking powers that will enable us to introduce labelling and information requirements for clothing, as well as eco-design requirements and producer responsibility schemes.

We have also worked closely with WRAP to develop the new voluntary agreement on textiles to succeed the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP 2020) from next year. Textiles 2030 was announced on 10 November and has ambitious targets, aligning with global goals on carbon, water and circularity and aims to drive the shift to a more resource-efficient textiles sector in the UK. Signatories will take action to improve the sustainability of their products in line with the ambitions of the new agreement.

We plan to publish our draft Waste Prevention Programme for consultation in the new year which will set out this Government's approach to improving resource efficiency and reduce waste in a number of key sectors including textiles.

## ■ Fibres: Research

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to allocate funding to (a) research and development in sustainable fabrics and (b) fabric recycling facilities in the UK.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Through the WRAP-administered Resources Action Fund we made £1.5 million available for small scale capital grants of between £20,000 to £170,000 to encourage innovation and support the development of textile reuse and recycling. Funds have been allocated to organisations in England to invest in facilities to improve the reprocessing of textiles waste, including recycling of waste textiles to create recycled fibres for manufacturers.

With backing from Defra, £30 million of research funding (of which £22.5 million is Government investment) has been allocated through the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council to establish five circular economy research centres. £4.5 million has been allocated to a centre focused on sustainable textiles. The Interdisciplinary Textiles Circularity Centre, led by the Royal College of Art, aims to reduce our reliance on imported clothing materials by leading research to turn post-consumer textiles and household waste into renewable materials for use in textiles

products. This programme will harness academic excellence and industry expertise to deliver for the UK.

■ **Flood Control: North West Norfolk**

**James Wild:**

[\[122907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has allocate funding to projects to protect properties from flooding in King's Lynn and North West Norfolk constituency as part of its £5.2 billion six year flood and coastal defence programme.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Earlier this year the Government announced it will invest a record £5.2 billion in a six-year capital investment programme for flood defences. This investment will deliver around 2,000 flood schemes, across every region of the country, and will better protect 336,000 properties from flooding.

The Environment Agency, King's Lynn Internal Drainage Board, Littleport & Downham Internal Drainage Board, Norfolk County Council and King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council have projects submitted for inclusion in the £5.2 billion capital flood programme.

The overall cost for these projects is estimated to be approximately £9 million within the North West Norfolk Constituency. They are eligible for approximately £4.7 million of Defra grant-in aid funding. The Environment Agency and Regional Flood and Coastal Committee for the region will now be considering the specific schemes for year one of the new programme.

■ **Food: Waste**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the 2019 Food Waste Strategy on levels of food waste from major retailers.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The UK Government has not published a 2019 Food Waste Strategy. The hon. Member's question may refer to the Scottish Government's Food Waste Reduction Action Plan from 2019. The following answer describes other strategic documents which are relevant to the question.

In 2019, Defra commissioned Henry Dimbleby, its lead Non-Executive Director, to lead an independent review of the food system to develop recommendations to shape a National Food Strategy. Part One was published in July 2020, with Part Two due in Spring 2021.

To help tackle food waste, Defra and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) launched the UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap (FWRR) in September 2018. The roadmap sets out a clear direction for what all large businesses in the UK

need to achieve in order for us to achieve our international targets for food waste reduction and provides a basis to track progress. It also allows a wider population of food businesses to show their commitment to implementing the Target, Measure, Act (TMA) approach.

The Resources and Waste Strategy (published in December 2018) sets out the Government's approach to tackling food waste, building on the direction set out in the FWRR. The 2020 annual progress report for the FWRR, published by WRAP and industry experts IGD, shows growing adoption of the TMA approach to food waste prevention with more than 70 new organisations committing to the Roadmap in the last twelve months.

Following support from respondents to our public consultation on increasing consistency in recycling, we are legislating through the Environment Bill to ensure that businesses and other organisations in England will be required to arrange for the collection of a core set of materials for recycling, including a separate food waste collection where this material is produced. We will be consulting further on this in 2021. We also committed in the Resources and Waste Strategy to consult to introduce mandatory reporting of food waste by businesses. We are currently engaging with industry and related stakeholders to inform the development of this consultation.

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce mandatory food waste reporting for all major food retailers.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In the Resources and Waste Strategy the Government committed to consult on introducing mandatory reporting by businesses. We are engaging with industry and related stakeholders to inform the development of this consultation.

Due to the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on food and drink businesses, we have postponed the launch of this consultation until 2021.

## ■ **Plastics: Biodegradability**

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[122619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Laboratoire d'Océanographie Microbienne of 4 September 2020 that oxo-biodegradable plastics biodegrade in seawater, and do so with higher efficiency than conventional plastics.

**Rebecca Pow:**

It is current practice in science for research to be published in international peer reviewed journals. The peer review process is central to quality assurance and ensures reliable and reproducible research findings enter the public domain and inform debate.



We would be happy to review the data once it has undergone peer review and has been published.

**Theresa Villiers:** [122621]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the opinion issued by the European Chemicals Agency on 30 October 2018 that they were not convinced that microplastics are formed by oxo-biodegradable plastic.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In January 2017, the European Commission asked the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to prepare an Annex XV restriction dossier concerning the placing on the market and use of oxo-degradable plastics. However, ECHA withdrew its intention to prepare the dossier in May 2019, on request from the European Commission, following the inclusion of oxo-degradable plastics in the Single-Use Plastics Directive.

This information can be found at: <https://echa.europa.eu/registry-of-restriction-intentions/-/dislist/details/0b0236e18244d9bb>.

This decision was a matter for the European Commission and it would not be appropriate to comment on an investigation which was not completed.

**Theresa Villiers:** [122622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113024 on plastics: recycling, whether it is his policy that packaging that has passed the tests prescribed by BS EN13432 should not be considered genuinely biodegradable because it is tested to biodegrade in special conditions found in an industrial composting facility and not in the open environment.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As stated in the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113024 on plastics recycling, the Government published a call for evidence in July 2019 to help consider the development of standards or certification criteria for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics as well as to better understand their effects on the environment and our current waste system. The call for evidence further considered existing standards including BS EN13432. We are currently analysing the responses received to inform future policy and will publish a response to the call for evidence shortly.

## ■ Plastics: Pollution Control

**Theresa Villiers:** [122617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113020 on Plastics: Pollution, what his policy is for tackling plastic which escapes into the open environment and cannot be collected and therefore recycled.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[122618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113021 on Seas and Oceans: Plastics, whether it is his policy to encourage the use of plastic which biodegrades more quickly than conventional plastics in the event that it is improperly disposed of.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As stated previously in the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113020 on Plastics: Pollution, our priority is to prevent plastic entering the environment at all, including through littering, with a focus on upstream measures to turn off the tap on plastic pollution. The Government's Resources and Waste Strategy sets out our plans to move away from a take, make, use, throw society to one where materials are kept in circulation for longer. It also commits to eliminating avoidable plastic waste over the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Our Litter Strategy sets out our aim to deliver a substantial reduction in litter and littering behaviour within a generation. Littering of any materials, including biodegradable plastics, is a criminal offence, and councils have legal powers to take enforcement action against offenders.

The Government published a call for evidence last year to help consider the development of product standards or certification criteria for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics as well as to better understand their effects on the environment and our current waste system. The call for evidence closed on 14 October 2019 and we are currently analysing the responses received. We will publish a Government response shortly.

■ **Seabed: Bomb Disposal**

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[122652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the damage caused to marine life as a result of the detonation of abandoned unexploded munitions on the sea floor.

**Sammy Wilson:**

[\[122653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many unexploded munitions on the seafloor have been disposed of by detonation in each of the last five years.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for licensing marine activities in the seas around England, including the removal of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) from the seabed. In determining any application for a marine licence, the MMO considers all relevant matters including the need to protect the marine environment. This involves assessing any potential impacts on marine life under an environmental assessment. Such assessments are made on the specifics of each case and involve consultation with the MMO's primary advisors, including Natural England.

In the last five years, the MMO has received, assessed and issued nine marine licences involving the removal of UXOs from the seabed.

■ **Supermarkets: Coronavirus**

**Emma Hardy:**

**[122866]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with online grocery providers to ensure that people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to covid-19 can access priority food delivery slots throughout December 2020.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra is continuing to work closely with supermarkets to provide clinically extremely vulnerable individuals in England with priority access to supermarket delivery slots. During the second lockdown (from 5 November to 2 December), all clinically extremely vulnerable people were able to register for priority access to delivery slots with seven supermarkets: Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose.

From 2 December onwards, any clinically extremely vulnerable person living in a Tier Three (very high risk) local area who does not already have priority access to delivery slots will still be able to register for this support through the GOV.UK website: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support). All clinically extremely vulnerable individuals who have registered through GOV.UK will retain their priority access to delivery slots until at least March 2021.

■ **Symphony Environmental: Plastics**

**Theresa Villiers:**

**[122620]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113023 on Symphony Environmental: Plastics, did not refer to industry standards (a) BS 8472 and (b) ASTM D6954 in relation to the degradability, biodegradability, and non-toxicity, of oxo-biodegradable plastic products.

**Rebecca Pow:**

My answer was given in response to my Rt Hon Friend's question about European Standard EN 13432, PQ UIN 113024.

As stated in the Answer of 12 November 2020 to Question 113023, the Government published a call for evidence in July 2019 to help consider the development of standards or certification criteria for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics as well as to better understand their effects on the environment and our current waste system. The call for evidence further considered existing standards, which includes BS EN13432, BS 8472, and ASTM D6954. We are currently analysing the responses received to inform future policy and will publish a response to the call for evidence shortly.

As I outlined previously, I appreciate the engagement of industry in our call for evidence and welcome further engagement in future consultations and policy development as our work develops.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Children

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[124754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to strengthen routes for holding to account those responsible for violations of children's rights in conflict.

**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, including calling for all perpetrators of such acts to be swiftly brought to justice and held accountable. 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. Recently, we have made strong calls for action from parties to conflict in Afghanistan, Yemen Colombia, Somalia, Sudan and Nigeria. We also press for the inclusion of child protection provisions in UN peacekeeping mandate renewals and sanctions resolutions.

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, including advocacy for and the negotiation of Action Plans to end the recruitment and use of children. The UK increased its funding to £550,000 in FY20/21.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[124755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the Safe Schools Declaration on the number of child deaths in conflict.

**James Cleverly:**

The Safe Schools Declaration (Declaration) has successfully shifted mind-sets globally on the impact of attacks and military occupation of educational infrastructure. The UK strongly supports the Declaration and other efforts aimed at promoting and protecting children's right to education and facilitating its continuation in conflict. Since the UK's endorsement of the Declaration, 32 additional states have endorsed, bringing the total number of supporting states to 106. Through our membership of the UNSC Children and Armed Conflict Working Group, the UK supports the work of the UN to end all violations against children, including pressing states to ensure that

educational facilities and related personnel are protected, in line with the Declaration, and monitoring progress. Progress is incremental but positive change is visible. For example, the overall reported incidents of military use of schools and universities declined between 2015 and 2018 in the 12 countries that endorsed the Declaration in 2015. In July 2020, the Syrian Democratic Forces issued an order to all commanders to 'refrain from using schools for military purposes and placing equipment near them, and subsequently vacated ten schools. In August, Mali's Government reminded the armed forces of their commitments under the Declaration to avoid using any school currently vacant due to the COVID-19 pandemic for military purposes. This progress is welcome but we know more needs to be done to drive tangible change. The UK continues to call upon all UN Member States to endorse and fully implement the Declaration.

### ■ **Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences**

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[122801\]](#)

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 Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) remains a top priority for the UK Government. We are the only government in the world to have a Prime Minister's Special Representative as well as a dedicated team and funding focused on tackling conflict-related sexual violence. Our core PSVI objectives are strengthening justice for survivors of sexual violence in conflict and holding the perpetrators to account; supporting all survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and tackling the stigma they face; preventing conflict-related sexual violence through engagement with faith, media and other stakeholders. No decisions have been taken on FCDO budget allocations for the financial year 2021/22. PSVI is a policy campaign to raise awareness of and encourage global action on, tackling conflict-related sexual violence through diplomacy, advocacy and convening power. It uses modest but catalytic programme funds, not large-scale programming, to make progress on this agenda.

### ■ **Bilateral Aid**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[124822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the £2.9 billion reduction in aid made in early 2020 came from bilateral programmes.

**James Cleverly:**

The final reductions of ODA spend in 2020 will not be confirmed until after the 2020 year-end. The Statistics on International Development due to be published in 2021 will provide a full breakdown of the UK's ODA spend for 2020.

## ■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[124168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of emergency loans provided to UK citizens stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic have been repaid in full within the 6 month timeframe given as a condition of receiving such loans.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* Of the emergency loans provided as a result of Covid-19, 38% have been repaid with a further 18% entering into repayment agreements. Around 1600 of these loans were issued within the past six months.

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[124170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK citizens have had their details passed onto Indesser debt management service as a result of failure to repay emergency loans provided to them by the Government while stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a change of circumstances for many. We encourage all those facing financial difficulties and who might struggle to pay within the agreed six month period, to contact our Debt Management Team. The contact details for the debt management team are UTRCSC@fco.gov.uk, this email address can also be found on their loan documentation. The Debt Management Team will work with them to agree a manageable repayment plan. For emergency loans issued as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the FCDO has not yet passed any details to Indesser debt management.

## ■ China: Buddhism

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[122701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Chinese Government on (a) the reported demolition of Buddhist temples in Hebei Province and (b) the confiscation of Buddhist materials that are not approved by the Chinese Government from temples in China.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are aware of reports of demolition and closure of religious sites across China. The UK remains concerned by restrictions placed on Buddhists and other religious groups in China, including reports of individuals being detained for their beliefs. The freedom to practice, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. The UK regularly raises Freedom of Religion or Belief directly with the Chinese authorities and via multilateral action at the UN. The Foreign Secretary has personally raised our serious concerns about related issues in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on a number of occasions.

**■ China: Christianity****Jim Shannon:**[\[122700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of reported changes to the Bible by the Chinese Communist Party on the right to freedom of religion or belief in China.

**Nigel Adams:**

We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China, including reports that authorities are tightening control over how certain religions are practiced. The freedom to practise, change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. This includes having access to religious texts and being allowed to worship in a manner of their choosing. The UK believes that societies which aim to guarantee freedom of religion or belief are more stable, prosperous and more resilient against violent extremism.

**■ Conflict, Stability and Security Fund****Lisa Nandy:**[\[124736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the projected expenditure is of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in the (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 financial years.

**James Cleverly:**

The final budget for the CSSF will be confirmed through the Foreign Secretary's cross-government review of discretionary ODA that will appraise and finalise all discretionary ODA allocations for the next Financial Year. This is planned to conclude before Christmas.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[124737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the funding allocated to the Conflict, Stability and Security in the (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 financial years is discretionary expenditure.

**James Cleverly:**

The final budget for the CSSF for 2021-22 will be confirmed through the Foreign Secretary's cross-government review of discretionary ODA that will appraise and finalise all discretionary ODA allocations for the next Financial Year. This is planned to conclude before Christmas.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[124738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the funding allocated to the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund in the (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22 financial years will be (i) Official Development Assistance (ODA) and (ii) non-ODA.



**James Cleverly:**

The Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise discretionary ODA allocations for the next Financial Year. This will include the CSSF's discretionary ODA allocation.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[124739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programmes have been identified for a reduction in their budget following the reduction in the Spending Review 2020 of funding for the CSSF in 2021-22.

**James Cleverly:**

To ensure coherence and maximum value for money from the UK's ODA spending, the Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise all of the UK's discretionary ODA allocations for the next Financial Year.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[124740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the reduction in funding allocation for the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund announced in the Spending Review 2020 is expected to result in staff redundancies.

**James Cleverly:**

To ensure coherence and maximum value for money from the UK's ODA spending, the Foreign Secretary will run a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise all of the UK's discretionary ODA allocations for the next Financial Year.

**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[123555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of fast-tracked approaches to vaccine development for covid-19; and what lessons can be learned from those approaches for the development of vaccines against (a) HIV/AIDS, (b) tuberculosis and (c) other global health challenges.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are very encouraged by the progress of fast-tracked approaches to vaccine development for COVID-19. Several vaccine candidates have demonstrated very promising results in clinical trials, with one recently approved for use in the UK (Pfizer/BioNTech). Interim results for another candidate, developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, are also very encouraging and this vaccine is part of a portfolio of candidates funded by the UK-backed Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). We will need multiple safe and effective vaccines to control the pandemic in a range of populations and settings. CEPI is playing a vital role in enabling global access to successful vaccine candidates, especially in poorer countries.

Vaccine research for many global health challenges, including HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, is expensive, complex and high risk. The encouraging results on COVID-19 vaccines demonstrate the importance of international collaboration and having trials in multiple settings. It also highlights the need to address manufacturing capacity, accessibility and affordability at the same time as development of the vaccine, to ensure rapid access for poorer countries. The UK has been clear in its commitment to international collaboration in development and access to COVID-19 vaccines, as demonstrated by our significant financial commitments to CEPI and Gavi the Vaccine Alliance which are both under the COVAX facility.

## ■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Mining

**Carol Monaghan:**

[\[124780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to investigate the use of child labour in cobalt mines in Congo.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK Government is deeply concerned by continued reports of children working in the artisanal mining sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The UK is fully committed to seeing an end to such practices by 2030 as laid out in the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

UK officials monitor trends in child labour in mining in DRC, including by working closely with partners such as the UN Joint Human Rights Organisation who report human rights abuses in DRC and raise concerns regularly with the DRC Government. As an active member of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights Initiative, which promotes responsible practice, the UK has met the DRC Government and local actors in the mining sector to press for adherence to the Voluntary Principles, with a view to eventual membership of DRC.

## ■ Development Aid

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[122659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has in place to enable the single sign-off by his Department of all UK official development assistance (ODA); and who is responsible for ODA-funded projects.

**James Cleverly:**

To maximise the Government's strategic focus in the use of ODA next year, the Foreign Secretary announced that he will run a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise all of the UK's ODA allocations across all departments with agreement of their Secretaries of State. It is the Government's intention to conclude this process by the end of the calendar year and communicate to the outcome to departments concerned. Secretaries of State and Accounting Officers will remain accountable for the ODA allocated to their departments as per Managing Public Money guidance.

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[122745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the international impact of the Government's reduction of the Official Development Assistance budget.

**James Cleverly:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take tough but necessary decisions and we have concluded after extensive consideration, and with regret, that we cannot for the moment meet our target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income on ODA. We remain a world leading aid donor spending 0.5% of GNI to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health. We are holding the G7 presidency and hosting COP26 in 2021, it is a unique opportunity to galvanise international action, lead and shape the direction of international development.

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[122798\]](#)

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 raise their incomes or maintain or gain a better job or livelihood.

**James Cleverly:**

We remain firmly committed to helping the world's poorest people and we will retain our position as a leader in the global fight against poverty. The FCDO is now conducting a rigorous internal prioritisation process that will establish our portfolio in 2021. As outlined in the Foreign Secretary's previous statement to Parliament, promoting trade and job-creating investment will remain one of our core priorities for ODA. Programmes that support people to raise their incomes or maintain or gain a better job or livelihood will be critical to poverty reduction efforts and our role as a force for good in the world.

## ■ **Equal Rights Coalition: Membership**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[123545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many countries have become new members of the Equal Rights Coalition since the UK was announced as co-chair of the Coalition on 10 December 2018; and on what dates those countries joined.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[123546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on how many occasions since July 2019, and with representatives of which countries, he has held discussions on potential membership of the Equal Rights Coalition.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[123547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he discussed the membership of the Equal Rights Coalition at the meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers on 14 October 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[123548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on how many occasions since July 2019 and with representatives of which countries he has held discussions on their potential membership of the Equal Rights Coalition.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[123549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations on the issue of membership of the Equal Rights Coalition at the meeting of Commonwealth International Trade Ministers on 10 October 2019.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[123550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on how many occasions since July 2019 and with representatives of which countries he has held discussions on their potential membership of the Equal Rights Coalition.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* The Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) was created to address the limited number of mechanisms or structures through which governments could coordinate their diplomatic efforts, share information, and work together at the international level to help achieve LGBT equality. As ERC co-chair, we shall soon deliver the ERC's first Five Year Strategy that seeks to guide and shape the Coalition's work to help it realise its considerable potential. Ireland and North Macedonia joined the ERC in June 2019 and we are seeking to expand the 42-strong membership to any country seeking to work within the Coalition to promote and protect the human rights of LGBT people around the world.

## ■ FSO Safer

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[124862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the oil tanker FSO Safer on (a) the environment, (b) the economy and (c) the humanitarian situation in Yemen in the event that the tanker was to fragment or capsize.

**James Cleverly:**

UK funded assessments have outlined the catastrophic effects of an FSO SAFER incident. A oil spill has the potential to be four times larger than the Exxon-Valdez and cause up to \$20 billion in damages. It would shut down the ports of Hodeidah and Saleef, cutting off life-saving humanitarian aid to Yemen for months, pushing the country even further towards famine. An oil fire would expose 8.4 million people to dangerous air pollution and put 14.9 million at risk of losing their crops.

The UK has kept this issue on the international agenda. We welcome the agreement between the Houthis and the UN on 24 November on the scope of the UN assessment mission, to which we have contributed £2.5 million. The UN estimates it will be able to begin the mission in early February. We are also supporting the development of comprehensive UN contingency plans should a leak occur. We regularly engage with the Houthis at senior levels to press them to facilitate the UN mission and avert a disaster.

## ■ Giulio Regeni

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[123618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with his Egyptian and Italian counterparts on the Egyptian authorities temporarily closing the investigation into the 2016 murder of Cambridge PhD student, Giulio Regeni.

**James Cleverly:**

We have the deepest sympathy for Giulio Regeni's family and their quest for justice for his appalling murder. As Mr Regeni was an Italian citizen, the Italian Government is taking the lead role on his case. We continue to follow the investigation into his death and to work closely with the Italian Government. We last discussed this at official level with the Italian authorities on 23 November. We have also raised with the Egyptian authorities at a senior level the need for a transparent and impartial investigation, in full co-operation with Italy, so that Mr Regeni's killers can be brought to justice.

## ■ Humanitarian Aid

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[122796\]](#)

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 Government's support for humanitarian assistance programmes.

**James Cleverly:**

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take tough but necessary decisions. We have concluded after extensive consideration, and with regret, that we cannot for the moment meet our target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income on ODA. However, the Foreign Secretary has been clear, we will remain a world leading aid donor spending 0.5% of GNI and continue to respond humanitarian crises and protecting those in need. By combining aid with diplomacy and ensuing a coherent approach across Government departments, we will be focusing our efforts where the UK can make a world-leading difference to deliver maximum impact for every pound we spend.

**■ Iran: Uranium****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[122666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the decision by the Iran Parliament to increase annual uranium enrichment to 20 per cent.

**James Cleverly:**

We are aware that the Iranian Guardian Council has approved a Bill to substantively expand Iran's nuclear programme. We are deeply concerned by Iran's continued systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the JCPoA. Along with his French and German counterparts, the Foreign Secretary has called for an urgent ministerial meeting of the JCPoA participants. Iran must engage seriously with our concerns and must not implement these measures.

**■ Iraq: Oil****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[123571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the change in the level of oil revenues in Iraq on the (a) economy and (b) reconstruction of that country.

**James Cleverly:**

The World Bank estimates that the collapse in oil revenues will force a 9.0% contraction in growth, a 19% fiscal deficit and over 40% of the population into poverty. The UK continues to work closely with the Government of Iraq (GoI) and international community to stabilise and reform the economy in order to create opportunities for all Iraqis. In 2018 the UK was a founding donor to the World Bank's Iraq Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Trust Fund which supports reconstruction and economic stabilisation in Iraq. In October the UK launched the Iraq Economic Contact Group in London, to bring together the GoI, international partners and financial institutions to monitor risks and coordinate resources to support implementation of reforms and macro-economic stability. The UK will continue to support Iraq as it undertakes bold economic reforms.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Matthew Pennycook:**[\[124270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich on Israeli Defence Force actions in the West Bank village of Sebastia, dated 21 October 2020.

**James Cleverly:**

A response has been sent on 4 December.

## ■ Morocco: Western Sahara

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[124335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to abide by Criterion 4 of the Consolidated EU and National Arms Licencing Consolidated Criteria ensuring that licences for Morocco are not used to assert by force its territorial claim in Western Sahara.

**James Cleverly:**

HMG takes its export control responsibilities seriously and continues to monitor developments in Western Sahara closely. We examine every licence application on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, including Criterion Four. We draw on a range of sources in making assessments, including from NGOs, international organisations and reports from our overseas network. All licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard.

## ■ Overseas Aid

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[124823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for each type of grant under the UK Aid Direct programme, how many applications have been (a) received and (b) approved for each year since 2015.

**James Cleverly:**

Since the formation of UK Aid Direct in 2015, to date, 3,245 applications have been received and 2,845 applications were eligible for review.

To date, 279 applications have been approved with a further 81 applications provisionally approved pending the successful completion of due diligence assessments.

All active and historical projects and values can be found at <https://www.ukaiddirect.org/>

## ■ Overseas Aid: National Income

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[122705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if will maintain UK overseas aid at 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income.

**James Cleverly:**

Due to the severe impact that the pandemic has had on our economy, we are taking the tough decision to spend 0.5 per cent of our national income next year on Official Development Assistance, rather than the usual 0.7 per cent. Despite these fiscal pressures, we remain firmly committed to helping the world's poorest people and we will retain our position as a leader in the global fight against poverty. The government intends to return to the 0.7 per cent target when the fiscal situation allows.



**■ Overseas Aid: Poverty****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[124824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 September 2020 to Question 91694 on overseas aid: poverty, whether it remains his policy to support the bottom billion poorest people; and in which countries those people live.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK will retain our position as a leader in the global fight against poverty and we will remain committed to following the rules set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee.

**■ Pakistan: Abduction****Jim Shannon:**[\[122699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to encourage the Pakistani Government to investigate and prevent cases of enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings in (a) Sindh, (b) Baluchistan and (c) Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK strongly condemns any instances of extrajudicial killings or enforced disappearances. On 16 November, the Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised concerns about the human rights situation in Pakistan with Dr Shireen Mazari, Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights. On 8 June, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Christian Turner CMG, raised issues regarding civic freedoms and legislation on enforced disappearances with Dr Mazari.

**■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[124290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Pakistani counterpart on the (a) inclusion of Ahmadi Muslims on the single electoral list and (b) importance of universal suffrage.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* The UK remains deeply concerned by reports of discrimination and violence against religious communities in Pakistan, including against the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. Discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief can take many forms, including restricted constitutional rights. Elections are the key test of a functioning democracy, allowing citizens to choose how they are governed and by whom. The UK believes that no one should be excluded because of their religion or belief.

We regularly raise human rights as a concern in our dialogue with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level. Most recently, the Minister of State for South Asia and

Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our concerns about the reports of discrimination and violence against the Ahmadiyya Muslim community with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 16 November.

## ■ **Pakistan: Forced Marriage**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[122698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Pakistani Government on behalf of (a) Maira Shahbaz, (b) Arzoo Raja and (c) other girls who have been kidnapped, forcibly converted and married in Pakistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We are closely monitoring the cases of Maira Shahbaz and Arzoo Raja. We regularly raise our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief, women and girls' rights and gender equality with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level. On 19 October, the Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised our concerns about child, early and forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari. In addition, Lord Ahmad raised our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief with Dr Mazari on 16 November. The British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Christian Turner CMG, raised our concerns about the case of Maira Shahbaz with the Governor of Punjab, Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar, on 16 November.

## ■ **Palestinians: Disability**

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

**[124769]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the needs of people with disabilities in the occupied Palestinian territory during the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Cleverly:**

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO, and the Ministerial team remains committed to embedding it across all our work, including as we respond to the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

The UK is committed to supporting people with disabilities across our programmes in the OPTs. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we have approved additional programming to strengthen disability inclusion across Palestinian society, which aims to ensure people with disabilities (PwD) are accounted for in the COVID-19 crisis response through reviewing laws, regulations, HR policies and bylaws in public sector to analyse barriers to PwDs' participation in decision making. This will be followed by an advocacy campaign targeting the gaps identified in the analysis. We also engage

frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting ordinary Palestinians, including the impact of COVID-19.

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[124770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support the protection and fulfilment of the rights of people with disabilities in the occupied Palestinian territory throughout the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Cleverly:**

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO, and the Ministerial team remains committed to embedding it across all our work, including as we respond to the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

The UK is committed to supporting people with disabilities across our programmes in the OPTs. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we have approved additional programming to strengthen disability inclusion across Palestinian society, which aims to ensure people with disabilities (PwD) are accounted for in the COVID-19 crisis response through reviewing laws, regulations, HR policies and bylaws in public sector to analyse barriers to PwDs' participation in decision making. This will be followed by an advocacy campaign targeting the gaps identified in the analysis. We also engage frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting ordinary Palestinians, including the impact of COVID-19.

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[124771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to encourage Israel to uphold its obligations to ensure the respect and fulfilment of the rights of Palestinians with disabilities under its effective control in the occupied Palestinian territory.

**James Cleverly:**

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO, and the Ministerial team remains committed to embedding it across all our work, including as we respond to the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

The UK is committed to supporting people with disabilities across our programmes in the OPTs. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we have approved additional programming to strengthen disability inclusion across Palestinian society, which aims to ensure people with disabilities (PwD) are accounted for in the COVID-19 crisis response through reviewing laws, regulations, HR policies and bylaws in public sector to analyse barriers to PwDs' participation in decision making. This will be followed by an advocacy campaign targeting the gaps identified in the analysis. We also engage frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting ordinary Palestinians, including the impact of COVID-19.

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[124782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the specific needs of people with disabilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[124783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support the protection of rights of people with disabilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to maintain their health, safety, dignity and independence during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[124784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to encourage Israel to uphold its obligations to respect and fulfil the rights of Palestinians with disabilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**James Cleverly:**

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO, and the Ministerial team remains committed to embedding it across all our work, including as we respond to the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

The UK is committed to supporting people with disabilities across our programmes in the OPTs. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we have approved additional programming to strengthen disability inclusion across Palestinian society, which aims to ensure people with disabilities (PwD) are accounted for in the COVID-19 crisis response through reviewing laws, regulations, HR policies and bylaws in public sector to analyse barriers to PwDs' participation in decision making. This will be followed by an advocacy campaign targeting the gaps identified in the analysis. We also engage frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting ordinary Palestinians, including the impact of COVID-19.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[124855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the specific needs of people with disabilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[124856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support the protection of rights of people with disabilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to maintain their health, safety, dignity and independence during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[124857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on Israel upholding its obligations to ensure the respect and fulfilment of the rights of Palestinians with disabilities under its effective control in the occupied Palestinian territory.

**James Cleverly:**

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO, and the Ministerial team remains committed to embedding it across all our work, including as we respond to the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

The UK is committed to supporting people with disabilities across our programmes in the OPTs. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we have approved additional programming to strengthen disability inclusion across Palestinian society, which aims to ensure people with disabilities (PwD) are accounted for in the COVID-19 crisis response through reviewing laws, regulations, HR policies and bylaws in public sector to analyse barriers to PwDs' participation in decision making. This will be followed by an advocacy campaign targeting the gaps identified in the analysis. We also engage frequently with the Israelis on issues affecting ordinary Palestinians, including the impact of COVID-19.

**■ Repatriation: British Nationals Abroad****Lisa Nandy:**[\[123586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the cost to the public purse was of each of the 151 charter flights organised by his Department to bring UK travellers back to the UK during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* The Government ran 186 charter flights, spending just over £40 million gross and around £15.2 million net, alongside £4.3 million, drawn from FCO Administration and the cross-HMG Conflict Stability and Security Fund, that supported the earlier repatriations from Wuhan, Peru, and cruise ships. The overall cost for each flight varied according to range of factors including the airline charter cost, take up by passengers, price capping of seats to ensure flights were affordable, facilitating ground transport to get passengers to airports in some countries, Government staffing, and contributions by other governments for flights that included outbound journeys. Not all of these costs are broken down by flight so we are unable to give a total cost to Government for each flight.

**■ Somalia: Security****Stuart C McDonald:**[\[121853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on (a) the security situation in Somalia and (b) reports of potential troop withdrawals in that country by Ethiopia and the US.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK regularly engages international partners on the security situation in Somalia, including the threat from Al Shabaab, the role of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somalia's ongoing needs for international support, as it takes greater control of its own security after 2021. UK efforts in November, for example, included a

very active role in UN Security Council consultations, participation in an international conference on security support in Somalia and, with the UK as 'penholder', renewal of UN Somalia sanctions. I also recently discussed security in Somalia with Kenyan Ministers and the Somali Foreign Minister.

We are aware of reports about the withdrawal of some Ethiopian troops present in Somalia in a national capacity. We have not seen indications of Ethiopian proposals to withdraw from AMISOM. On 4 December the US announced the repositioning of US forces in Somalia, with some relocating to Djibouti or Kenya and others returning to the US. US officials have briefed UK counterparts on their decision, and been clear that this is a change in force posture and not a change in US policy on Somalia. We continue to work with international partners on our collective interests in building long-term security and stability in Somalia, and ensuring an effective international presence to support this.

## ■ **Stan Swamy**

**Simon Fell:**

[\[122882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he is making to his Indian counterpart on the arrest and imprisonment of Fr Stan Swamy.

**Nigel Adams:**

FCDO officials raised Father Stan Swamy's case with the Indian High Commission on 12 November. On 9 October, British High Commission officials in New Delhi highlighted to the Ministry of Home Affairs the impact of recent amendments to Indian security legislation on activists and human rights campaigners in India.

Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at ministerial level.

## ■ **Syria: Armed Conflict and Coronavirus**

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[122888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to support and protect civilians in Syria during the ongoing civil conflict and covid-19 pandemic.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK continues to work closely with the UN and our humanitarian partners to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19 and sustain life-saving services in Syria. The UK has committed £34 million to help humanitarian partners mitigate the impact of the virus. The funding will help stop the spread of the virus in Syria by supporting health workers with training, medical supplies and sanitation. Additionally, 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. The UK continues to call upon

all parties to the conflict to uphold International Humanitarian Law and protect civilians.

### ■ Syria: Islamic State

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[124228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts to on establishing an investigation on the fate of Syrians kidnapped by ISIS.

**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. The UK is supporting efforts to account for missing people in formerly held Daesh territory in north-east Syria. Through our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) we support the International Commission on Missing Persons' (ICMP) work with local Syrian civil society organisations to collect data on missing persons and secure the rights of families of the missing to justice, truth and reparations. We support ICMP's role as the holder of an impartial missing persons' database, and underline the need for a missing persons process that accounts for all missing persons, regardless of their role in the conflict or origin, in accordance with international human rights and the rule of law. 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.

### ■ Syria: Overseas Aid

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[124873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to (a) maintain the UK's aid spend in Syria and (b) take diplomatic steps at UN level to ensure Russia does not obstruct humanitarian assistance to Syria.

**James Cleverly:**

Tackling the humanitarian impact of the Syria Crisis remains a priority for the FCDO. In his statement to the House of Commons on 26 November, the Foreign Secretary stated that resolving conflicts and alleviating humanitarian crises will be a focus area for ODA. To deliver on this commitment the FCDO is currently running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes, to ensure that every pound we spend goes as far as possible and makes a world-leading difference. 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.



Whilst we are at the forefront of the humanitarian response in Syria, we are appalled that Russia has twice sought to block cross-border aid access into Syria, placing political support for the Assad regime above lifesaving support for the Syrian people. We continue to use our position at the UN Security Council to push for greater aid access into Syria and we remain committed to supporting aid delivery, through all mechanisms, to those in need.

## ■ Syria: Peace Negotiations

**Nickie Aiken:**

[\[122879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to secure a political solution to the Syrian civil war and to ensure the ceasefire is upheld by all sides.

**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.

## ■ Travel Information: Coronavirus

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[123558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to review its travel advice against all but essential travel before the introduction of the test and release scheme.

**Nigel Adams:**

From 5 November, the FCDO moved away from advising against all non-essential international travel, returning to country specific advice. We retained advice against all but essential travel to a number of countries based on risks due to Covid-19. FCDO travel advice remains under constant review and considers both the epidemiological and non-epidemiological risks associated with Covid-19 in each destination. When the FCDO no longer assesses the risks to British nationals to be unacceptably high, travel advice is updated accordingly.

**■ Travel: Coronavirus****Sir Graham Brady:**[\[123531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to review Government advice on all but essential travel before the introduction of the Test to Release for International Travel scheme.

**Nigel Adams:**

From 5 November, the FCDO moved away from advising against all non-essential international travel, returning to country specific advice. We retained advice against all but essential travel to a number of countries based on risks due to Covid-19. FCDO travel advice remains under constant review and considers both the epidemiological and non-epidemiological risks associated with Covid-19 in each destination. When the FCDO no longer assesses the risks to British nationals to be unacceptably high, travel advice is updated accordingly.

**■ UN High Commissioner for Refugees: Finance****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[124821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the UK plans to contribute to the UNHCR in 2021.

**James Cleverly:**

Humanitarian preparedness and response is one of our core strategic priorities, and this includes supporting refugees and displaced persons. It is not possible to give a firm figure for our 2021 spending at this stage since a number of programmes are still under discussion, and our plans will need to take into account a range of needs and the contributions from other donors. The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy means we will have to take tough decisions on our 2021 aid budget, and our contributions to all partners will need to be considered in light of this. However, UNHCR remains an important partner and supporting forcibly displaced persons is a priority.

**■ Vaccination: Children****Owen Thompson:**[\[122799\]](#)

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 immunisation programmes for children.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government remains committed to supporting routine immunisation programmes as part of our manifesto commitment to end preventable deaths of mothers, new-borns and children.

The Government has committed £1.65 billion over the next five years to support Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to immunise 300 million children and save up to 8 million lives.

This commitment is unchanged following the recent reductions to the ODA budget.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **Breast Cancer: Medical Treatments**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[109227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to (a) patients and (b) NHS England of permanently reducing the number of doses of radiotherapy and cycles of adjuvant trastuzumab for breast cancer patients.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 4 November 2020]:* Breast cancer treatments are advancing all the time, and, despite the pandemic, this year is no exception with developments having been made in both radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments – both of which are likely to benefit breast cancer patients and the National Health Service as follows:

- The publication of the ten-year results of the FAST Trial, which looked at five fraction radiotherapy to treat early breast cancer, is an exciting breakthrough which enables people with breast cancer to be treated much more quickly and conveniently meaning fewer visits to hospital. All NHS radiotherapy providers in England are adopting this approach; and
- The PERSEPHONE trial evaluated the use of trastuzumab over a six month period versus a 12 month period to evaluate non-inferiority. In response to the pandemic, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence developed interim guidance which recommended the use of the six month schedule. This approach means that patients attend hospital for a shorter overall period in order to reduce the risk of infection to vulnerable patients.

How and if these treatments become part of the standard of care for breast cancer patients will be determined by the breast cancer clinical community, working in partnership with NHS England, and guided by research findings as they emerge.

### ■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[114888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the adequacy of staff numbers in the mammography workforce in the latest period for which that data is available.

**Jo Churchill:**

This information is not held centrally.

## ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

**Alex Sobel:**

**[115809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will publish the evidence underpinning the Government guidance dated 5 November 2020 on visiting care homes.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 November 2020]:* We have updated our guidance over time as our scientific understanding of the virus grows. We work with Public Health England, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) Social Care Sub-Group and other relevant bodies to closely monitor national and international evidence, to ensure best practice is reviewed and can be applied. SAGE publishes its papers routinely and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies>

We have also worked closely with a range of stakeholders who represent the sector to ensure that the recent guidance update encourages and enables care providers to facilitate visiting while keeping residents, staff and visitors as safe as possible.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[121298]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources he plans to provide for care homes to carry out lateral flow testing on staff, residents and visitors.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* The Department is providing a tailored training and guidance package for care homes in order to support them to establish effective testing regimes. We have made £4.6 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care.

In addition, the Infection Control Fund, set up in May, has been extended until March 2021, with an extra £546 million for the care sector to take key steps to improve infection prevention and control. As per the grant conditions, this funding may be used for supporting safe visiting in care homes and for ensuring that staff who need to attend work for the purposes of being tested for COVID-19 are paid their usual wages to do so.

## ■ Care Homes: Families

**Olivia Blake:**

**[123735]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date the initial pilot to give families key worker status in care homes will be evaluated; and what his Department's timetable is for rolling out that pilot to care homes throughout England.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* We want to bring an end to the pain of separation and help care homes bring families and loved ones together.

Following a successful trial in 20 care homes, we have started the phased rollout of new rapid tests to support visiting. The first 385 care homes are now able to begin testing visitors and we aim to roll this out to care homes across England by Christmas.

**Care Homes: Learning Disability****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[120093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that staff in residential care homes for autistic people and people with learning disabilities are regularly tested for covid-19 even when those people are not displaying symptoms.

**Helen Whately:**

Regular testing is available for all Care Quality Commission-registered care homes. Regular retesting for residents and staff of care homes for over 65 year olds and those with dementia was rolled out from 6 July. This included weekly testing for staff and every 28 days for residents. All remaining adult care homes, including residential care homes for autistic people and people with learning disabilities, were able to apply for retesting from 31 August.

**Carers****Ed Davey:**[\[110723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings he has had with carers' organisations across the UK since March 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 November 2020]:* The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had the following meetings with carers organisations since March:

- adult social care stakeholder roundtable event on 22 July 2020; and
- meeting with Professor Martin Green, Care England on 22 July 2020.

I have also met with a range of organisations representing those providing paid and unpaid care.

**Coronavirus: Disease Control****Justin Madders:**[\[100432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Lord Bethell, of 6 October 2020, Official Report, column 544 on Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2020, if he will publish the research from the frontline on children and the rule of six.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 12 October 2020]:* The Government's priority is for children to attend school and for further education colleges to remain open, in recognition of the important role that such settings play in children's development and in supporting and sustaining local communities. We also recognise the importance of exercise for children to help them develop and maintain their mental and physical wellbeing.

Studies have shown that such settings can sustain high levels of COVID security and are a low transmission risk. For example, Public Health England's 'SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmission in educational settings' which is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/911267/School\\_Outbreaks\\_Analysis.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911267/School_Outbreaks_Analysis.pdf)

**■ Coronavirus: Mortality Rates****Dr Lisa Cameron:****[116535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the correlation between age-standardised mortality rates for covid-19 deaths in England and relative deprivation; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Office for National Statistics found that the rate of mortality for deaths involving COVID-19 was 2.2 times higher in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas in England over the months of March to July.

In an earlier analysis, Public Health England stated that people in deprived areas are more likely to be diagnosed and to have poor outcomes following diagnosis than those in less deprived areas. Poor outcomes remained after adjusting for ethnicity, however further investigation would be needed.

**■ Coronavirus: Nutrition: Health Services****Dr Lisa Cameron:****[122748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) support patients suffering from long covid after their discharge from hospital and (b) assess and monitor the nutritional status of those patients.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

On 7 October, NHS England announced £10 million of investment to establish a network of specialist clinics in England to support people suffering from the persistent effects of COVID-19 or 'long COVID'.

These specialist clinics will support patients suffering from various symptoms of long covid. Every patient experiencing symptoms will undergo a physical and psychological assessment to help address the problems being faced. Further details on the location of these clinics will be announced shortly.

The National Health Service has also launched 'Your Covid Recovery', an online rehabilitation service that provides personalised support to patients for both their physical and mental health. The support offered by this service includes nutritional advice about eating well and the potential benefits of supplements such as vitamin D.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[121320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the widespread wearing of face coverings in preventing the spread of covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* Face coverings are largely intended to protect others and not the wearer against the spread of infection. Evidence on the effectiveness of face coverings in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in community settings is constantly developing, and research is being conducted all over the world, leading to a variety of observations and suggested conclusions that vary in their degree of confidence.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[119973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 18 November 2020, Official Report, column 323, if he will set out the evidence both ways on whether people who have tested positive within the last six months have protection from their T cells preventing reinfection for at least six months; and if he will place a copy of that evidence in the Library.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* The early findings of a study by the Coronavirus Immunology Consortium and Public Health England (PHE), which is yet to be peer-reviewed, suggest that a strong cellular immune response is likely to be present in the majority of adults at six months after infection, which is likely to contribute to the low levels of re-infection seen to date.

The Government, including PHE, is working with academia to answer the outstanding questions on immunity. Further research is being carried out to establish the efficiency of any long-term immunity after infection, including the SIREN study which is monitoring healthcare workers for reinfection.

**Cat Smith:**

[\[123625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking ensure that people who are digitally excluded and do not have an email address are able to (a) register for and (b) receive their coronavirus home testing results.



**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* There are a number of ways individuals can access testing without a mobile phone number or email address. Individuals can ask someone they trust who has a mobile number or email address, for example a family member, to book a test or receive their results. If this is not possible, individuals can contact 119 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 0300 303 2713 in Scotland to book a test at their nearest test site and to receive their results, either via a call back to a landline or by contacting 119 once the results are available. We are working to further improve the accessibility of testing via non digital routes.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[81594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that the turnaround time for Covid-19 test results is as short as possible.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[81595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the turnaround time for covid-19 test results is dependent on which area of the country the test is taken.

**Helen Whately:**

We have rapidly expanded our testing capability and anyone with symptoms can now get a test. Testing turnaround times have significantly improved over the last few months. While there are currently some small delays due to increased demand, the vast majority of results for tests taken in person at drive through, walk through and mobile testing units are still delivered the day after the test was taken.

**■ Dementia: Coronavirus****Kim Johnson:**[\[120160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Alzheimer's Society report entitled Worst hit: dementia during coronavirus, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing at least one informal carer per care home resident to be designated a key worker and given access to (a) training, (b) covid-19 testing and vaccinations and (c) personal protective equipment.

**Helen Whately:**

We are providing rapid (lateral flow) testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) to all care homes in time for the Christmas period, to enable residents to receive regular visits from loved ones. Visitors will still be expected to follow infection prevention and control procedures and minimise contact as much as possible to reduce the risk of transmission. New guidance setting out these visiting opportunities was published on 1 December on GOV.UK.

We are also sending out free PPE to all Care Quality Commission-registered care homes that are also registered on the PPE portal for use by visitors.

## ■ Doctors: NHS

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[115658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of senior doctors working in the NHS.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS Digital statistics, as at July 2020, showed that, in England, there were almost 40% more full time equivalent consultants and almost 12% more specialty and associate specialist doctors employed in National Health Service trusts and clinical commissioning groups since 2010.

The Government has delivered on a manifesto commitment to fix the taper issue in doctors' pensions, in response to evidence of senior clinicians turning down additional work for fear of high tax bills. The tapered annual allowance thresholds have increased by £90,000 from 6 April 2020, which removes up to 96% of general practitioners and 98% of consultants from the scope of the taper based on their NHS income. The incentive to take on additional work is now restored.

We are also taking action to increase the retention of doctors and support them to progress into long careers. For example, the Enhancing Junior Doctors' Working Lives programme, led by Health Education England, is delivering a range of initiatives to improve the quality of life of doctors in training.

NHS workforce matters in Northern Ireland are a matter for the Devolved Administration.

## ■ Health Professions

**Justin Madders:**

[\[122762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent (a) doctors and (b) nurses there were in each quarter from Q1 2020-21 to the latest available data.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[122763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent vacancies there were for (a) doctors and (b) nurses in each quarter from Q1 2020-21 to the latest available data.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in primary care, general practice surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

As at the end of quarter one 2020/21 there were 121,142 full time equivalent HCHS doctors working in the National Health Service. There were also 324,599 full-time equivalent (FTE) registered nurses, health visitors and midwives, of which 295,818 FTE were nurses, 6,652 FTE were health visitors and 22,128 were midwives. Data

for the end of quarter two 2020/21, September 2020, will be published on 22 December.

NHS England and NHS Improvement collect vacancy data for three staff groups; doctors, registered nurses (nurses, health visitors and midwives) and 'other staff'. These vacancy statistics are published by NHS Digital for England and at regional level.

The following table shows the number of FTE vacancies and vacancy rates for doctors and registered nurses, health visitors and midwives in each quarter of 2020-21 to the latest available data. The quarterly vacancy figures provided are based on the number of vacancies at the end of the respective quarter.

	NURSES, HEALTH VISITORS AND MIDWIVES		MEDICAL	
	FTE vacancies	Vacancy rate	FTE vacancies	Vacancy rate
Q1 2020/21 June 2020	37,185	10.1%	7,924	5.9%
Q2 2020/21 September 2020	36,655	10.0%	7,502	5.5%

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement – NHS vacancy statistics April 2015-September 2020 England Tables – published by NHS Digital

The vacancy figures and workforce statistics do not perfectly align as they are derived from different sources. Vacancy figures are derived from a bespoke data collection from trusts, relating to the number of established posts they have and how many are not filled by substantive staff. Staff in post figures on the number of doctors and nurses working in the National Health Service are derived from the Electronic Staff Record, the Human Resources and payroll system for the NHS.

## ■ Health Professions and Patients: Safety

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

[\[121167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's policy is on the World Health Organization Charter on Health worker safety: a priority for patient safety, published on 17 September 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* Ensuring the safety of both health workers and patients is a priority for the Government, particularly during this unprecedented pandemic. The Secretary of State agreed on 21 September 2020 to sign up to the World Health Organization Charter on Health worker safety: a priority for patient safety. The charter is closely aligned with aims of the NHS People Plan 2020/21 published in July. The People Plan includes a specific commitment around looking

after National Health Service staff in compassionate and inclusive environments and focuses on building resilience across the NHS workforce.

## ■ Health Professions: Coronavirus

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

[\[121171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) mental health and (b) occupational health and safety of health workers.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 1 December 2020]:* Supporting the mental health and occupational health and safety of health workers is a priority for the Government, particularly during this unprecedented pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement have put in place a comprehensive package of health and wellbeing services for National Health Service staff, including helplines for counselling and support and free access to well-being apps. The NHS People Plan published in July is focused on the wellbeing of the NHS workforce. This includes more comprehensive occupational health support and a £15 million investment into mental health hubs that will provide proactive outreach to overcome barriers to seeking help for frontline staff. The NHS also funds NHS Practitioner Health, which provides confidential mental health services for doctors and dentists.

## ■ Health Professions: Mental Health

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

[\[121169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on (a) the mental health of NHS staff (b) the effect of stress on NHS staff in (i) each year since 2015 and (ii) since the outbreak of covid-19.

**Helen Whately:**

The annual National Health Service staff survey enables an analysis of self-reported trends and can be tracked back to 2015. The survey collects data on health and wellbeing.

It includes the question 'During the last 12 months have you felt unwell as a result of work-related stress?'. The response rates for the past five years are shown in the following table:

YEAR	% OF STAFF RESPONDING 'YES'
2015	37.10%
2016	36.80%
2017	38.40%
2018	39.90%
2019	40.30%

Data on NHS staff sickness absence is published by NHS Digital includes reporting on the reason for sickness absence dating back to 2015.

The following table shows the full time equivalent (FTE) days lost to mental health related absence for NHS Hospital and Community Health Service (HCHS) staff, for the period March to February in each year since 2015.

PERIOD	FTE DAYS LOST DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH RELATED REASONS	SICKNESS ABSENCE RATE FOR MENTAL HEALTH RELATED ABSENCE AS A PERCENTAGE OF FTE DAYS AVAILABLE	SICKNESS ABSENCE RATE FOR MENTAL HEALTH RELATED ABSENCE AS A PERCENTAGE OF FTE DAYS LOST DUE TO ALL REASONS
March 2015 to February 2016	3,264,151	0.80%	20.10%
March 2016 to February 2017	3,465,678	0.90%	20.70%
March 2017 to February 2018	3,759,543	0.90%	22.20%
March 2018 to February 2019	4,206,154	1.00%	24.10%
March 2019 to February 2020	4,820,335	1.10%	25.60%

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, a significant health and wellbeing offer accessed over 500,000 times by NHS staff, has been developed to support the psychological and physical health of staff. The offer is kept under review and gathers intelligence from existing surveys and user experience.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[121885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the mental health of healthcare workers.

**Helen Whately:**

Supporting the mental health of health workers is a priority for the Government, particularly during this unprecedented pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement have put in place a comprehensive package of health and wellbeing services for National Health Service staff, including helplines for counselling and support and free access to well-being apps.

The NHS People Plan published in July is focused on the wellbeing of the NHS workforce. As part of this offer, £15 million is being invested to strengthen mental health support for NHS staff. This funding will be used to set up a first wave of mental health hubs that will provide outreach and assessment services to help frontline staff receive rapid access to mental health services. The NHS also funds NHS Practitioner Health, which provides confidential mental health services for doctors and dentists.

■ **Health Services and Social Services: Staff**

**Jeremy Hunt:**

[\[113523\]](#)

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

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 November 2020]:* The Department does not hold data in the format requested.

■ **Health Services and Social Services: Technology**

**Jeremy Hunt:**

[\[122648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Spending Review 2020, if he will provide more information on plans for the modernisation of technology across the health and care system.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* The funding for technology transformation that was secured in the Spending Review will support local provider organisations to generate a step change in their digital maturity as well as to ensure that there is the right national infrastructure to support them.

We are now planning activity for 2021-22 and we will provide guidance to the system before the start of the next financial year.

**Huntington's Disease: Research****Alexander Stafford:** [\[122928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage research into new treatments for Huntington's disease.

**Edward Argar:**

The Government remains strongly committed to supporting research into dementia and neurodegeneration, including Huntington's disease. The National Institute for Health Research Biomedical Research Centres have supported recent research on diagnosis and treatment of this condition.

The Government's 2020 Challenge contained the commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over five years. This commitment was delivered a year early with £344 million spent on dementia and neurodegeneration research over the four years to 31 March 2019. We are currently working on ways to boost significantly further research on dementia and neurodegeneration at all stages on the translation pathway including medical and care interventions.

**Intensive Care: Hospital Beds****Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[123561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many acute beds there have been in the NHS in England, in each year since 2009-10.

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[123562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many critical care beds there have been in the NHS in England, in each year since 2009-10.

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[123563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many critical care beds there are in the NHS in England.

**Edward Argar:**

Data is not available in the format requested.

**Mental Health Services: Children and Young People****Caroline Lucas:** [\[122656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the £500m set out for mental health in the Spending Review 2020 is ringfenced for children and young people's services; how that £500m is planned to be allocated; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

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.

**Elliot Colburn:**

[\[123710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) children who do not meet the thresholds for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and (b) other children with poor mental health can access support.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon MP) on 8 October 2020 to Question [99607](#).

#### ■ **Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

[\[121880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to develop a public mental health strategy in response to a potential increase in the number of people with (a) mental illness and (b) poor mental wellbeing as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have brought forward our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, backed by £50 million, to set out the support available for individuals in the context of a second wave, and the winter months. It sets out the steps we have taken to strengthen the support available for people who are struggling, our commitments to ensure services are there to support those who need it and the provision in place to keep our frontline workers well.

#### ■ **Mental Health Services: Young People**

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[121832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support youth mental health services.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* We are committed to achieving our NHS Long Term Plan ambitions for service transformation and expansion, backed by investment of £2.3 billion a year to mental health services by 2023/24. The investment will mean that, by 2023/24, an extra 345,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years old will be able to access mental health support via National Health Service-funded mental health services and school- or college-based mental health support teams, if they need them.

Through the Long Term Plan, we will extend current service models to create a comprehensive offer for 0-25 year olds that reaches across mental health services for children, young people and adults. The new model will deliver an integrated approach across health, social care, education and the voluntary sector, such as the

evidenced-based 'iThrive' operating model which currently covers around 47% of the 0-18 year old population and can be expanded to 25 year olds.

#### ■ **Mental Health: Children**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[120874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle severe mental health issues in children exacerbated by the covid-19 outbreak and isolation due to the lockdown restrictions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The National Health Service has worked hard to keep mental health services going during the first peak, using technology where needed but also face to face appointments where appropriate.

On 23 November, we brought forward our Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Plan for COVID-19, to set out the support available for individuals in the context of a second wave, and the winter months. It sets out the steps we have taken to strengthen the support available for people who are struggling, including for children and young people with severe mental illness. This includes the announcement that the NHS will receive around an additional £500 million next year to address waiting times for mental health services, give more people the mental health support they need and invest in the NHS workforce.

#### ■ **Mental Health: Coronavirus**

**Anne Marie Morris:**

[\[121842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking in response to the Care Quality Commission's most recent Monitoring the Mental Health Act report in the context of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* We welcome the Care Quality Commission's report which gives us an invaluable insight into the ways that mental health inpatient services have responded to the pandemic.

We have announced measures which address some of the concerns raised in the report. This includes a £50 million winter discharge support package which will boost capacity and support good quality discharge from mental health inpatient settings to help reduce pressures on inpatient beds and keep patients safe over the winter.

It is important that any restrictions on hospital visiting are proportionate and only kept in place when absolutely necessary and in line with the Government's and NHS policies during the pandemic. We are aware that advocacy services have had to innovate during the pandemic in order to continue to offer patients the advice and support that they need.

**Emma Hardy:**

[121906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the mental health and wellbeing of people living in tier 3 covid-19 restricted areas.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

There is a variety of evidence on mental health, including detailed surveillance reports from Public Health England. There are likely to be some short-term negative mental health impacts associated with restrictions under the tier system. The 'Government's Analysis of the health, economic and social effects of COVID-19 and the approach to tiering' published on 30 November is available at the following link:

[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\\_SoS .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_SoS.pdf)

The tier system in England will be reviewed in the next two weeks, with areas being added to, removed from or remaining on the highest tier 3.

#### ■ **Mental Health: Employment**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[84278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial assistance he will make available to employers to help support the mental health of their employees and ensure that mental health and suicide awareness are prioritised in workplaces during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We recognise the crucial role that employers play in ensuring individuals are supported to take positive actions to improve their wellbeing at work.

The Health and Safety Executive's 'talking toolkit' is a resource to help employers to have effective conversations with employees on how to prevent work-related stress to inform tangible actions in the workplace, for example, completion of a stress risk assessment.

As we move into winter, guidance and best practice will be available to employers on the Mental Health at Work website at the following link:

[www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk)

#### ■ **Mental Health: Males**

**Ben Bradley:**

[121000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to develop Government policy on improving men's mental health.

**Ben Bradley:**

[121001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health support for men in order to reduce levels of male suicide.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We know that men are less likely to seek help or talk about suicidal feelings and some are often reluctant to engage with health and other support services.

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy highlights men, and especially middle-aged and young men, as a group at high risk of suicide, and in January 2019, we published the first Cross-Government suicide prevention workplan. It includes sections on tailoring prevention approaches towards reducing suicide risk in high-risk groups such as men.

**■ NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus****Jeremy Hunt:**[\[120016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle workforce burnout across the NHS and social care during the Covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* The Government is committed to supporting the National Health Service and social care workforce. The NHS People Plan, published in July, is focused on the wellbeing of the NHS workforce and on strengthening resilience during COVID-19. We have invested in mental health support with £15 million recently going into the roll out of mental health hubs that will provide proactive outreach to overcome barriers to seeking help for frontline staff.

In September we published a winter plan for adult social care setting out the wellbeing support available to support the adult social care workforce through the winter. We have worked alongside the NHS and other organisations to develop a package of emotional, psychological and practical resources for the workforce and wherever possible the same offer is in place for all social care staff as is for their colleagues in the NHS. We have funded extensions of the Samaritans staff support line and the Hospice UK bereavement and trauma line to all social care staff as well as bespoke support for Registered Managers. We will continue to work with local authorities to improve access to occupational health provision and other wellbeing support for care workers, in line with our commitments in the winter plan.

**■ NHS and Social Services: Pay****Mr Clive Betts:**[\[120775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the effect on the pay of (a) NHS and (b) social care staff of the pay proposals in his Spending Review 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* Given the impact of COVID-19 on our health services, the Government will continue to provide for pay rises for over one million National Health Service workers in 2021/22. For the NHS, the Government will ask the independent pay review bodies (PRB) to make recommendations, including

ensuring that staff earning less than £24,000 receive a minimum of £250 increase. The Government will take PRBs recommendations into account when we receive them.

The vast majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers who ultimately set their pay, independent of central Government. While social care for some people is funded by local authorities, many people pay for their own care. We are providing councils with access to an additional £1 billion for social care.

## ■ **NHS Trusts: West Midlands**

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[121809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to reorganise NHS trusts in the Black Country.

**Edward Argar:**

Since the establishment of the sustainability and transformation partnership there has been much greater collaboration between organisations in the Black Country and West Birmingham.

There is an ambition to work much more closely together to reduce the variance in services, standardise clinical practices and take the best part of each other's improvement programmes which will ultimately improve outcomes for local people.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust and Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust have therefore indicated that they are looking to progress a strategic collaboration arrangement, which is due to be discussed in upcoming public board meetings.

## ■ **NHS: Apprentices**

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[122788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a national pay-scale for apprentices across the NHS.

**Helen Whately:**

The Agenda for Change multi-year pay and contract reform deal 2018/19 to 2020/21 included a commitment for the NHS Staff Council to negotiate a new provision on pay for apprentices within the National Health Service terms and conditions of service.

Employers and trade unions were unable to reach a consensus on pay following lengthy negotiations but did agree on other areas including on job descriptions and person specifications for apprentices and on treatment of internal applicants to apprenticeship roles.

## ■ **NHS: Redundancy and Re-employment**

**Jon Trickett:**

[\[120781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff have been made redundant since 2010; and how many of those staff have since been rehired by the NHS.

**Helen Whately:**

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

The following table shows the number of redundancies since by financial year to 2019/20, headcount.

YEAR	TOTAL REDUNDANCIES
2010-11	5,521
2011-12	6,820
2012-13	6,750
2013-14	4,637
2014-15	3,690
2015-16	3,221
2016-17	2,405
2017-18	2,243
2018-19	1,576
2019-20	1,475

Source: NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics, NHS Digital – June 2020 Reasons for Leaving

The Department does not hold the information requested on the number of employees who have since been rehired by the National Health Service.

■ **Nurses: Students**

**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[113493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the Royal College of Nursing's campaign for Government to provide a life assurance scheme to English student nurses working on the front line during the second wave of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 November 2020]:*

The Government holds all healthcare students in the highest regard and greatly appreciates their contribution to the National Health Service.

The NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme provides additional financial protection for frontline staff who are employed to deliver care for people and work in environments that carry an increased risk of contracting coronavirus.

Whilst the scheme is designed to cover employed staff, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care recognises the importance of the role students on placement play in supporting frontline health and social care services and so can exercise his discretion and consider cases from individuals who meet the appropriate eligibility criteria.

The Secretary of State will review each case to decide whether to exercise this discretion and if the other eligibility criteria are met.

### ■ **Protective Clothing**

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[121922]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what methods his Department is using to track the (a) manufacture and (b) distribution of PPE to key workers across different sectors to ensure equity of access to PPE.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 2 December 2020]:* As set out in 'Personal protective equipment (PPE) strategy: stabilise and build resilience', which was published on 28 September and available on GOV.UK, a cross-Government effort has been used to screen and approve a large number of global manufacturers. As a result, we have developed a pre-market supply chain engagement plan that, within the public procurement rules, enables suppliers to better support the Department's requirements. This has helped us stabilise the United Kingdom PPE supply chain.

PPE is distributed through the NHS Supply Chain, Local Resilience Forums and local authorities. We also operate a national supply disruption response where emergency requests of PPE can be made.

### ■ **Protective Clothing: Coronavirus**

**Neale Hanvey:**

**[118115]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the National Audit Office investigation into contracts for providing personal protective equipment during the covid-19 outbreak, which companies were awarded contracts after being introduced to a high-priority lane by (a) Ministers, (b) hon. Members or Peers and (c) officials, including the private office of the Permanent Secretary of his Department.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Government issued a public call to action to support the increased requirements of personal protective equipment (PPE). This resulted in over 15,000 suppliers offering their help and support.

The cross-Government PPE team considered that leads referred by Government officials, Ministerial private offices, Parliamentarians, senior National Health Service



staff and other health professionals were possibly more credible and needed to be initially reviewed with more urgency. This was commonly referred to as a 'priority' or 'VIP' channel.

At the point of being prioritised these offers went into exactly the same due diligence, technical assurance, closing or contract negotiation and contract award process as all the other offers. About one in ten suppliers processed through this channel - 47 out of 493 - obtained contracts. We do not intend to publish the list of these suppliers as there may be associated commercial implications.

### ■ **Protective Clothing: Procurement**

**Alyn Smith:**

[\[117371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled Investigation into government procurement during the covid-19 pandemic, published 18 November 2020, what the names are of the 144 companies that were introduced by the private offices of Ministers and processed via the high priority lane for the procurement of personal protective equipment.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 November 2020]:* The Government issued a public call to action to support the increased requirements of personal protective equipment (PPE). This resulted in over 15,000 suppliers offering their help and support.

The cross-Government PPE team considered that leads referred by Government officials, Ministerial private offices, Parliamentarians, senior National Health Service staff and other health professionals were possibly the more credible and needed to be initially reviewed with more urgency. This was commonly referred to as a 'priority' or 'VIP' channel.

At the point of being prioritised these offers went into the same due diligence, technical assurance, closing or contract negotiation and contract award process as all the other offers. About one in ten suppliers were processed through this channel - 47 out of 493 - obtained contracts. We do not intend to publish the list of these suppliers as there may be associated commercial implications.

### ■ **Respite Care: Coronavirus**

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[121911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that families with additional needs living in tier 3 covid-19 restricted areas can access the respite support they require.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government recognises that respite care provides important support for people with care needs and their carers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A revised set of local restriction tiers were implemented on 2 December. Across all the tiers there is an exemption from the gathering limits for the purposes of providing

care or assistance to someone vulnerable or to provide respite for a carer. In addition, eligibility criteria for support bubbles has been extended. From 2 December, a person can form a support bubble with another household if they are the only adult in their household with any other members of the household having been under 18 years old on 12 June 2020 or are the only adult who does not have a disability that needs continuous care.

Further, support groups can continue to meet in person with up to 15 participants, where formally organised. This covers day services that provide support to vulnerable people and respite to their carers. We have worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance on how such provision can be operated safely. All these provisions aim to ensure carers can continue to receive the support they need during this period.

## ■ Self-harm

**Liz Twist:**

[\[109566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of commissioning research to improve understanding of how to support people who self-harm without intending to take their own lives.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

In 2017, we expanded the scope of the national suicide prevention strategy to include addressing self-harm as an issue in its own right, and we have funded the Multicentre Study of Self-harm – the most in-depth analysis and monitoring of self-harming trends in England.

The aim of the Multicentre Study's work is to conduct a series of related studies on the epidemiology, causes, clinical management, outcome and prevention of self-harm.

The cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan includes a commitment to establish a wider mental health research programme to inform our thinking in many of the areas that may impact suicide and self-harm prevention. We continue to provide funding for research projects through the National Institute for Health Research including for suicide and self-harm prevention.

## ■ Self-harm: Young People

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[122789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to increase the (a) quantity and (b) quality of online support for teenagers who self-harm during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:* National Health Service mental health services have remained open for business throughout the pandemic. Our community, talking therapies and children and young people's services have deployed innovative digital tool to connect with people and provide ongoing support. For those with severe

needs or in crisis, all NHS mental health providers have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week mental health crisis lines.

We have invested more than £10 million in supporting national and local mental health charities, including CALM and Samaritans, to continue their vital work in supporting people across the country.

■ **Social Services: Statutory Sick Pay**

**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[110198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of social care workers that qualify only for statutory sick pay.

**Helen Whately:**

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ **Social Services: Vacancies**

**Jeremy Hunt:** [\[120018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the workforce shortage in social care in the (a) short and (b) long term.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 30 November 2020]:* We are taking action to increase recruitment into adult social care in both the short and long term. We have launched an online recruitment tool, Join Social Care, to simplify and fast track the recruitment process, and are offering free and rapid induction training via Skills for Care for new and existing staff and volunteers. In the last year we have run a National Recruitment Campaign across broadcast, digital and social media highlighting the vital work care workers do.

The Department for Health and Social Care is also working with the Department for Work and Pensions to promote adult social care careers to jobseekers, including those who may have lost their jobs during the pandemic from other sectors, such as tourism, hospitality and retail. We are continuing to work with the sector and other government departments to understand how we can further support recruitment and retention, and we continue to work to raise the profile of adult social care careers.

## HOME OFFICE

■ **Biometric Residence Permits: Coronavirus**

**Drew Hendry:** [\[124785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of allowing mitigations for people facing delays in receiving biometric residence permits during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government has implemented a range of measures to help foreign nationals during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We exchanged expired 30-day entry clearance vignettes free of charge. We also replaced the 30-day entry clearance vignettes with ones which are valid for 90 days to provide foreign nationals with a longer window of opportunity to travel to the UK in light of travel limitations due to global covid-19 restrictions. Where expired vignettes were reissued, we also reissued the biometric residence permit (BRP) to reflect the updated leave start and end dates.

Upon arrival in the UK, anyone who cannot collect their BRP from the Post Office because of Covid-19 restrictions will not be penalised, and we have extended the Post Office's period for retaining uncollected BRPs from the current 30 days to 90 days to give people more time to collect them.

We have also put in place arrangements to reuse biometrics from certain foreign nationals who have previously provided them to speed up the processing of their applications for further leave and enable them to obtain a new BRP.

Advice and guidance for visa applicants during the pandemic is available on GOV.UK by searching 'Covid-19 visa'.

**■ Immigration: Afghanistan****Carol Monaghan:**[\[124778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for family reunion there have been under the Afghan ex gratia scheme since March 2019.

**Carol Monaghan:**[\[124779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for family reunion made under the Afghan ex gratia scheme since March 2019 have since been approved.

**Kevin Foster:**

Qualifying dependant family members are able to apply to join Afghan interpreters relocated the UK under the Ex-Gratia Scheme.

The process of identifying family members suitable for relocation is a complicated one which requires employing departments to identify family members in addition to the verification of documents under challenging circumstances in Afghanistan.

The process of relocation has inevitably been impacted by COVID-19, those who have been approved for relocation will be brought to the UK once suitable accommodation has been sourced and support arrangements for arrival are in place.

The Home Office does not publish data on the volume of applications it receives - and approves - under the scheme.

**■ Immigration: EU Nationals****Duncan Baker:**[\[124876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether EU citizens with permanent residency status in the UK need to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme by June 2021.

**Kevin Foster:**

Permanent residence is a status derived from EU law.

EU citizens with this status need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme for a UK immigration status by 30 June 2021 in order to continue living in the UK after that date.

**■ Sexual Offences: Mental Health Services****Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[124904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that people who report (a) rape or (b) sexual assault to the police have access to specialist counselling and therapy (i) before trial and (ii) from the trial onwards.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Rape and sexual assault are devastating crimes and we want victims to have the confidence to report them, knowing they will get the support they need and that everything will be done to bring offenders to justice.

The Ministry of Justice has committed £32 million over three years from 2019 to 2022 to rape support centres across England and Wales to provide emotional and practical support to victims, which may include counselling and therapy. The Home Office is also providing £200,000 in 2020/21 to specialist sexual violence support services through its National Sexual Violence Support Fund.

We understand the importance of accessing therapy after going through a traumatic experience. Earlier this year the CPS launched a public consultation on guidance for pre-trial therapy. The updated guidance will provide prosecutors, the police and therapists with practical support in helping victims through this part of the justice process.

The Government is also conducting an end-to-end review of the criminal justice response to rape, which includes considering the role of support services in victims' engagement throughout the criminal justice system.

**■ Windrush Generation: Compensation****Bambos Charalambous:**[\[124830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush Compensation Scheme claims her Department has (a) accepted and (b) rejected, to date.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

**[124831]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time taken is to process an application to the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

**Bambos Charalambous:**

**[124832]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has set a time limit by which Windrush Compensation Scheme claims must be settled from the time the claim is first submitted.

**Priti Patel:**

Information on the Windrush Compensation Scheme claims that have been (a) accepted and (b) rejected, to date is available to view on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/windrush-compensation-scheme-data-november-2020>

Our priority remains to process claims as quickly as possible. However, the Home Office does not have a set time within which claims are to be resolved. This is because the Windrush Compensation Scheme has thirteen claim categories, each individual's compensation claim is deeply personal and requires detailed consideration to understand their circumstances and experiences. This enables the Home Office to make an individualised assessment of the value of compensation to be awarded. Some individuals' experiences are more complex than others and it is right we take the time to ensure these are considered carefully. This holistic approach necessarily takes time, but is ultimately beneficial to individuals.

In some cases, we will make interim payments on parts of the claim that are straightforward to determine, such as immigration fees, thereby speeding up the provision of compensation.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Building Safety Fund

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

**[122739]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the deadline for applications to the Building Safety Fund will be extended.

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[124878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the deadline for applications to the Building Safety Fund beyond 31 December 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The timelines for the Building Fund, set out in the prospectus, are intended to incentivise building owners to demonstrate pace of progression with their remediation plans for unsafe buildings. We will keep timelines under review as we continue through the application process.

**■ Buildings: Insulation****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[122740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the capacity of the construction industry to carry out cladding remediation work.

**Christopher Pincher:**

From the outset of the Building Safety Programme, the Department has engaged industry to ensure sufficient capacity exists to meet demand and to have arrangements in place to address any blockages in the supply chain.

We are providing £600 million to speed up the removal of the most dangerous ACM cladding, making homes safer, quicker. We are also providing £1 billion to remove other forms of unsafe cladding

Where funding alone has not been enough to increase the pace of remediation we have provided direct expert support to projects.

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[123619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Fifth Report of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Pre-legislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill, published on 24 November 2020, HC 466, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for building remediation works.

**Christopher Pincher:**

In the March 2020 budget, the Government announced that it will provide £1 billion in 2020/21 to support the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on residential buildings 18 metres and over, in both the private and social housing sectors. This funding is in addition to the £600 million which Government has already made available to ensure remediation of the highest risk ACM cladding, the type that was in place on Grenfell Tower.

This will go a long way to addressing the most significant safety risks and, in many cases, address the costliest remediation works necessary.

Government's decision to place the scope of the Building Safety Fund at buildings over 18m reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height, as previously noted by the Independent Expert Advisory Panel and Dame Judith Hackitt.

Government support is focused on cladding because unsafe cladding acts as an accelerant to fire spread, and funding will remove any financial barriers to remediation proceeding.

Our impact assessment also identifies work not related to cladding that will need to be remediated. Michael Wade, senior adviser to MHCLG, is accelerating work with leaseholders and the financial sector to identify financing solutions that defend



leaseholders from unaffordable costs of building safety works while ensuring that taxpayers are protected.

■ **Buildings: Salford**

**Mike Amesbury:**

**[122874]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with Laing O'Rourke on fire safety building defects at the (a) Millennium Tower and (b) Millennium Point buildings in Salford, Greater Manchester.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has not had any discussions with Laing O'Rourke about Millennium Tower and Millennium Point buildings in Salford, Greater Manchester.

■ **Help to Buy Scheme**

**Andrew Lewer:**

**[124304]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the (a) cost to the public purse was of and (b) value of assets was in the Help to Buy scheme in each financial year since 2017-18.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Help to Buy expenditure (equity loans made), redemptions (equity loans repaid) and value of the loan portfolio (loan book) are published each year in Homes England's Annual Report & Financial Statements and are summarised below for the financial years 2017-18 through to 2019-20 expressed in £000's:

2017/18

Expenditure: £3,048,679 Valuation of assets: £8,314,304

Redemptions: (£492,394)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-england-annual-report-and-financial-statements>

2018/19

Expenditure: £3,530,582 Valuation of assets: £11,083,941

Redemptions: (£714,925)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-england-annual-report-financial-statements-201819>

2019/20

Expenditure: £3,592,940 Valuation of assets: £14,016,314

Redemptions: (£919,840)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-england-annual-report-financial-statements-201920>

**■ High Rise Flats: Coronavirus****Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[122933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional steps the Government has taken to help protect residents living in high-rise buildings from contracting covid-19.

**Christopher Pincher:**

My Department has provided a range of guidance to support people and mitigate the risk of transmission, including residents living in blocks/ buildings with shared spaces. My Department has advised that landlords and/or managing agents should carry out their own risk assessments to identify suitable control measures to mitigate the risk of transmission in common areas or shared facilities. The Government has always been clear that it will continually monitor the transmission of the virus in our communities and adapt our advice and approach accordingly.

**■ Housing: Broadband****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[122804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to introduce a mandatory requirement for fibre optic infrastructure to be included in all new developments.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Ensuring that every new home is built with fast, reliable and resilient broadband is a priority for this Government. We announced in March 2020 that we will amend the Building Regulations to require the provision of gigabit-capable connectivity such as fibre optic infrastructure to new homes. We plan to publish a technical consultation this Winter and to introduce the new requirements in 2021.

**■ Housing: Construction****Geraint Davies:**[\[124645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that the quality of permitted development conversions to residential is on a par with the quality of homes delivered through planning permission.

**Christopher Pincher:**

To ensure that all homes delivered under permitted development rights in England are quality homes we have recently introduced legislation to require adequate natural light in all habitable rooms and that, in future, all new homes delivered through the rights must meet the nationally described space standards.

**Geraint Davies:**[\[124646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that environmental impact assessments for new housing developments include analysis of (a) air quality and (b) noise pollution.

**Christopher Pincher:**

New housing developments which are likely to have significant effects on the environment require an environmental impact assessment (EIA). An EIA must identify, describe and assess the likely significant impacts on a variety of factors, including on human health and air quality.

This will, where relevant, include an assessment of air and noise pollution, as well as a description of their effects. The EIA is then open to consultation with experts and the public. The information the assessment contains and the views expressed through consultation must be taken into account in the decision to grant permission for any development.

As part of our commitment to streamline and improve the planning system, we have committed to review the environmental assessment process, with the aims of making it faster and easier to navigate, whilst upholding environmental protections and where possible going further to take advantages of opportunities for environmental improvement.

**Dr Liam Fox:**[\[124650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking through the Planning White Paper to balance the building of new homes with the provision of sufficient infrastructure to support growing communities.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We understand how important it is to local communities that new housing development is supported by the provision of infrastructure. The proposal to create a new Infrastructure Levy, as set out in the *Planning for the Future* White Paper, will support a more streamlined and accessible planning system. The new Levy will raise at least as much value as is currently captured through CIL and section 106 and will continue to be collected and spent at the local level, on priorities including infrastructure and affordable housing.

The consultation on the White Paper closed on 29 October. It is important that we analyse and scrutinise the consultation feedback thoroughly, and we will respond formally.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Apsana Begum:**[\[124881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that leaseholders do not bear the costs of remedial works when their managing agent or building owner is unsuccessful in their application for Building Safety Fund, in (a) Poplar and Limehouse constituency and (b) England.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Building Safety Fund will cover the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on private and social sector high-rise residential buildings over 18m where building owners would not otherwise be able to do so at the pace required.

On May 26, Government announced the launch of the prospectus for the Building Safety Fund. The prospectus sets out the buildings and non-ACM cladding systems that are eligible for funding. However, we do not expect Government funding to be the only means of remediating high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding systems.

We expect a significant proportion of the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding on these buildings to be funded by those responsible for the original work, through warranties or by building owners and landlords who are able to pay for the remediation without passing on costs to leaseholders.

The department is investigating solutions to protect leaseholders, and will provide an update

## ■ Housing: Standards

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[124644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make healthy housing a central feature of the future planning system.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Planning Reform provides a once in a generation opportunity to place renewed emphasis on how the planning system can contribute to delivering the healthy homes and neighbourhoods this country needs. The importance of this has been clear during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the role that our homes and neighbourhoods play in health and wellbeing

We are taking measures to deliver healthy homes through the current planning system. We have published the National Design Guide which recognises the need for new homes to be functional, healthy and sustainable. The forthcoming National Model Design Code will help local authorities embed this through their own local design codes

The Planning for the Future White Paper consultation closed on 29 October 2020 and we are currently considering the responses received. The Government will publish a response which will set out decisions taken and proposed implementation.

## ■ Islam: Religious Hatred

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[124888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will commission independent research on the causes of Islamophobia.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Government keeps its policies on addressing hate crime under review and in doing so draws upon extensive existing research regarding the drivers of anti-Muslim hatred.

## ■ Landlords

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[124882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of legislation in ensuring that enforcement action can be taken against landlords who do not fulfil their legal obligations to tenants.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Local authorities have a range of enforcement powers to protect tenants from landlords that do not fulfil their legal obligations. The Housing Act 2004 gives powers to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 further introduced civil penalties of up to £30,000 and banning orders for use against the worst and most persistent offenders. Legislation also extended rent repayment orders which require a landlord to repay rent when they have not complied with the law.

My Department has also created the database of rogue landlords and property agents and, as part of the Renters' Reform Bill, we have committed to widening access to the database to empower tenants to make more informed choices.

## ■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Steve Reed:**

[\[124762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to consult on the design of the (a) UK Shared Prosperity Fund and (b) Levelling Up Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for people and places. To help local areas prepare over 2021-22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, the Government will provide £220 million additional funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches. Further details will be published in the new year.

Officials have held 26 engagement events on the UKSPF, attended by over five hundred representatives from a breadth of sectors including businesses, public bodies, higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups. We will continue to work with interested parties as we develop the fund.

The Government is also launching a new Levelling Up Fund worth £4 billion for England. This will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. Projects should be genuine local priorities, prepared in collaboration with local stakeholders that have clear benefits to the local community and are aligned with a broader local economic strategy. The Spending Review makes available up to £600 million in 2021/22. We

will publish a prospectus for the Fund and launch the first round of competitions in the new year.

#### ■ Local Government: Coronavirus

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[121806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimates he made of the costs incurred by English local authorities in responding to the covid-19 outbreak when preparing the 2020 spending review.

**Luke Hall:**

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have worked closely with local authorities to understand the pressures they are facing. Local authorities have completed monitoring returns to assess the impact the pandemic is having on their finances which shows that the estimated additional expenditure up to the end of October 2020 is £4 billion. Based on this, we have allocated £7.2 billion directly to local authorities, with £4.6 billion of this being unringfenced money for authorities to spend how they see fit. Furthermore, 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. The Chancellor also confirmed that Core Spending Power is forecast to rise by 4.5 per cent in cash terms in 2021-22 - a real terms increase. This package means local authorities will be able to access an estimated additional £2.2 billion to support Adult and Children's Social Care and to maintain universal services.

#### ■ Local Government: Elections

**Steve Reed:**

[\[124759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what resources his Department plans to provide to Local Authorities organising elections for May 2021 to ensure that those elections are carried out in a covid secure way.

**Luke Hall:**

My Department and the Cabinet Office have been working together with the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Local Government Association, and Public Health England, to identify and resolve challenges presented by the impact of Covid-19 to the delivery of the local and mayoral elections in England and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales in May 2021.

In the Spending Review we are making available £1.55 billion to local authorities to support the costs of Covid-19 in 2021-22. We have also received specific requests for additional Covid related local election costs to be supported. We will set out more detail about the £1.55 billion in due course.

## ■ Local Government: Reorganisation

**Steve Reed:**

[\[124761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has received proposals on restructuring from local authorities in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset.

**Luke Hall:**

Councils in North Yorkshire, Somerset and Cumbria have until 9 December to submit their final proposals for local government reorganisation. We have already received more than one outline proposal from each area. All proposals received will be carefully considered.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[122640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 19 August 2020, on councils' handling of planning regulations, ref za53448.

**Christopher Pincher:**

A response was issued to the Hon Member on 7 December 2020.

## ■ Nitrates: Solent

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[122669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of whether use of emergency development provisions under the Town and Country Planning Act override the need for nitrate mitigation measures in the Solent region.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Habitats Regulations apply to plans or projects which are likely to have a significant effect on a protected habitats site. All development, whether emergency or not is subject to this requirement, regardless of the legislation under which planning permission is granted.

Where a plan or project is likely to have significant effects on the environment the competent authority will need to undertake an Appropriate Assessment to determine whether development will have an adverse effect on the protected site. The competent authority may only grant consent where adequate mitigation of any adverse effect can be secured to enable development to proceed – such as nitrate neutrality.

## ■ Planning Inspectorate: Members

**Tom Tugendhat:**

[\[124238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance his Department provides to the Planning Inspectorate on meeting hon.



Members outside of scheduled evidence hearings regarding concerns on Local Plans affecting their constituencies undergoing examination.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) have their own detailed procedural guidance on the conduct of examinations -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examining-local-plans-procedural-practice> and their own code of conduct

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-conduct>. These take account of the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. My Department has not provided separate guidance to PINS.

More generally, PINS are aware of the legitimate interest that Members of Parliament have in the progress of local plans in their areas, and the important contribution they can make in representing the interests of their constituents. Local plan Inspectors are encouraged to engage positively with local MPs in the examination process whilst adhering to the Franks principles of openness, fairness and impartiality. This includes avoiding dealing privately with one party in the absence of other parties.

■ **Pre-school Education: Finance**

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[123668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what specific local support for early years services his Department will provide under the Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need and for people who face labour market barriers. The Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. Funding for the UKSPF will ramp up so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match receipts from EU structural funds, on average reaching around £1.5 billion per year. The Government will publish further details on the UKSPF in a UK-wide investment framework in 2021 and its funding profile will be set out at the next Spending Review. To help local areas prepare over 2021-22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, the Government will provide £220 million additional funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches. Further details will be published in the new year.

■ **Rented Housing: Coronavirus**

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[123557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to support households with rent arrears since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government has put in place unprecedented measures to protect and support renters during the Covid-19 pandemic, which includes support for households with rent arrears.

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, landlords are required to give tenants 6 months' notice except in the most serious circumstances such as anti-social behaviour, fraud and arrears of more than 6 months. Housing possession cases were suspended in the courts from 27 March until 20 September. Landlords are now once again able to progress their claims, and the most serious cases are being prioritised by the courts. To further protect tenants, the Government has changed the law to ensure bailiffs do not enforce evictions in England until 11 January 2021, except in the most serious circumstances such as illegal occupation, anti-social behaviour or rent arrears of more than 9 months accrued before 23 March.

The Government has also put in place an unprecedented financial package, which is supporting renters and ensuring that they can continue to afford their housing costs. This includes support for businesses to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has now been extended until March 2021. We have also boosted the welfare system, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year and increasing Local Housing Allowance rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21 there is already £180 million for local authorities to distribute in Discretionary Housing Payments for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors.

The Government believes this strikes the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, while allowing landlords to obtain possession of their property in the most egregious cases.

**Colleen Fletcher:****[124768]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of households that have fallen into rent arrears with (a) private landlords and (b) social housing providers as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England; and what steps his Department is taking to protect renters during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government has put in place an unprecedented financial package, which is supporting renters with their housing costs. This includes support for businesses to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until March 2021. We have also boosted the welfare system, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year and increasing Local Housing Allowance rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing

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The Department does not currently hold information on the number of households within the private and social rented sectors that have fallen into rent arrears in Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands and England as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Regulator of Social Housing's quarterly survey report for July to September 2020 (which is based on regulatory returns from private registered providers and private registered provider groups that own or manage more than 1,000 homes) shows that mean current tenant arrears stood at 3.98 per cent at the end of September. The equivalent figure in the same quarter of 2019/20 was 3.71 per cent. This information is for private registered providers in England and does not include local authorities. The report is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/quarterly-survey-of-private-registered-providers>

We are carrying out a data collection to gather information on the impact COVID-19 is having on local authority finances. Data from these returns indicate that Housing Revenue Account residential rent arrears for local authorities for April to October 2020 is estimated at £101.265 million.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-covid-19-financial-impact-monitoring-information>

## ■ Retail Trade: Northern Ireland

**Colum Eastwood:**

**[124903]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing (a) directly and (b) to the Northern Ireland Executive to support Northern Ireland's high streets.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

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

High streets and town centres policy is a devolved matter. Government officials have worked and will continue to work closely with their counterparts in the devolved administrations on the response to Covid-19 and in the future.

#### ■ **Right to Buy Scheme: Midlands**

**Nick Fletcher:**

[\[122924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timescale is for the conclusion of the Voluntary Right to Buy pilot for housing association tenants in the Midlands; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential for that scheme to be rolled out more widely after that pilot's conclusion.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The final sales under the Voluntary Right to Buy Midlands pilot are due to conclude in 2021, following some delays to sales caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The pilot is being fully evaluated, and the results of this evaluation will be published.

#### ■ **Shared Ownership**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[123689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many shared ownership properties have been staircased to 100 percent ownership in the last (a) five and (b) ten years in England.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We have launched the new model of Shared Ownership which will make it easier for shared owners to buy more of their home, including in 1 per cent tranches with heavily reduced fees.

At present, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government does not hold the requested data regarding the uptake of staircasing in Shared Ownership homes. However, from next year we will start recording some more detailed information on staircasing whilst implementing the new model of Shared Ownership.

#### ■ **Shared Ownership: Service Charges**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[123691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the transparency of service charges in shared ownership properties.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government believes very strongly that service charges should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. The law is clear that service charges are payable only to the extent that costs have been reasonably incurred. In support of this, leaseholders, including shared owners, have the ability to apply to the Property Chamber of the

First-tier Tribunal for a determination where they do not believe the charges are reasonable.

The Government established an independent working group chaired by Lord Best to raise standards across the property sector, which also considered how fees such as service charges should be presented to consumers. The working group published its final report to Government (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations before announcing next steps.

### ■ **Sleeping Rough: Bexley and Greenwich**

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

**[124342]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support has been given to (a) Bexley Borough Council and (b) Greenwich Borough Council to help rough sleepers (i) during and (ii) after the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* In 2020/21, we are providing over £700 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping across England.

Greenwich have been allocated £951,740 through rough sleeping programmes in 2020/21. This includes Rough Sleeping Initiative funding to support the establishment or enhancement of coordinated local services for rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough, £413,207 Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding to prevent as many as possible of those brought in during the Covid-19 pandemic returning to the streets and Cold Weather Funding: giving local areas the tools they need to protect people from cold weather and the risks posed by Covid-19.

Bexley have been allocated £240,000 through rough sleeping programmes in 2020/21. Bexley have been allocated £190,000 in funding through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and Cold Weather Funding.

Both authorities are also being closely supported by our MHCLG Rough Sleeping Initiative advisers and Homelessness Advice and Support Team. These expert advisers are pro-actively working with local areas and will continue to support these authorities with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Both authorities produced delivery plans setting out how they will be supporting rough sleepers. Delivery plans were used in the allocation of Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding.

### ■ **Social Services: Pay**

**Mr Clive Betts:**

**[124666]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the local authority spending power in the Spending Review 2020, whether

(a) payment of the living wage and (b) the £250 minimum pay rise for lower paid staff employed (i) by the council and (ii) on council contracts including social care workers are accounted for in that figure.

**Luke Hall:**

Local government has the flexibility to agree its own wages for staff and therefore ultimately decisions on wages will be for local authorities to make. Councils and their contractors must, of course, pay the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage. The package announced at Spending Review 2020 – including an estimated 4.5 per cent cash increase in core spending power – includes sufficient resources for them to do this.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Export Controls

**Joanna Cherry:**

**[124773]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the average number of days her Department has taken to make export licence decisions from the date of the initial request to the date of the first decision being communicated to the applicant in each quarter of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

HM Government publishes Official Statistics on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on GOV.UK, on a quarterly and annual basis.

These reports contain detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This information is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data)

The most recent publication was on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020, covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. For Standard Individual Export Licence (SIEL) applications, the data is reproduced below.

PERIOD	MEDIAN PROCESSING TIMES (DAYS)
Q1 2018	11
Q2 2018	11
Q3 2018	10
Q4 2018	12
Q1 2019	11
Q2 2019	10
Q3 2019	10

PERIOD	MEDIAN PROCESSING TIMES (DAYS)
Q4 2019	15
Q1 2020	15
Q2 2020	13

### ■ Food: Import Duties

**Caroline Nokes:** [\[122670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential financial effect on the NHS of the imposition of tariffs on medical foods.

**Caroline Nokes:** [\[122673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for (a) Health and Social Care and (b) Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the effect of WTO rules on the cost of infant (i) formula, (ii) baby foods and (iii) medical foods.

**Greg Hands:**

The UK Global Tariff (UKGT) was informed by a public consultation where we received over 1,300 responses. To ensure we extracted maximum value from the consultation responses, these have been shared with other relevant government departments, including the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who supported the policy development of the UKGT.

My Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade meets regularly with her colleagues, including my Rt Hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, though they have not discussed tariffs on infant formula, baby foods or medical foods.

### ■ Pipelines: East Africa

**Kate Osamor:** [\[122815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether support for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline is being considered under UKEF.

**Graham Stuart:**

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has been approached on the project referred to, but no decision has been made.



## ■ Trade Agreements: Ghana

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[122552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason she has taken the decision not to use the Economic Community of West African States Economic Partnership Agreement as the starting point for negotiations on a rollover trade deal with Ghana; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

HM Government has now signed, or agreed in principle, trade agreements with 55 countries – accounting for £170 billion of the United Kingdom's bilateral trade in 2019. We are working to make further progress before the end of the Transition Period, and beyond.

The United Kingdom proposed a deal three years ago to provide Ghana with continuing access to our market, on the same basis as they currently enjoy. This deal remains on the table. The Hon. Gentleman will know that the ECOWAS Partnership Agreement he refers to does not provide the basis for our trade flows today. We continue to engage with the Government of Ghana to this effect. If a deal cannot be reached, Ghana will be eligible for the General Framework of the United Kingdom's Generalised Scheme of Preferences from 1st January 2021.

## JUSTICE

## ■ CAF/CASS: Finance

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[909933\]](#)

What assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of funding for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service.

**Alex Chalk:**

We acknowledge that Cafcass continues to experience high levels of demand while managing a rise in the number of open cases.

The Ministry of Justice has allocated an additional £3.4m this year to help Cafcass meet these challenges.

Cafcass has in place a protocol to, where necessary, prioritise cases in local service areas so it can continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and families.

## ■ Coroners

**Mr David Lammy:**

[\[122559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Preventing Future Death reports have been submitted by coroners to NHS trusts since 2013.

**Alex Chalk:**

Coroners have a duty under regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 to send the Chief Coroner their Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) reports and the responses to them. These are uploaded to the Chief Coroner's website under a number of categories. 1,447 PFD reports have been posted under the category of "Hospital Death (Clinical Procedures and medical management) related deaths", since 2013. These however include PFD reports that were issued to private hospitals and will not include any reports issued to NHS Trusts for deaths in the community. Determining how many of the PFD reports were to NHS trusts alone could only be done at disproportionate cost.

The full list of PFD reports since 2013 can be accessed online at:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/subject/prevention-of-future-deaths/>

**■ Criminal Legal Aid Review**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[909935]**

What progress he is making on the second phase of the Criminal Legal Aid Review.

**Alex Chalk:**

In August we announced that the next phase of the Criminal Legal Aid Review will be independently led, bringing in outside expertise and fresh perspectives in order to deliver meaningful change. This will enable the review to widen its focus, ensuring the sustainability of the Criminal Legal Aid System as a whole.

We are working closely with key stakeholders to ensure that the Review is set up as quickly as possible. It is essential that we appoint the right chair and expert panel so that the review can deliver a robust, evidence-based assessment of the criminal legal aid market. At present, we are working to identify and appoint the right candidate for the role. We aim to launch the review before the end of the year.

**■ Human Rights Act 1998**

**Jonathan Gullis:**

**[909945]**

What plans he has to amend the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Alex Chalk:**

Yesterday the Government announced the launch of the Independent Human Rights Act Review, which is a key manifesto commitment of Government.

The Review will be a technical examination of the operation of the Human Rights Act, chaired by Sir Peter Gross. It will focus on the relationship between domestic courts and the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the relationship between the judiciary, the executive and the legislature.

The Panel have been requested to provide a detailed, independent piece of advice outlining options for reform by Summer 2021. A government response will subsequently be published.

**James Sunderland:**

[\[909949\]](#)

What plans he has to amend the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Alex Chalk:**

Yesterday the Government announced the launch of the Independent Human Rights Act Review, which is a key manifesto commitment of Government.

The Review will be a technical examination of the operation of the Human Rights Act, chaired by Sir Peter Gross. It will focus on the relationship between domestic courts and the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the relationship between the judiciary, the executive and the legislature.

The Panel have been requested to provide a detailed, independent piece of advice outlining options for reform by Summer 2021. A government response will subsequently be published.

■ **Law Centres: Finance**

**Kim Johnson:**

[\[909943\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for Law Centres.

**Alex Chalk:**

Charities in the advice sector play a crucial role in helping people resolve their legal problems across England and Wales, which has been vital throughout Covid-19.

That is why MoJ has provided £5.4m in funding for not-for-profit providers of specialist legal advice. £3m of this was distributed to Law Centres.

We continue to work closely with our stakeholders, including the Law Centres Network, to ensure the advice sector can continue to provide support to the communities they serve.

■ **Rule of Law**

**Angela Crawley:**

[\[909948\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on upholding the rule of law.

**Alex Chalk:**

Naturally, the Government does not disclose the details of private conversations that are had amongst Cabinet colleagues, but there should be no doubt that the Government will continue to be very active in supporting the rule of law.

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[909950\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on upholding the rule of law.

**Alex Chalk:**

Naturally, the Government does not disclose the details of private conversations that are had amongst Cabinet colleagues, but there should be no doubt that the Government will continue to be very active in supporting the rule of law.

**Alan Brown:**[\[909960\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on upholding the rule of law.

**Alex Chalk:**

Naturally, the Government does not disclose the details of private conversations that are had amongst Cabinet colleagues, but there should be no doubt that the Government will continue to be very active in supporting the rule of law.

■ **Sexual Offences****Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[124905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of outstanding (a) rape and (b) sexual offences court cases in (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since 2015.

**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[124906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of outstanding (a) rape and (b) sexual offences court cases waiting more than two years for an outcome in (a) England and (b) Wales.

**Chris Philp:**

THE NUMBER OF OUTSTANDING RAPE AND SEXUAL OFFENCES COURT CASES AT THE CROWN COURT IN ENGLAND AND WALES EACH YEAR SINCE 2015 ARE PRESENTED IN THE TABLE

BELOW: OFFENCE 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 SEXUAL

OFFENCES ENGLAND 6,368 5,898 4,983 2,829 3,167 WALES 308 257 268 160 217 RAPE ENGLAND 2,605

2,443 2,023 970 1,057 WALES 117 107 89 58 57 THE NUMBER OF DEFENDANTS DEALT WITH IN COMPLETED CASES FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES AND RAPE THAT SPEND OVER TWO YEARS BETWEEN FIRST LISTING AT THE MAGISTRATES' COURTS TO COMPLETION IN ENGLAND AND WALES EACH YEAR SINCE 2015 ARE AS FOLLOWS: OFFENCE 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 SEXUAL

OFFENCES ENGLAND 831 081 511 531 25 WALES 210 033 RAPE ENGLAND 404 259 505 0 WALES 130 11

■ **Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999****Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[124907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending section 41 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 to ensure that it is fit for purpose in the digital age.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Government wants to ensure that victims of sexual offences are treated with dignity and respect in court.

Section 41 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 provides critical protection for complainants in sex offence cases, by restricting the introduction of a complainant's sexual history by the defence in sexual offence cases.

In 2017, we carefully looked at how the law was working in practice and found that the law was operating as Parliament intended, while striking the balance between the need to protect complainants and ensure defendants receive a fair trial.

As part of the End to End Review of the Criminal Justice's system response to rape we are working to ensure disclosure is proportionate, taking into account the increasing digital nature of evidence.

The Government will publish its initial findings and recommendations for action in due course and we are committed to continuing work with partners from across the criminal justice system after that to improve the system in the longer term.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Louise Haigh:**[\[124257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his Answer to the Oral Question asked by the hon Member for Sheffield, Heeley on 2 December, Official Report, how the WAVE group requested that he pause on engagement on legacy; and on what date that group made that request to him.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* During March and April, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and officials met with a number of victims groups and other key stakeholders to discuss legacy issues. This included a meeting with WAVE Trauma Centre on 19 March. Following these discussions, it was clear that engaging effectively and sensitively ahead of delivering legislation would be difficult due to the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially given the vulnerability of many of those it is vital we engage with.

The Secretary of State remains committed to engaging with victims groups and all parts of the community in Northern Ireland in order to make progress on legacy issues.

**Louise Haigh:**[\[124258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he plans to end the pause on engagement with victims groups on legacy matters.

**Mr Robin Walker:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2020]:* The Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles in a way that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations which has failed victims and veterans alike.

While progress on this - including substantive engagement with key stakeholders like victims groups - has been affected by the challenging circumstances of the past few months, we remain committed to working with all parts of the community in Northern Ireland to help make progress on legacy issues as quickly as possible.

**SCOTLAND****■ Health Education: Scotland****Karin Smyth:**[\[123631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will hold discussions with the Scottish Government on the potential merits of including (a) endometriosis and (b) menstrual wellbeing in the health and wellbeing school curriculum in Scotland.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

Health, Wellbeing and Education are policy areas devolved to the Scottish Government. However, the Department for Education (DfE) has regular discussions with the Scottish Government on a number of education related issues.

Menstrual health and wellbeing education is already a key part of relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) education, which is part of the health and wellbeing area of the Scottish curriculum. There are online learning resources available to assist teachers in delivering learning on menstrual health and wellbeing including endometriosis.

**■ Scotland Office: Electric Vehicles****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[124849\]](#)

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

**Mr Alister Jack:**

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland does not own or lease government vehicles. When required, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland uses vehicles provided by the Government Car Service.

**TRANSPORT****■ Aviation: Passengers****Chris Grayling:**[\[122593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason it is his Department's policy that airlines should be responsible for the incomplete completion by a passenger of a passenger locator form.

**Robert Courts:**

The Passenger Locator Form (PLF) is a key part of our Covid-19 strategy to ensure passengers who are required to self-isolate after travelling do so when they arrive in the UK, and passengers who have travelled near someone who tests positive can be contacted. Passengers are required to fill out a PLF before arrival in the UK.

Airlines are in an unparalleled position to assist in ensuring compliance away from the UK border, thereby facilitating a smooth arrivals process at UK ports.

The Government will continue to engage with industry on our proposals for ensuring passengers arrive at the border with a completed PLF.

**■ Bus Services: Coronavirus****Tom Tugendhat:**[\[124236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will expedite payment of the covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant to operators to ensure that those payments are made by the end of each restart period.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department is incredibly grateful to the bus sector and its key workers for providing services throughout the pandemic. These vital services have and continue to allow people to make essential journeys and enable key workers to get to their place of work.

The Department has provided an unprecedented amount of support to the sector during this time. We are continually looking to enhance the scheme's operations including to the timeliness of payments.

**■ Buses: Finance****Lilian Greenwood:**[\[124733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the £120 million for zero emissions buses in the Spending Review 2020 combined with all-electric bus towns for delivering 800 zero emission buses in 2021-22.

**Rachel Maclean:**

As set out in the Spending Review 2020, the £120 million investment in zero emission buses, together with existing funding for the All-Electric Bus Town, will support both the introduction of 800 zero emission buses and the necessary local



infrastructure. Further details on how funding will be distributed to fulfil this ambition will be announced in due course.

■ **Buses: Procurement**

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[124731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the £120 million for zero emission buses in 2021-22 in the Spending Review 2020, if he will publish details of the scheme his Department will use to deliver 800 zero emission buses.

**Lilian Greenwood:** [\[124732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adopting the leasing model proposed by the Confederation of Passenger Transport to deliver the 800 zero emission buses committed to in the Spending Review 2020.

**Rachel Maclean:**

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

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

Further details on how funding will be distributed will be announced in due course. The Department is considering all funding mechanisms in delivering the zero emission buses.

■ **Crossrail Line**

**Alan Brown:** [\[124245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Transport for London press notice, published 1 December on an agreed funding and financing package for the final phase of the Crossrail project, (a) what is the total value of the loan, (b) what is the repayment period of the loan, (c) do interest rates agreed in the package accord with the current Public Works Loan Board and (d) if he will make a statement.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

On 1 December, the Government announced that additional borrowing of £825m will be made available to the Greater London Authority (GLA) for the purposes of Crossrail. The terms of the loan remain commercially sensitive. The Secretary of State for Transport provided a statement on this matter on 1 December.

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether legislative proposals are required to facilitate the loan package agreed with the Greater London Assembly for the completion of Crossrail.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

As a result of the announcement made on 1 December that additional borrowing of £825m will be made available to the Greater London Authority (GLA) for the purposes of Crossrail, the government will be preparing a Statutory Instrument to extend the period of time that Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy (MCIL) can be collected for the purposes of Crossrail.

## ■ **Cycling and Walking: Coventry**

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[124766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve provision for (a) cycling and (b) walking as alternative transport options in (i) Coventry North East constituency and (ii) Coventry.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Under the Active Travel Fund, the Department has made available around £17 million to Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM) this financial year for schemes to boost cycling and walking.

It is up to TfWM to determine in discussion with its seven constituent authorities where this funding is spent. The Spending Review last month confirmed that a further £257 million would be made available for cycling and walking schemes in England next financial year. The Department will make a further announcement in due course about how that funding will be split between different schemes and different regions of the country.

## ■ **Driving Tests: Scottish Borders**

**John Lamont:**

[\[124827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative estimate he has made of the number of driving tests taken between April and September at (a) Duns, (b) Hawick, (c) Peebles, (d) Galashiels, and (e) Kelso driving test centres, this year and in the previous three years.

**Rachel Maclean:**

	DUNS	HAWICK	PEEBLES	GALASHIELS	KELSO
Apr - Sept 2017	66	235	224	496	140
Apr - Sept	64	176	124	442	116

	DUNS	HAWICK	PEEBLES	GALASHIELS	KELSO
2018					
Apr - Sept 2019	63	202	139	426	130
Apr - June 2020 *	0	0	0	0	0

**\* TO NOTE:**

No driving tests were conducted between April and June 2020 due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

We cannot provide figures beyond 30 June 2020 as they have not yet been published officially and to release them externally would breach the Statistics and Registrations Service Act 2007.

■ **East Coast Railway Line: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[124851]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with rail operators on the potential effect of the East Coast Mainline engineering works scheduled for Christmas on passengers who choose to travel over that period when the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are temporarily lifted.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

We have developed a comprehensive plan for the Christmas travel window between 23 December and 27 December. We have also asked Sir Peter Hendy to rigorously scrutinise the plans of all transport modes, to ensure a collective focus on minimising disruption and supporting passengers this Christmas.

The East Coast upgrade works, which include the closure of King's Cross Station, are going ahead as cancelling or delaying these works would see benefits to punctuality, safety and reliability on the East Coast Mainline deferred by up to two years.

We are working closely with London North Eastern Railway and other train operators to put into place measures which ensure passengers who need to travel on the affected dates can do so safely via alternative routes and services if required. These measures have been informed by our analysis of advanced ticket sales and travel data to determine demand over the Christmas period. Additionally, Network Rail has altered its plans allowing additional services to operate to and from King's Cross station on December 24.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Ian Mearns:**

[\[123569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to (a) review and (b) increase the provision of electric vehicle charging points across the UK.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Our vision is to have one of the best infrastructure networks in the world for electric vehicles (EVs), and we want chargepoints to be accessible, affordable and secure. We are investing £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure targeting support for charging on longer journeys, at home, workplace and on street to make charging as easy as refuelling a petrol or diesel car. We regularly review and publish numbers of EV chargepoints. Since 2015, the number of public chargepoints has grown rapidly to October 2020, with a near ten-fold increase in rapid charging points. As set out in the National Infrastructure Strategy, we will produce an EV infrastructure strategy in 2021. We will ensure we engage with local authorities and stakeholders across the EV and energy sector in early 2021 to inform the development of the vision and strategy.

## ■ London North Eastern Railway and Northern Trains: Pay

**Sir George Howarth:**

[\[122572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether train drivers working for (a) Northern Rail and (b) London North Eastern Railway are classed as public sector workers and will not receive a pay rise.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that since 2011 all rail workers' earnings have increased at rates often double that for the average UK worker.

We are still working through how the public sector pay policy announced by the Chancellor may affect rail workers working for Northern Rail and London North Eastern Railway.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[122639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, of 28 July 2020, on Government Funded Satellite Navigation, ref za53233.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

A response to your letter was sent on 7 December.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Insurance

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[124689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the judgement of the European Court of Justice on *Damijan Vnuk v Zavarovalnica Triglav*, whether he plans to incorporate into UK law any changes to the EU European Motor Insurance Directive on motor insurance in relation to (a) public roads and (b) private property for (i) ride-on lawnmowers, (ii) golf carts, (iii) tractors and (iv) motor sport activities; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The issue of the Vnuk judgement on motor insurance in the UK is an important one. We understand the implications on motor sports, motorists and other road users, and the concerns raised by the insurance industry. During the transition period, EU law continues to apply to the UK through the EU Withdrawal Act and options for after that period will be for Government to decide.

## ■ Road Traffic Control

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[124886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) socio-economic and (b) equalities impact of low-traffic neighbourhoods in (a) Poplar and Limehouse and (b) England.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department has not made any assessment of these factors in either Poplar and Limehouse or England.

It is for local authorities to ensure that any changes they propose to make to road layouts are delivered in line with relevant legislation, consultation and noticing requirements. The Department recommends they carry out monitoring and evaluation of schemes but it is for them to determine how to do so, in line with relevant good practice.

To support the Active Travel Fund, the Government has published additional Network Management Duty guidance which clearly set out what the Government expects local authorities to do in making changes to their road layouts to encourage cycling and walking in response to Covid-19 and to support a green restart and recovery.

The guidance is clear that the Public Sector Equality Duty still applies and in making any changes to their road networks, authorities must consider the needs of disabled people and those with other protected characteristics, for example by carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on proposed schemes.

## ■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[124820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of The Times investigation which recently found that 4,000 of

about 9,000 bridges and large culverts on motorways or A-roads showed evidence of defects or damage that may significantly affect their capacity.

**Rachel Maclean:**

All bridges and structures on the Strategic Road Network are regularly inspected by Highways England to ensure that they remain safe to operate. Through regular inspection, Highways England is also able to plan maintenance works in a way that minimises disruption for road users.

Identification of damage or defects, which can include cosmetic defects, does not mean a structure is unsafe. Where defects or damage is detected, further detailed engineering inspections are undertaken to determine the cause and whether maintenance is required. *If* repairs are needed, they will be appropriately prioritised and included in Highways England's ongoing maintenance programme.

■ **Royal Mail: Motor Vehicles**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[122562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Royal Mail on their capacity to improve the sustainability of their vehicle fleets.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[122563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with DHL on their capacity to improve the sustainability of their vehicle fleets.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[122564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with XPO Logistics on their capacity to improve the sustainability of their vehicle fleets.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[122565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with FedEx on their capacity to improve the sustainability of their vehicle fleets.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[122566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with UPS on their capacity to improve the sustainability of their vehicle fleets.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[122567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Wincanton on their capacity to improve the sustainability of their vehicle fleets.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials have periodic meetings with fleet operators about a range of issues. The Government recognises the scope for fleets to be at the vanguard of the transition to zero emission driving and we will continue to work with fleet operators towards this. The Government has to date already committed £1.5 billion to support the early market for greener cars and vans through various grant funding schemes which fleet operators are able to take advantage of. The Government has announced

phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. To facilitate this we have pledged a further £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles.

## TREASURY

### ■ Bank Services: British Nationals Abroad

**Jeff Smith:**

[123633]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK citizens living in (a) The Netherlands and (b) other countries in Europe are able to continue holding UK bank accounts after the conclusion of transitional arrangements for the UK leaving the EU.

**John Glen:**

The UK authorities have taken the appropriate actions to mitigate risks of disruption to cross-border financial services at the end of the Transition Period (TP), including confirming that the Temporary Permissions Regime will apply from the end of the TP. This will allow EEA firms currently providing services in the UK via a financial services 'passport' to continue operating after the TP while they apply for full UK authorisation.

However, the issue of whether UK firms can service EEA-based retail customers remains a matter of local law and regulation in each country. It may also be impacted by how firms are set up and what steps they have taken to continue to service customers. We expect banks to act lawfully and in accordance with local regulators' expectations.

We also expect that banks work to ensure good outcomes for their customers and provide timely communications to enable them to make appropriate decisions. UK banking providers are expected to contact impacted customers if they need to make any changes to their product or the way it is provided.

We encourage customers with questions or concerns to speak to their service provider. There is also further guidance for impacted customers on the Money Advice Service website, which can be found here:

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/brexit-banking-insurance-finance>

### ■ Bank Services: Coronavirus

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[123655]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will (a) extend financial support to those facing a recent increase in bank overdraft interest rates and (b) discourage banks from increasing their overdraft interest rates during the covid-19 outbreak.



**John Glen:**

In 2019, following the High-cost Credit Review, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) introduced changes to overdraft rules. These included mandating that firms cannot charge more for unarranged overdrafts than arranged overdrafts, banning fixed daily and monthly charges, and a package of measures to improve the transparency of pricing.

Overall, these changes will make overdrafts simpler, fairer and easier to manage. FCA analysis from January this year found that 7 out of 10 overdraft users will be better off or see no change to their overdraft costs as a result of the changes. In instances where a firm identifies that a customer has a pattern of repeat overdraft use and may see increased fees on their borrowing, the new rules require firms to develop strategies to reduce harm to customers.

In April 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the FCA announced a series of temporary proposals to provide emergency support in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. On overdrafts, firms were expected to provide up to £500 interest free buffer for customers. Firms were also expected to make sure customers were not paying more for their overdraft than they were before the rule changes came into force. In July 2020, the FCA extended this guidance for those customers who have been impacted by Covid-19 for a further 3 months.

In September 2020, the FCA announced proposals to ensure that firms provide tailored support for users of consumer credit and overdraft products who continue to face payment difficulties due to Covid-19. Where a customer needs further support, firms are expected to use measures such as reducing or waiving interest, agreeing a programme of staged reductions in the overdraft limit, or supporting customers to reduce their overdraft usage by transferring the debt. If any overdraft customer requires this further support then they should speak to their provider.

**■ Beer: Excise Duties****Grahame Morris:**[\[124720\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the contribution of the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury of 9 November 2020, Official Report, column 707, if he will publish the evidence to support the statement that there are breweries in all Members' constituencies that will benefit from changes to Small Brewers Relief.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Further evidence about changes to Small Brewers Relief will be published alongside the forthcoming technical consultation.

**■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme****Rehman Chishti:**[\[123567\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to ensure that small banks have access to adequate capital to offer eligible customers Bounce Back loans.

**John Glen:**

Our position has always been that the Government does not provide capital to financial institutions, who must source their own funding.

Challenger banks and non-bank lenders among the 29 accredited lenders under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme have played a vital role in providing 1.4 million businesses with vital financial support worth over £42 billion.

The Treasury recognises the vital role that challenger banks and non-banks play in the provision of credit to SMEs. It is grateful for the way the sector has responded to the current crisis, and remains committed to promoting competition and widening the funding options available to UK businesses.

**■ Bus Services: Coronavirus****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[122918\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether loans have been made from the public purse to (a) Stagecoach, (b) National Express, (c) Go-Ahead, (d) First Group, (e) Serco, (f) Arriva and (g) Abellio as part of the Government's response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Throughout this crisis, the government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods, and support businesses and public services across the UK. This has included support for business through access to finance schemes (CBILS, CLBILS, Future Fund, BBLS), with over £65bn dispersed through these schemes.

The sectoral breakdowns of these loans published by the Government shows the transport sector as a whole has received over 2,200 CBILS loans worth £500m and over 67,000 BBLS loans worth £1.7bn. The list of businesses making use of CCFF loan facilities is publicly available. The Bank of England publishes current borrowers weekly.

The Government have been publishing the number of applications approved and the volume of lending under the schemes which show continued support for over a million businesses.

**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[122920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse is of grants and payments to (a) Stagecoach, (b) National Express, (c) Go-Ahead, (d) First Group, (e) Serco, (f) Arriva and (g) Abellio in response to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on employment costs.

**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[122921\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total value is of grants or payments made from the public purse to subsidiaries of (a) Stagecoach, (b) National Express, (c) Go-Ahead, (d) First Group, (e) Serco, (f) Arriva and (g) Abellio for support with employment costs during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

HMRC are not able to provide information on any specific organisations that may have received financial support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

This is because of HMRC's duty of confidentiality. HMRC cannot publish identifying information unless there is an appropriate legal basis for publication. No such legal basis was in place for the CJRS prior to 12 November 2020 when the latest CJRS Direction was signed.

In line with the published direction, as part of HMRC's commitment to transparency and to deter fraudulent claims, HMRC will publish information about employers who claim for periods starting on or after 1 December 2020. This will be available from February for December claims, and then monthly thereafter.

**Dave Doogan:**[\[124868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will (a) meet representatives of the private coach industry to discuss the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak on and (b) provide additional financial support to that industry.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the coach sector as a result of Covid-19, and firms experiencing difficulties are able to draw upon the unprecedented package of cross-economy measures the government has put in place, including Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees and tax deferrals. These measures have been designed to ensure that firms of any size receive the help they need to get through this difficult time.

As part of my regular engagement with industry leaders, I recently met with representatives of the coach sector to better understand their situation. I encourage the sector to continue to engage with the Department of Transport on the matters discussed.

**■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: West Sussex****Andrew Griffith:**[\[122931\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) total value of grants provided through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to employees in (i) West Sussex and (ii) Arundel and South Downs constituency since the introduction of that scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC have published statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). The statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics>.

For the period July to October 2020, the CJRS was closed to claims for employments not already furloughed and supported by the scheme except in certain exceptional circumstances. The total number of employments supported by the scheme up to that point was published in August and can be found on GOV.UK at the link provided

below. The total number of employments at any time between March and June in West Sussex is 133,000. The equivalent figure for Arundel and South Downs constituency is 14,100. These figures are based on each employee's residential address.

These statistics can be found here in full:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020>

The value of claims split by Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency is not available. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme provides funds to PAYE schemes to support employers to pay a proportion of the wages of furloughed staff. The registered address for PAYE schemes can be in a different area to that where their employees live and work. In addition, for PAYE schemes claiming for between 1 and 99 employments there was no requirement to specify the amount claimed for each employment. As a consequence it is not possible to provide reliable figures for the monetary value of the support provided by geographical area.

#### ■ Customs: ICT

**Alan Brown:**

[\[124786\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC still accepts applications from UK companies on form C1800 to access Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) to award CHIEF badges.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC do still accept applications from UK companies on form C1800 to access Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) to award CHIEF badges, and will continue to do so from 1 January 2021.

#### ■ Debts

**Ben Lake:**

[\[123675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's steps to tackle problem debt.

**John Glen:**

The Government has delivered unprecedented support for living standards during this challenging time, protecting livelihoods with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and temporary welfare measures

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme until 31 March 2021. Eligible employees will continue to receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The Government has increased the overall level of the third grant under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to 80 per cent of average trading profits, meaning that the maximum grant available has now increased to £7,500

The Government has provided Local Authorities with £500 million to support people who may struggle to meet their council tax payments this year. The Government expects that this will provide all recipients of working age local council tax support with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150 this financial year

These measures are in addition to the changes this Government has made to make the welfare system more generous, worth over £7 billion according to recent OBR estimates. This includes a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to Local Housing Allowance rates

We have also worked with mortgage lenders, credit providers and the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure the financial sector provides support for people across the UK to manage their finances by providing payment holidays on mortgages and consumer credit products

The Government has also provided unprecedented support for businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This support includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Scheme, Bounce Back Loan Scheme and the Future Fund which, as of 18th October, have collectively supported over 1.4 million businesses with facilities worth more than £62 billion. The Chancellor has announced that the Government has extended the application deadline for these schemes to a single date, 31 January 2020, meaning that even more businesses will have access to financial support

To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, an extra £37.8 million support package is being made available to debt advice providers this financial year, bringing this year's budget for free debt advice in England to over £100 million

In May, the Government also announced the immediate release of £65 million dormant assets funding to Fair4All Finance, an independent organisation that has been founded to support the financial wellbeing of people in vulnerable circumstances. The funding is used to increase access to fair, affordable and appropriate financial products and services for those in financial difficulties

From May 2021 the Breathing Space scheme will offer people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges, and will encourage them to seek professional debt advice

It would be premature to evaluate the impact of these measures, which seek to prevent financial hardship and to resolve problem debt where it does arise.

**Ben Lake:**

**[124288]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the matter of problem debt.

**John Glen:**

The Government is committed to promoting financial resilience, to minimising financial hardship, to tackling financial exclusion and to helping consumers who fall into problem debt to return to a stable financial footing.

The Government works closely with the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) to monitor personal finances. MaPS monitor levels of problem debt through an annual survey of 22,000 people. The latest data will be published in due course.

The Government also notes the Financial Conduct Authority's biennial Financial Lives Survey, which provides a comprehensive insight into the finances of 16,000 adults. The latest survey concluded in February and will be published in early 2021.

■ **Debts: Coronavirus****Ben Lake:**[\[124289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has considered the potential merits of a Jubilee Fund as proposed by the Reset the Debt campaign.

**John Glen:**

The Government has delivered unprecedented support for living standards during this challenging time, protecting livelihoods with the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and temporary welfare measures

We have also worked with mortgage lenders, credit providers and the Financial Conduct Authority to ensure the financial sector provides support for people across the UK to manage their finances by providing payment holidays on mortgages and consumer credit products

The Government has also provided unprecedented support for businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This support includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Scheme, Bounce Back Loan Scheme and the Future Fund which, as of 15 November, have collectively supported over 1.4 million businesses with facilities worth in excess of £65bn. The Chancellor has announced that the Government has extended the application deadline for these schemes to a single date, 31 January 2020, meaning that even more businesses will have access to financial support.

The Government recognises that some people are struggling with their finances at this challenging time. We must be fair to people who pay their bills on time by taking a proportional approach to those who do not. A Jubilee fund to provide grants to write-off debts accrued as a result of Covid-19 would not deliver this fairness

To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, an extra £37.8 million support package is being made available to debt advice providers this financial year, bringing this year's budget for free debt advice in England to over £100 million

From May 2021 the Breathing Space scheme will offer people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges, and will encourage them to seek professional debt advice

## ■ Development Aid

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[122658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to return the official development assistance budget to 0.7 per cent of GNI; and what the fiscal criteria are for that return.

**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.

## ■ Gambling: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[122609\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support operators of adult gaming centres during their extended period of closure in tier three covid-19 lockdown areas.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like indoor entertainment.

That is why in order to support businesses to retain their employees and protect the UK economy, the Chancellor extended both the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which will continue to be available across all three tiers on 3 December.

Additionally, the Treasury has announced support for closed businesses through the Local Restrictions Support Grants, giving businesses that are forced to close due to national or local restrictions up to £3,000 per month; this is worth over £1bn per four weeks with the new restrictions in place and will benefit over 600,000 business premises, including eligible businesses in the indoor entertainment sector.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the gaming industry, as we respond to this pandemic.

## ■ Pension Wise

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[124647\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Q82 of the oral evidence taken before the Treasury Committee on 4 November 2020, HC950, what plans the Financial Conduct Authority has to set a target for take-up of Pensions Wise.



**John Glen:**

This is a matter for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), which is operationally independent from Government. The question has been passed on to the FCA. The FCA will reply directly to the right honourable Gentleman's question by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

**Personal Care Services: VAT****Patrick Grady:**[\[122764\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the VAT reduction offered to hospitality services until March 2021 to (a) hairdressers, (b) beauty services and (c) other close contact services.

**Jesse Norman:**

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July in order to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021. This relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are currently no plans to extend the scope to include other sectors.

The Government has announced a significant package of support to help businesses through the winter months, which includes an extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an extension of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grant, and an extension of the application window for the Government-backed loan schemes.

**Public Sector: Pay****Rachael Maskell:**[\[124792\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people whose median annual pay is under £24,000 who are eligible to receive the £250 increase announced in the Spending Review 2020 and whose pay will fall in real terms as a result of inflation.

**Steve Barclay:**

We estimate that 2.1 million people earn less than £24,000 on a full-time equivalent basis in the public sector. The OBR forecasts inflation for the 2021/22 financial year will be 1.4%. With a payment of £250 everyone earning under £24,000 will receive a pay award worth over 1%, those earning less than £18,000 on a full-time equivalent basis will receive a pay award above inflation.

For the financial year 2020/21 government implemented significant real terms increases of at least 2% for the nine major workforces for whom the government sets pay policy. School teachers received 3.1% on average, doctors and dentists 2.8% and police 2.5%. In addition, more than 1 million NHS workers continue to benefit from the three-year Agenda for Change deal, which delivers an investment of 3% in 2020/21. The OBR's current inflation forecast for the 2020/21 financial year is 0.6%.

Sources:

OBR Economic and Fiscal Outlook:

[https://obr.uk/site-search/?\\_keywords=economic%20and%20fiscal%20outlook](https://obr.uk/site-search/?_keywords=economic%20and%20fiscal%20outlook)

July Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pay-rises-for-doctors-police-and-more-in-the-public-sector>

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[124793]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to statistics showing average private sector pay is higher in November 2020 than at the same time 12 months ago, for what reason he used a six month period to highlight trends in the level of private sector pay during the 2020 Spending Review statement; and whether he has used a six month period to compare trends in private and public sector pay at previous fiscal events.

**Steve Barclay:**

The use of a six-month period to highlight trends in the level of private and public sector pay was specifically in response to the effect of Covid-19 on the labour market. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on private sector wages since April 2020, and the intention was to describe these trends at Spending Review 2020.

## ■ Repossession Orders: Coronavirus

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[123556]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help protect homeowners who have exhausted the six-month mortgage payment holiday from having their homes repossessed.

**John Glen:**

For borrowers that have already taken a full six months payment holiday and who continue to face ongoing financial difficulties, the FCA's guidance sets out that firms should continue to provide support through tailored forbearance options. This could include granting new mortgage payment holidays. As part of this guidance any forbearance granted beyond six months of payment holidays will be reflected on the consumer's credit file in the usual manner. As borrowers still requiring assistance after that point could be in serious financial distress the FCA believe it is right that lenders are able to understand their financial position in order to lend responsibly.

We understand this remains an uncertain time, and to reassure homeowners the period that lenders cannot repossess homes for has been extended. The FCA's guidance released on 17 November sets out that lenders cannot issue a warrant for repossession until after 31 January 2021.

**■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:** [\[122642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that HM Revenue and Customs replies to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, dated 14 September 2020, on a constituent's tax issue, ref za53685.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC apologise for the delay in dealing with this case. They telephoned the constituency office of the Honourable Member on 2 December in order to resolve her constituent's issue and have confirmed the position by email with her.

**■ Sports: VAT****Julian Knight:** [\[122743\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing non-profit sports organisations (a) that are and (b) that are not VAT registered to claim back VAT during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

Under the current VAT rules, bodies, including non-profit organisations, that have a turnover in excess of £85,000 must register for VAT. However, bodies that are below the VAT registration threshold may register for VAT voluntarily.

Bodies that are VAT registered are required to charge VAT on their taxable business activity and are also able to recover any VAT on costs that they incur in the course of that taxable business activity.

**■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: Foreign Nationals****Siobhain McDonagh:** [\[122554\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on revenue accruing to the public purse of setting the Stamp Duty Land Tax non-UK resident surcharge at (a) 3 per cent and (b) 5 per cent; and if he will make a statement.

**Siobhain McDonagh:** [\[122555\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) revenue accruing to the public purse for (i) projects to tackle rough sleeping and (ii) other projects and (b) house price inflation of reducing the Stamp Duty Land Tax non-UK resident surcharge from 3 per cent to 2 per cent.

**Jesse Norman:**

The new rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax for non-UK resident purchasers of residential property in England and Northern Ireland are set to be 2% higher than the rates applying to UK-resident purchasers. The expected revenue will be used to tackle rough sleeping and is set out on page 35 of the "Policy Costings" document published alongside the Red Book at Budget 2020.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/871948/Budget\\_2020\\_policy\\_costings.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/871948/Budget_2020_policy_costings.pdf)

No assessment has been made of the effect of a 3% or 5% Stamp Duty Land Tax non-UK resident surcharge.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

**[122556]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the new Stamp Duty Land Tax non-UK resident surcharge due to come into force in April 2021 can be avoided by being resident in the UK on at least 183 days.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

**[122557]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adopting the Association of Accounting Technicians proposal to extend the residency requirements for the Stamp Duty Land Tax non-UK resident surcharge from 183 days to those of the residency requirements for (a) British Citizenship, five years and (b) the husband, wife or civil partner of a British citizen, three years.

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

**[122558]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take in relation to the new Stamp Duty Land Tax non-UK resident surcharge to ensure that overseas buyers are not refunded a surcharge when they state only that they intend to live in the UK for 183 days after purchasing property; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

At the March Budget, the Government confirmed its intention to introduce a 2% SDLT surcharge on non-UK residents purchasing residential property in England and Northern Ireland from 1 April 2021.

After a public consultation, which took place between February and May 2019, the Government decided that an individual will be UK resident for the purposes of the surcharge where they are present in the UK for at least 183 days during any continuous 365-day period beginning 12 months before a transaction and ending 12 months after. A refund of the surcharge will be available only if individuals spend 183 days in the UK over the relevant period.

HMRC will publish guidance for taxpayers and agents in advance of the surcharge coming into effect. This guidance will include the information taxpayers and agents will be able to use to demonstrate their residence status.

## ■ **Sunscreens: VAT**

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[122902]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reclassifying sunscreen products as essential healthcare items for VAT purposes.

**Jesse Norman:**

Under the current VAT rules, sun protection products are subject to the standard rate of VAT. High-factor sunscreen is on the NHS prescription list for certain conditions and is provided VAT free when dispensed by a pharmacist.

Expanding the scope of the current VAT relief would come at a considerable cost to the Exchequer. Therefore, while all taxes are kept under review, there are currently no plans to reduce VAT on sunscreen products.

**■ Tax Avoidance****Theresa Villiers:**[\[122616\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking on the mis-selling of schemes now subject to the Loan Charge.

**Jesse Norman:**

While the Government sympathises with anyone who believes they were misled into using a disguised remuneration (DR) scheme, it is an individual's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of their tax return and to understand the consequences of their decisions.

The Government and HMRC are determined to continue to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes. This includes challenging those who promote disguised remuneration loan schemes.

In March 2020, HMRC published their strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes. The strategy sets out HMRC's work to date and outlines how HMRC will continue to take robust actions against promoters of tax avoidance.

Last month HMRC launched the 'Tax avoidance: don't get caught out' communications campaign. The campaign is targeted at contractors and encourages them to stop and take time to check what they are signing up for, challenge what they have been told by those selling the scheme, and protect themselves and public services by reporting schemes to HMRC.

**■ Urban Areas: Northern Ireland****Colum Eastwood:**[\[124902\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support the Government is providing to the Northern Ireland Executive to support high streets during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Steve Barclay:**

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK Government has supported businesses in Northern Ireland.

To give the Northern Ireland Executive the upfront certainty to plan and deliver their Covid-19 response this year, the UK Government guaranteed they would receive at least £2.8 billion in additional resource funding on top of their Spring Budget 20 funding. Spending Review 2020 is also providing a further £540 million for the

Northern Ireland Executive in relation to Covid-19 in 2021-22. It is for the Executive to decide how to use this funding.

This is on top of all the UK-wide schemes that the UK government has introduced this year to support all parts of the UK, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Children: Maintenance

**Jane Hunt:**

[124346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of (a) providing the Child Maintenance Service with stronger enforcement powers and (b) reviewing the standard of compliance used by the Child Maintenance Service.

**Guy Opperman:**

No assessment has been made.

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) already has tough enforcement powers including taking regular or lump sum payments from bank accounts or regular payments direct from earnings. Other sanctions such as sending parents to prison or disqualifying them from holding or obtaining a driving licence are used as a deterrent and as a last resort where all other methods of enforcement have failed.

These powers were reviewed as part of the Compliance and Arrears Strategy and in 2018 we introduced new powers to deduct child maintenance directly from a wider range of accounts, including certain joint and business accounts; and to disqualify parents from holding or obtaining a passport.

Compliance measures are published quarterly and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-maintenance-service-statistics-data-to-june-2020-experimental/child-maintenance-service-statistics-data-to-june-2020-experimental>

### ■ Kickstart Scheme

**Justin Madders:**

[122761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2020 to Question 88348 on Kickstart Scheme, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of businesses that are (a) eligible and (b) not eligible to sign up to be representatives of the Kickstart scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

Kickstart is open to employers and organisations from all sectors. An application may be rejected and unable to receive funding if it fails to show appropriate proof of (a) the

fiscal competence of the employer and gateway, (b) the quality of the employability support provided, and (c) the additionality of the jobs proposed (placements should not replace existing employees or vacancies).

**Ms Marie Rimmer:**

[123635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is she taking to speed up the approval process for (a) St Helens Chamber, which is already an approved provider for her Department and (b) other kickstarter gateways.

**Mims Davies:**

All applications for funding from the Department for Work & Pensions' Kickstart Scheme are assessed according to the same criteria and are subject to the same tests of due diligence. We anticipate applications to take 4 weeks although they can take longer. We anticipate that the time taken to process applications will reduce as the scheme is rolled out.

#### ■ Pension Credit

**Elliot Colburn:**

[124316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of eligible people who are not claiming pension credit; and what assessment she has made of the reasons people are not claiming that benefit.

**Guy Opperman:**

Estimates of the number of families entitled to pension but not claiming it can be found in the following publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

Information regarding the research carried out by the department around why those entitled to Pension Credit do not claim can be found in the following publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pension-credit-eligible-non-recipients-barriers-to-claiming-rr819>

#### ■ Pension Credit: Greater Manchester

**Afzal Khan:**

[125306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of unclaimed pension credit in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

**Afzal Khan:**

[125307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of unclaimed housing benefit in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

**Afzal Khan:**

[125308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of unclaimed income support and income-related employment and support allowance in (a) Greater



Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[125309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of unclaimed universal credit in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[125310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of unclaimed job seeker's allowance in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[125311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of unclaimed Sure Start maternity grants in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

**Guy Opperman:**

The information requested is not available. On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 the Department for Work and Pensions published the report "Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2018 to 2019". This provided figures on the value of some unclaimed benefits in Great Britain. Estimates are not available for other DWP benefits, including Sure Start Maternity Grant and Universal Credit, and sub-national figures are not published because of small sample sizes.

#### ■ Pensioners: British Nationals Abroad

**Neil Gray:** [\[124763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on levels of poverty among UK pensioners living overseas.

**Guy Opperman:**

This information is not available.

The most recent poverty statistics for pensioners are derived from the 2018/19 Family Resources Survey (FRS) so would not cover the impact of the covid-19 pandemic. As the FRS sample is drawn from random UK addresses it does not provide information on those living overseas.

#### ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

**Helen Hayes:** [\[123650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who are not eligible for the (a) Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, (b) Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and (c) Universal Credit; and what steps is she taking to make additional support available to those people.

**Will Quince:**

The Government is wholly committed to supporting people on lower incomes and has paid out more than £100 billion in welfare support this year.

We estimate most households will be eligible for some Universal Credit support if they are unable to work or on lower earnings and have lower than £16K capital/savings.

The new £170m COVID Winter Grant Scheme extends the support already in place and will enable local authorities to support vulnerable households in their area with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter.

The Department recognises that work is the best route to prosperity. We are investing in our recovery from this pandemic with our Plan for Jobs including our £2bn Kickstart scheme which is already creating thousands of high-quality jobs for young people, and our Ten Point Plan which will create 250,000 green jobs, helping us build back better. We have also boosted our Flexible Support Fund by £150m to provide localised and tailored employment support for people across the UK and we are doubling the number of frontline Work Coaches to help support people of all ages to find a job, retrain, or gain vital practical experience.

**Dan Jarvis:**[\[124756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak on claimants on legacy benefits.

**Mims Davies:**

To support those on low incomes through the outbreak, we introduced a package of temporary welfare measures.

We increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants, so they now cover the lowest 30% of local rents. This increase, costing almost £1 billion, will mean 1.5 million households see an increase, on average, of £600 this year. We also increased the additional earnings disregard in Housing Benefit to ensure increases in the maximum rate of the basic element of Working Tax Credit did not impact on a claimant's Housing Benefit award.

We legislated to allow access to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) from day one of a claim for Covid-19 related cases and we have made it easier to access ESA by launching a portal for new style ESA online claims.

In addition to the above, legacy benefits were increased by £600m (1.7%) from April 2020 and will receive a further £100m (0.5%) increase from April 2021 as part of the Government's annual up-rating exercise.

■ **Support for Mortgage Interest**

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[123632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to consult on changing the 39 week qualifying period for Support for Mortgage Interest loans.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department has no plans to consult on amending the qualifying period for Support for Mortgage Interest.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Unacceptable Behaviours Progress Review

**Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**

[\[HCWS629\]](#)

Today the Ministry of Defence is publishing the Unacceptable Behaviours Progress Review and its response, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Progress Review was conducted by Danuta Gray, Non-Executive Member of the Defence Board and Chair of the People Committee. The Review assessed progress made implementing the Wigston Review's 36 recommendations in the single Services, UK Strategic Command and Head Office.

The Review found that good progress was made over the past year. To further accelerate progress, it made an additional 13 recommendations, many of which build upon Wigston recommendations. I welcome the report and accept the recommendations in full. We will be considering how to best take the recommendations forward. We remain committed to preventing and reducing instances of unacceptable behaviour and supporting our people when instances do occur.

Whilst there is clearly work still to do, over the past year we have issued new policy guidance on unacceptable behaviours, introduced a new whole-force bullying harassment and discrimination helpline, introduced active bystander training and ensured our personnel have access to professional mediation services. We are also making reforms to the Service Complaints System and will be rolling out the first changes in the New Year.

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### ■ Avian Influenza: Housing measures for kept birds to be introduced

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food) (Victoria Prentis):**

[\[HCWS631\]](#)

Further to my statement of 12 November, High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza continues to circulate in the UK and Europe. There are now eight confirmed cases in England in kept birds and a large number of findings in wild birds across 19 counties.

Public Health England advises that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency has said there is no food safety risk for UK consumers.

Given the high risk of incursion to captive birds we are adding a housing measure to the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ). This will take effect from 14 December. It will require all keepers to house their birds or otherwise keep them separate from wild birds. Keepers have until 14 December to ready their birds for housing.

The addition of the housing measure has been co-ordinated with the Devolved Administrations and Scottish and Welsh Governments are introducing a similar measure. In practical terms, this means the additional requirement to house birds applies to the whole of Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, as in GB, there is an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone in place and the case for further measures on housing is kept under review.

There are rules covering the free range sector in these circumstances. Eggs may continue to be marketed as free range providing the birds are not housed continuously for more than 16 weeks. There are similar rules for poultry meat for 12 weeks. Eggs or poultry can continue to be marketed as organic regardless of this additional housing requirement.

The key to protecting the sector and reducing the risk of further increase in cases is for all keepers to adopt the highest possible standard of biosecurity.

We continue to urge bird keepers to be vigilant for any signs of disease, ensure they maintain their biosecurity, seek prompt advice from their vet and report suspect disease to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), as they must do by law.

We strongly advise keepers to register on the Poultry Register so as to receive notifications and disease alerts. This is mandatory for all those with flocks over 50 birds. Registration is easy and can be found at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-gatherings-licences](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-gatherings-licences).

Officials examine the evidence about the risk on a daily basis and review their risk assessment at least once a month. The need to keep the housing requirement in place will therefore be continually under review.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Vaccine Update

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment)  
(Nadhim Zahawi):**

**[HCWS630]**

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention the contingent liabilities relating to the contract signed between HMG and Pfizer/BioNTech for their COVID-19 vaccine.

On 2 December, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) gave their authorisation for use of the COVID-19 vaccine being manufactured by Pfizer/BioNTech. With deployment of this vaccine beginning this week, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to this vaccine via this statement and Departmental Minute laid today.

The agreement to provide an indemnity as part of the contract between HMT and Pfizer/BioNTech creates a contingent liability on the COVID-19 vaccination programme, and I have laid a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

It has been and is the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19 until an effective vaccine/s can be deployed at scale. Willingness to accept appropriate indemnities has helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers are willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we have taken a broader approach to indemnification than we usually would. Global approaches differ, but we are aware that many other nation states are offering indemnities as part of their contractual arrangements, or other means e.g., the US PREP Act, which provides immunity from liability to vaccine developers.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The independent Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) approval for use of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine clearly demonstrates that this vaccine has satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

Developing a vaccination against Covid-19 has been an extraordinary feat which has been delivered at great pace. Given the pace of vaccine development and our ambition to deploy the vaccine as soon as it has been authorised, it has not been possible to provide you with normal 14 sitting days to consider this issue of contingent liabilities.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines are deployed.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Local Government Update

**Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS627\]](#)

The Spending Review, announced by the Chancellor on 25 November, contained significant announcements for local government. The Government confirmed that councils' core spending power would rise by an estimated 4.5 per cent in cash terms in 2021-22 – worth £2.2 billion – a real terms increase. This will support the services that the public relies on, including children's and adult social care.

Alongside this, we announced a package of measures to support local government in their response to the pandemic. For 2020-21, government has delivered on its commitment to apportion irrecoverable tax losses from this year, by confirming that it will compensate councils for 75 per cent of such losses. For 2021-22 we will provide unringfenced grant funding of £1.55 billion; £670 million in recognition of the additional costs of providing local council tax support resulting from increased unemployment, and we will extend the existing sales, fees and charges scheme to include the first three

months of 2021-22. We have good reasons to be optimistic about overcoming the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, we will continue to keep the Covid-19 package under review.

I intend to bring forward proposals for the allocation of this funding in the provisional local government finance settlement, before the Christmas Recess.

## TREASURY

### ■ Taxation (Post-transition Period) Bill

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):**

**[\[HCWS628\]](#)**

The Government has today tabled resolutions for the Taxation (Post-transition Period) Bill as part of its preparations for the end of the Transition Period.

The Bill will take forward changes to the tax system to support the smooth continuation of business across the UK. It will ensure legislation required for the purposes of VAT and customs and excise duties to support the practical implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol is in place by the end of the Transition Period. It will also implement further changes to the tax system which are required ahead of the end of the Transition Period, including the introduction of a new system for collecting VAT on cross-border goods.

The Government will introduce Finance Bill legislation in the spring, following the next Budget in the usual way.