



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:47 P.M., 09 December 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse:

[123672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure businesses are making their workplaces covid-secure for employees.

Paul Scully:

The Safer Workplaces [guidance](#) includes robust health and safety measures to ensure businesses are supported or, where required, challenged. Alongside legal requirements covered in the guides, they outline the enforcement powers held by the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities (section 1.2).

■ Business: Government Assistance

Rehman Chishti:

[123568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that businesses that are eligible for Bounce Back loans but unable to access them through their bank receive the support they need.

Paul Scully:

The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BLS) is currently being delivered through 29 accredited lenders, including several non-banks and alternative lenders. If an eligible business is unable to access the scheme because their bank is not a participant, or their bank is unable to process their application or turns it down, businesses are encouraged to apply for finance with another of the lenders. These accredited lenders are all listed on the British Business Bank's website[1].

If the application is still unsuccessful, there are other forms of finance available to eligible firms and these can be identified from a number of sources, including the Government's online finance finder on GOV.UK.

Businesses of all sizes across England, are also encouraged to contact the nearest local government-backed Growth Hub for free impartial advice on accessing the right finance. Expert advisers will be able to discuss alternative sources of support, business planning and building resilience.

The Government's Business Support Helpline (FREEPHONE 0800 998 1098) also provides free, impartial support and advice to businesses.

Businesses based in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland will be able to access similar support through the Devolved Administrations.

[1] <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-schemes/bounce-back-loans/current-accredited-lenders-and-partners/>

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[123743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) value of loans provided through the Business Interruption Loans Scheme to businesses in (i) West Sussex and (ii) Arundel and South Downs constituency since the introduction of that scheme.

Andrew Griffith:

[\[123744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) value of loans provided through the Bounce Back Loan Scheme to businesses in (i) West Sussex and (ii) Arundel and South Downs constituency since the introduction of that scheme.

Paul Scully:

In the Chichester (West Sussex) constituency as of 15 November, 118 loans were offered under the CBILS scheme to a value of £24,286,975. In the same constituency, 2106 loans were offered under the BBLS scheme to a value of £63,038,524.

In the Arundel and South Downs constituency as of 15 November, 127 loans were offered under the CBILS scheme to a value of £22,734,238. In the same constituency, 2089 loans were offered under the BBLS scheme to a value of £61,589,232.

■ Housing: Energy

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[125251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of working from home during the covid-19 outbreak on the average cost of household energy bills.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We will publish estimates for household bills in 2020 shortly.

■ Nuclear Reactors: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[123696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding the Government has allocated to the research and development of fourth generation nuclear reactors to date.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

At the Spending Review in 2015, the Government committed to invest around £460m in nuclear research and innovation between 2016 to 2021.

As part of this commitment BEIS expects to invest around £180 million on the Nuclear Innovation Programme. This includes up to £46m which directly supports "fourth generation" advanced modular reactor R&D and upskilling of the nuclear

regulators. The remainder of the funding includes projects and programmes that support both the development of these reactors as well as “third and third+ generation” reactor technologies.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister’s recent Ten Point Plan included a commitment of £170m for Advanced Modular Reactor R&D under the £385m Advanced Nuclear Fund.

■ Offshore Industry: Coronavirus

Mary Glendon:

[\[123595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the value is of covid-19 related loans (a) from the public purse and (b) via the British Business Bank to duty holders in the UK sector of the offshore oil and gas industry, broken down by support for (a) revenue streams, (b) capital investment and (c) employment costs.

Paul Scully:

The three Coronavirus Business Interruption loan schemes are administered by the British Business Bank and delivered by accredited lenders. The Loans are designed to ensure that businesses have access to capital to help them through this difficult time, with the temporary cashflow impacts of Covid-19.

The British Business bank does not keep data on (a) revenue streams, (b) capital investment and (c) employment costs.

The British Business Bank publishes lending figures under the BBLs and CBILS schemes, including by sector as follows:

BBLs BY SECTOR	NUMBER OF BBLs FACILITIES	VOLUME OF FINANCE UNDER BBLs (£)	% OF BBLs FACILITIES	% OF BUSINESS POPULATION
Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	9518	303,000,000	1%	0.6%

CBILS by Sector	Number of	Volume of	% of CBILS	% of business
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BBLs BY SECTOR	NUMBER OF BBLs FACILITIES	VOLUME OF FINANCE UNDER BBLs (£)	% OF BBLs FACILITIES	% OF BUSINESS POPULATION
	facilities	Finance under CBILs (£)	facilities	population
Mining and Quarrying; Electricity, Gas and Air Conditioning Supply; Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	709	196,000,000	1%	0.6%

The Covid Corporate Financing Facility provides debt finance to support fundamentally strong companies through the market disruption brought about through Covid-19. The scheme is funded by central bank reserves – in line with other Bank of England market operations - and is indemnified by HM Treasury. Details of outstanding lending through the scheme are published weekly on the Bank of England website.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[125312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November to Question 109692, whether wet-led pubs are able to engage outside catering contractors under tier 2 rules as they did under tier 3 rules on 4 November 2020.

Paul Scully:

From 2 December pubs in Tier 2 areas may only provide alcohol for consumption on their premises with a substantial meal. A wet-led pub may partner with outside caterers or local food businesses to enable them to provide substantial meals, subject to any conditions contained in their licence.

■ Skiing: Qualifications

Anna McMorris:

[\[123678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications of the end of the transition period for the recognition of British ski instructors' qualifications in the rest of Europe.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, British ski instructors who have had their qualifications recognised and who are resident or a frontier worker in the EU Member State that recognised them at the end of the Transition Period will have that recognition protected, and will be able to continue to work there. This includes qualifications which have been recognised before the end of the Transition Period under the EU legislation establishing a Common Training Test for ski instructors.

The EU legislation which established the Common Training Test for ski instructors applies to EU citizens only. Accordingly, it will not apply to UK citizens not within scope of the Withdrawal Agreement who wished to rely on it in the EU after the end of the Transition Period.

The recognition of UK professional qualifications across all industries (including ski instructors) in the EU after the end of the Transition Period is subject to ongoing negotiations with the EU, and the local laws and regulations in Member States.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[125293]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of support available to small businesses in Slough during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government is making substantial business grants available through Local Authorities to support businesses that have been mandated to close or had their trade affected by national or local Covid-19 restrictions.

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) will offer grants of up to £1,500 per two-week period, available to all businesses in England that have been required to close due to local and national restrictions.

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) is a discretionary fund designed to support those businesses that whilst not mandated to close, are severely impacted by restrictions.

On top of the support being provided centrally, the [Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership](#) has committed £11.3 million of capital to create a funding escalator of loans and equity. This will support expansion plans and help with short-term cash flow issues. In addition, Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub Recovery and Growth Programme is supporting businesses to help them plan their recovery, build resilience and maximise opportunities to grow.

■ Wind Power

Ian Mearns:

[125226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to introduce more stringent supply chain employment requirements for the offshore wind industry ahead of the next Contract for Difference auction process.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is eager to deliver supply chain investment and jobs from CfD contracts. We have confirmed our intention to align the Supply Chain Plan process with government priorities, and we are currently consulting^[1] on proposals to introduce consequences for non-delivery of commitments that developers put forward in their Supply Chain Plans, which are approved before they enter the CfD Allocation Round. We are also strengthening the Supply Chain Plan monitoring process to support compliance.

These measures should be seen alongside my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement on £160 million of new funding towards investment to upgrade ports and infrastructure and long-term ambitions to increase renewable energy capacity in the next CfD auction, which, together, will support new UK content, jobs and investment.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-changes-to-supply-chain-plans-and-the-cfd-contract> - Closing date 18th January 2021.

Ian Mearns:

[125227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the next Contract for Difference auction process assists the offshore wind industry in meeting its commitment to 60 per cent UK content in the supply chain for offshore wind farms on the UK Continental Shelf before 2030.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is eager to deliver supply chain investment from CfD contracts. We have confirmed our intention to align the Supply Chain Plan process with government priorities, and we are currently consulting^[1] on proposals to introduce consequences for non-delivery of commitments that developers put forward in their Supply Chain Plans, which are approved before they enter the CfD Allocation Round. We are also strengthening the Supply Chain Plan monitoring process to support compliance.

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[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-changes-to-supply-chain-plans-and-the-cfd-contract> - Closing date 18th January 2021.

Alan Brown:

[\[125266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase the onshore wind generation capacity to 22-29GW by 2030 in line with the Committee on Climate Change's scenarios for electricity generation.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Renewable technologies will make a critical contribution to meeting our 2050 net zero commitment, alongside firm low carbon power such as nuclear and gas or biomass generation with carbon capture, usage and storage, and a significant increase in flexibility.

We recognise that achieving our 2050 net zero target will require increased deployment across a range of technologies, including onshore wind. This is why we announced on 2 March 2020 that onshore wind and other established renewable technologies such as solar PV will be able to compete in the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round. The round will open in late 2021 and aim to deliver up to double the renewable capacity of last year's successful round, potentially providing enough clean energy for up to 10 million homes.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Electoral Register: Ethnic Groups

Kate Osamor:

[\[122816\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights report entitled, Black people, racism and human rights, published on 11 November 2020, what plans she has to consult on the effect of the implementation of automatic voter registration on increasing democratic participation among Black people.

Kate Osamor:

[\[122817\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of automatic voter registration on voter turnout among (a) Black people and (b) other ethnic minorities.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to PQs [114938](#), [102161](#) and [104752](#).

■ Honours

Daisy Cooper:

[\[123697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have declined an appointment to each Order of the British Empire award in each of the last five years.

Daisy Cooper:[\[123698\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people who declined an appointment to an Order of the British Empire award cited (a) anti-imperialism and (b) an unwillingness to be associated with the former British empire in each of the last five years.

Chloe Smith:

It has always been the case that a small number of individuals have chosen to decline to receive honours.

The numbers of refusals for the Order of the British Empire broken down by award and honours round in the last five years for the Prime Minister's Lists can be found below. Figures for the British Empire Medal have been included as the award is closely affiliated with the Order of the British Empire.

As the figures show, refusal rates for honours remain extremely low. Individuals are not required to give reasons for refusing honours.

	GBE	KT	DBE	CBE	OBE	MBE	BEM	TOTAL
NY16	-	-	1	-	3	6	2	12
BD16	-	-	-	4	6	5	7	22
NY17	-	2	-	5	6	13	8	34
BD17	-	-	-	3	3	7	7	20
NY18	-	-	-	1	6	8	9	24
BD18	-	-	1	5	6	11	3	26
NY19	-	1	-	3	5	9	8	26
BD19	-	-	-	3	5	9	6	23
NY20	1	-	-	-	5	7	11	24
BD20	-	-	-	3	10	15	15	43

DEFENCE■ **Armed Forces: Redundancy****John Healey:**[\[120776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on each Armed Forces redundancy scheme in each year since 2010.

Johnny Mercer:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: The following table provides the requested information for the Army. The same information for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force is not available.

ARMY TOP LEVEL BUDGET SPEND (£ MILLION) ON THE ARMED FORCES REDUNDANCY SCHEME

Financial Year (FY)	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total
Total	26.598	74.541	151.760	24.027	5.975	282.901

Note: spend was zero in each FY from 2016-17.

John Healey:[\[120777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel have been made involuntarily redundant in each year since 2010.

Johnny Mercer:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: Detailed statistics on the numbers of Service personnel either applying or selected for redundancy in the UK Armed Forces redundancy programme 2011-2015 (Tranches 1 to 4) have been published at the following address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-redundancy-program-statistics-index>

The redundancies in all four tranches were compulsory. However, eligible personnel (by rank, branch or trade) were able to apply for selection for compulsory redundancy. Applicants formed 62% of those made redundant in Tranche 1, 72% in Tranche 2, 84% in Tranche 3 and 72% in Tranche 4.

The vast majority of Service personnel who were made redundant through this programme had left Service by March 2016. Another eight personnel left their Service on redundancy terms between April 2016 and December 2017. Since then, no additional Service personnel have been made redundant.

■ **Armed Forces: Scotland****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[125216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether servicemen and servicewomen operating in Scotland whose residence is in England will be permitted to return to their families at Christmas.

James Heappey:

As announced by this Government on 24 November, travel restrictions across the four administrations and between tiers will be lifted to allow people to travel within the UK from 23 to 27 December. This includes military personnel travelling to and from military bases. Outside of this window, Defence personnel will continue to follow the restrictions in force where they work and live.

■ National Security

Owen Thompson:

[\[125280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of China's thousand talents programme on UK national security.

James Heappey:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Monday 30 November to Question 120919.

Attachments:

1. 120919 - Science; China [Hansard Extract 120919.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Boxing: Coronavirus

Peter Gibson:

[\[124869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to support amateur boxing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government recognises the many benefits that boxing can bring, such as relieving stress, stimulating endorphins, and building physical strength and self-confidence. Boxing clubs are also based in the heart of many communities and are therefore in a unique position to be able to engage people who may feel disconnected. We welcome the work done by organisations such as England Boxing to bring communities together through projects that tackle issues such as knife and gun crime, extremism and holiday hunger; whilst also engaging people with mental health issues, long term health conditions and those from lower socio-economic groups and BAME backgrounds.

Following the end of national restrictions, on Wednesday 2 December, gyms and indoor sport facilities reopened across all tiers. As part of this, the government has published guidance to support the phased return of Contact Combat Sports including boxing in as safe a way as possible.

Contact combat sports can now take place provided they follow the COVID-secure guidance set out in the [contact combat sport framework](#) and adhere to wider restrictions including legal gathering limits. Contact combat sports need to have their National Governing Bodies action plans approved in order to resume activity above Phase 0 of the Framework. The Framework sets out the Phases which are allowed in each tier of restrictions.

■ Broadband

Jon Trickett:

[124133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the average broadband speed is in England.

Matt Warman:

Ofcom's latest UK Home Broadband report found that the average download speed in the UK was 72 megabits per second. The report did not break this down by nation.

In terms of access, ThinkBroadband estimates that a third of premises in England are now connected to gigabit-capable networks, while superfast broadband is available to 97% of English premises.

■ Broadband: Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[121051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department is making on delivering gigabit-speed broadband to rural homes and business throughout (a) Sussex and (b) Arundel and South Downs constituency.

Matt Warman:

We currently split Sussex into East and West when collecting data. According to Thinkbroadband (<http://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E10000011>), 97.3% of premises in East Sussex could access superfast speeds and 13.2% had access to gigabit capable speeds, which is up from 0.5% in 2016. Only 0.8% of premises have access to less than 10Mbps, which makes them eligible for the Universal Service obligation (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations-and-statements/category-1/uso>). Fast, reliable broadband has been instrumental in helping businesses and communities cope with the pressures caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency. It has enabled businesses to continue trading, diversify their offer and assist residents to work from home by allowing everyday activities to become digital.

In East Sussex, the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme has issued vouchers worth £562,272 to deliver gigabit-speed broadband to 852 premises. Many more projects are in the pipeline to receive DCMS support.

DCMS continues to work with Sussex Local Bodies to deliver gigabit-capable broadband solutions through its other programme such as the Superfast programme, which has been delivering gigabit speeds for several years.

West Sussex is similar with 97.2% of premises with access to Superfast and 14% with access to gigabit capable speeds. 0.9% are eligible for the USO (<http://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E10000032>)

West Sussex is committed to its rural digital agenda and has been working with DCMS and suppliers to accelerate coverage in some of the hardest to reach areas of the county.

The DCMS Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme, which West Sussex is “topping up” to support rural communities, has attracted great interest. So far 28 community projects have registered with DCMS meaning around 2000 premises are able to benefit from the scheme with £1.1m being profiled to date and a further 26 community projects are seeking quotes.

Arundel and South Downs constituency (<http://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E14000534>) currently has 93% of premises with the ability to access superfast speeds which is up from 7% in 1012. Currently 8% can access gigabit speeds.

Mid Sussex also has an ongoing Local Full Fibre Network Programme (LFFN) with an investment of £2.2m. The project focuses on developing new fibre and ducting for a scaffold ring in Burgess Hill and a connection to the Brighton Digital Exchange and the creation of a new Digital Exchange in Burgess Hill.

Mid Sussex District Council has also been successful in securing £3.2M of funding through the Getting Britain Building fund from MHCLG. This is to build a Rural Connectivity Full Fibre Network between Burgess Hill and Brighton, across the South Downs.

This project will complement and leverage the DCMS Local Full Fibre Network Programme investment across Burgess Hill. The gigabit capable network will connect 7 rural towns and is within 200m of over 20,000 rural households. The network will be completed by March 2022.

■ Cinemas: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[121909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to make additional financial support available to cinemas in tier 3 covid-19 restricted areas.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government has implemented a tiering system which aims to reduce and keep R below 1, and will therefore allow areas to move down the tiers. However, we recognise how tough the measures are for people and businesses in Tier 3. This is why, in addition to the Job Retention Scheme and other measures available, businesses in England that are forced to close will receive up to £3,000 for each 28 day period. This includes cinemas.

In addition, as important cultural hubs for communities right across the country, the Government has supported cinemas through the VAT cut on tickets and concessions, a business rates holiday and Bounce Back Loans. This is alongside the £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations that was announced in July, the biggest ever one-off investment in culture. Independent cinemas are eligible for a share of up to £30m of this package, and the majority of allocations are expected to be announced in December.

■ Coronavirus: Gambling

Scott Benton:

[122914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what evidential basis of the rate of covid-19 transmission in adult gaming centres informed the decision not to allow those centres to reopen in tier three covid-19 local lockdown areas.

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

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.

■ Culture: Coronavirus

Angela Crawley:

[124244]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a freelance performers support scheme to support (a) the arts and (b) community attendance of covid-secure live cultural events.

Caroline Dinanage:

The Government recognises the significant challenge the current pandemic poses to our world-beating cultural and creative industries and to the many individuals and freelancers working across the sector. We are working very hard to help freelancers in those sectors access support.

According to the latest statistics (published on the 25th November), over two thirds of all those who are self-employed in the country have been eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. Those statistics showed that 76,000 self employed people in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector got SEISS support in phase 1 earlier this year, and 72,000 in phase 2.

Of the £119m available through Arts Council England as part of their Covid emergency support, over £26m has been distributed to individuals, including freelance workers, and organisations via the Emergency Relief Fund and Project Grants Funding (as of 5 November 2020).

Within the £26m, £17m has been distributed to individuals via ACE's Emergency Response Fund (now closed) and c.£9m has so far been distributed to both organisations and individuals via Project Grants (out of a total of c.£80m available until April 2021).

In addition to the two Funds above, the £119m also includes the following:

- £6 million distributed by a series of Benevolent Funds focused on self employed individuals; and
- £18 million available through their Developing Your Creative Practice Fund

The £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) is also benefiting freelancers. Around 40% of CRF awards have gone to non-building based companies (and building based companies are also likely to employ significant numbers of contracted employees), and it is estimated that around 12.5% of business costs by CRF recipients will go to freelancers, artists and casual events staff.

Under the new Tiers which came into force in England on 2 December live audiences are permitted in indoor covid secure venues in Tiers 1 and 2 in line with the capacity caps now in place and provided social distancing is maintained in line with the Performing Arts Guidance.

■ Football: Dementia

Jon Trickett:

[\[124132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his policy is on the role of (a) Government and (b) professional football governing bodies in examining the potential link between football and risk of dementia.

Nigel Huddleston:

The safety, wellbeing and welfare of everyone taking part in sport is absolutely paramount. National Governing Bodies are responsible for the regulation of their sports and for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect participants from harm, including serious injuries. With that in mind, we expect sports to do all they can to protect their players.

It is clear that further examination of the links between health, dementia and football is needed to better understand this issue. I welcome the Professional Footballers'

Association's recent move to set up a dedicated task force to further investigate the issue of brain injury diseases in football.

■ Gambling: Coronavirus

Graham Stringer:

[125211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether adult gaming centres can adopt similar measures to bookmakers in order to re-open in areas with tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

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:

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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.

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

■ Ice Skating: Coronavirus

Sir Alan Campbell:

[124686]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will urgently review the tier regulations on the opening and use of ice rinks for individual and non-elite athletes.

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 ended on Wednesday 2 December, and gyms and sport facilities are reopening across all tiers. Outdoor skating rinks can stay open across all tiers and indoor skating rinks can open in Tiers 1 and 2.

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

■ **Leisure: Coronavirus**

Laura Farris:

[\[123732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish additional details on the £100 million leisure centre fund which he announced on 22 October 2020.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. On 22 October, the Government announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres. We will be releasing further information on the scheme and how local authorities with outsourced leisure centre provision can apply in the coming weeks.

■ **Music: Coronavirus**

Pete Wishart:

[\[124690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the commercial music industry on the difficulties of procuring insurance for live music events.

Caroline Dineneage:

We are aware of the concerns raised by the music industry about the potential challenges associated with securing insurance for live music events.

Officials have been working closely with the affected sectors to understand the challenges faced. This includes work to build an evidence base on whether there is a clear market failure that demonstrates insurance coverage is the only barrier to live music events taking place.

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[125238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to support the live music industry to enable it to have a viable future when festivals and venues reopen.

Caroline Dinenage:

We are making an unprecedented investment of £1.57 billion in the UK's cultural sector through the Culture Recovery Fund. To date over £500 million of the Fund has been announced to organisations across England, a fifth of which has gone to the music sector. These funds will provide valuable support for live music venues and festivals to continue operating and stage activity.

We have held back £258 million from the Culture Recovery Fund to enable us to respond to the emerging public health picture, and provide additional support to the sector when needed throughout the rest of the financial year.

From 2 December, in Tier 1 and 2 areas, socially distanced indoor audiences are permitted provided capacity in a venue is maintained at maximum 50% capacity or 1000 people, whichever is lower. Outdoor events can take place in line with Covid secure guidance with a capacity limit of the lower of 50% or 4000 in Tier 1 and 50% or 2000 in Tier 2.

DCMS has established a Venues Steering Group and a sector-led sub-group on Outdoor Events and Festivals looking at how music venues and festivals can reopen safely. We are committed to continue working with music venues and festivals to understand the challenges they face and to enable events to take place in line with the latest regulations and guidance.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Darren Jones:

[\[124833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of covid-19 restrictions on sports which prevent adults from travelling between local authorities but enable coaches, umpires and under-18s to do so.

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 opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

You can travel in order to exercise across all tiers, however there is additional guidance for Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas which affects those living in the areas as well as those who wish to travel into the areas to take part in sporting activities. In tier 2: you should aim to reduce the number of journeys you make, where possible.

You are advised not to travel into or out of Tier 3 areas, including for sport, unless this is necessary to enable individual exercise (or exercise for people from the same household or support bubble). Where this is necessary (for example to access a

green space for a run or cycle), you should only travel a short distance and stay as local as possible. Travel is also permitted where it is necessary to enable sport for disabled people, sport for educational purposes, or supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, to take place, but should still be minimised and kept to short distances only. People can additionally travel for necessary work or voluntary purposes.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Day Care

Tulip Siddiq: [\[123666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what (a) specific steps he will take and (b) funding he will allocate to help establish a Flexible Childcare Fund.

Vicky Ford:

The government will establish a £220 million holiday activities and food programme to provide enriching activities and a healthy meal for disadvantaged children in the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays in 2021. This provides funding up to the end of the 2021/22 financial year and supports our commitment to establish a flexible childcare fund to increase the availability of high quality and affordable flexible childcare.

■ Children: Disadvantaged

Tulip Siddiq: [\[123670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what criteria the Government will use to determine the (a) funding allocated to and (b) success of the Growing Up Well project.

Vicky Ford:

Growing Up Well is a Shared Outcomes Fund project worth £11.8 million over 3 financial years, between 2020/21 and 2022/23. It will identify, and test, data and digital innovations that will improve outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable families with children aged 0 to 5.

The project will focus on improving the family user experience of early years services; improving local level professional collaboration and planning around the family and child; and greater alignment of early years objectives and funding across government.

The project is currently in its mobilisation phase. A process and impact evaluation will be commissioned to measure success. The evaluation of the project will inform future policy development.

■ Department for Education: Databases**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[123669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Spending review 2020, what criteria his Department will use to a) distribute funds under the Data Improvement Project and b) determine the success of funds distributed under the data improvement project.

Nick Gibb:

Data Improvement across Government is a programme comprising of projects involving the Department for Education, Ministry of Justice, Department of Health and Social Care, Home Office, and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The overarching aim of the programme is to improve the cross-government evidence base and use of data to inform policy decisions and service delivery for children and young people. The amounts for each department have been pre-agreed with Her Majesty's Treasury as part of the shared outcomes fund bidding process reflecting the specific requirements of their projects.

Several projects are focused on improving Government capability which will be delivered directly by the involved departments. MHCLG is developing an element of the programme to help improve local areas' capability in their use of data and data matching to support vulnerable children and families, and will provide guidance on how funds will be bid for in due course. The programme will be evaluated to assess its impact and to inform future policy development.

■ Free School Meals: Immigrants**Daisy Cooper:** [\[123699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children in low-income families with No Recourse to Public Funds that are (a) eligible for and (b) have access free school meals since the extension of that scheme to those families.

Daisy Cooper: [\[123700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 2 November to Question 106891, when the review on how immigration status and no recourse to public funds interact with free school meals and other educational entitlements will be published.

Daisy Cooper: [\[123701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 106891, when the Government plans to publish the (a) terms of reference and (b) scope of the review on how immigration status and no recourse to public funds interact with free school meals and other educational entitlements.

Daisy Cooper:

[123702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to inform schools of the extension in the eligibility for free school meals to children from low-income families with No Recourse to Public Funds; and whether his Department provided an end-date for the temporary extension in that communication.

Daisy Cooper:

[123703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility for free school meals to undocumented children.

Vicky Ford:

We are working with departments across government to evaluate access to free school meals for families with no recourse to public funds. In the meantime, the extension of eligibility will continue with the current income threshold until a decision on long-term eligibility is made.

Once the review is complete, we will update our guidance accordingly. Our current guidance regarding the extension can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/guidance-for-the-temporary-extension-of-free-school-meals-eligibility-to-nrpf-groups>.

At present, data is not available regarding the take up of free school meals by no recourse to public funds groups during the temporary extension.

■ Further Education: Finance

Karin Smyth:

[123627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on college finances of the disproportionately low payment made by ESFA for 16-18 provision in March 2020, which leaves the sector under-funded by around 6% according to the Association of Colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

The existing payment profile is based on the academic year (August to July) and is based on historical analysis. It takes into consideration the higher costs faced by colleges early in the year, as well as varying profiles in other months. Currently, colleges receive payments that are higher than the flat profile in the autumn and lower monthly payments over the winter that lead to the 'shortfall' in the spring, as identified by the Association of Colleges.

We have no plans at this time to change the profile; it has been used for many years and is well understood by colleges. However, this academic year has seen a significant boost to levels of funding for 16-19 education. The government previously announced in August 2019 that it will invest an extra £400 million in 16-19 education in 2020-21. This is the largest injection of money in a single year since 2010 and

represented an increase of 7% in overall 16-19 funding. The base rate of 16-19 funding has since increased by 4.7% this academic year 2020/21, from £4,000 to £4,188.

■ Graduates: Employment

Emma Hardy: [\[123684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information he holds on the rate of graduate employment for people who finished university in summer 2020.

Emma Hardy: [\[123685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information he holds on graduate employment rates for people who completed an undergraduate degree in 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

Statistics on graduate employment in the calendar year 2020 will be published in our annual "Graduate Labour Market Statistics" release in April 2021.

Statistics specifically relating to the 2020 graduating cohort and their outcomes 15 months after graduation will be published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency from their "Graduate Outcomes (GO) survey" in mid-2022.

We recognise that a number of 2020 and 2021 graduates will face challenges gaining employment due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the UK labour market and economy.

The Recruitment and Employment Federation has found an increase in the confidence of bosses to start hiring again, and we are doing all we can to help people find roles if they are at the start of their career journey. Our nationwide network of Work Coaches is supporting jobseekers and matching them with employers who are recruiting.

As part of the government's Skills Recovery package plan for jobs, we are investing an additional £32 million in the National Careers Service up to March 2022. This investment will provide individual careers advice for 269,000 more people whose jobs or learning have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Many higher education providers have developed new and innovative ways to support students and graduates who are looking to continue their studies or to prepare for employment. The Department for Education is working with Universities UK, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, the Institute of Student Employers, the Office for Students and the higher education sector to identify and help promote the overall range of support offered to graduates who are looking to enter the labour market or continue their studies at this challenging time.

■ Pre-school Education

Daisy Cooper:

[123705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving maintained nursery schools the same status as schools by adequately covering their (a) statutory responsibilities (b) staff obligations and (c) costs.

Vicky Ford:

As maintained schools, maintained nursery schools (MNS) have statutory requirements placed on them, such as the need to have a head teacher, a special educational needs coordinator, and a governing body. They are also subject to administrative requirements such as the need to publish a range of policies on their websites. The cost of these are not experienced by non-school early years providers, and MNS do not have the economies of scale that many primary schools have.

The government has secured a continuation of around £60 million of supplementary funding for MNS in the 2021-22 financial year, as part of the 2020 Spending Review: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>. The Department for Education is considering what is required to ensure a clear, long-term picture of funding for MNS, and will say more about this soon.

The government has already confirmed that up to £23 million of supplementary funding will be provided to local authorities, to enable them to continue protecting the funding of MNS during the summer term in 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-years-support-package-to-help-close-covid-language-gap>. This provides MNS with certainty about funding for the 2020/21 academic year.

This government remains committed to the long-term funding of MNS, and any reform to the way they are funded will be accompanied by appropriate funding protections.

■ Pre-school Education: Disadvantaged

Daisy Cooper:

[123706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Early Years Alliance survey's finding that one in six early years providers and one in four in the most deprived local authorities could close by Christmas 2020 without additional funding.

Vicky Ford:

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

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Tulip Siddiq:

[123664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2020 to Question 118052, for what reasons the Spending review 2020 did include

information on supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools after the 2020/21 academic year.

Vicky Ford:

The government has secured a continuation of around £60 million of supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools (MNS) in the 2021/22 financial year, as part of the 2020 Spending Review. The department continues to consider what is required to ensure a clear, long-term picture of funding for MNS, and will say more about this soon.

The government has already confirmed that up to £23 million of supplementary funding will be provided to local authorities, to enable them to continue protecting the funding of MNS during the summer term in 2021. This provides MNS with certainty about funding for the 2020/21 academic year.

This government remains committed to the long-term funding of MNS, and any reform to the way they are funded will be accompanied by appropriate funding protections.

Tulip Siddiq:

[123665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 118555, what the cost to the public purse was of the (a) 15 hour free early years entitlement for (i) the most disadvantaged two year olds and (ii) parents of three and four year olds and (b) 30 hour early years entitlement for working parents of three and four year olds in each of the last three years.

Vicky Ford:

Details of government spending on the early education entitlements is available in the dedicated school grant allocations tables. These are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2020-to-2021>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2019-to-2020>; and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2018-to-2019>.

The funding allocations for local authorities are based on actual take up of the entitlement hours.

Daisy Cooper:

[123704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to commence the review into the early years funding formula.

Vicky Ford:

The Early Years National Funding Formula has been designed to allocate our record investment in early years entitlement funding fairly and transparently across the country.

We will continue to keep under review the data underpinning the formula.

■ Primary Education: Harrow West

Gareth Thomas:

[123510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to Answer of 23 October 2020 to Question 104028 on Primary Education: Harrow West, how much additional funding for unavoidable costs incurred during the covid-19 outbreak has been disbursed to (a) Hatch End School and (b) other schools in Harrow West; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has thoroughly assessed all claims to the COVID-19 exceptional costs fund where schools claimed for costs other than the standard categories set out in the guidance and have determined there were no additional categories of extraordinary costs that we are able to reimburse. As a result, the funding Hatch End School and other schools in Harrow West have received from the COVID-19 exceptional costs fund remains unchanged from the figures provided in my answer to Question 104028 here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-15/104028>.

The Department has opened a second claims window for schools to claim from the fund for any costs that fell between March and July in the same approved categories, for which they did not claim during the first window. Information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19/exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19--2>.

In addition to this, 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.

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'. An initial payment of the premium (25% of the total) has been made to schools. Data published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-catch-up-premium-provisional-allocations> shows that Hatch End School received £18,300 in the autumn payments, and schools in Harrow West received £280,920 in total.

Alongside this, the catch up package includes a National Tutoring Programme (NTP) which will provide additional, targeted support for disadvantaged 5-16 year olds who need the most help to catch up. The programme has two pillars which can be accessed by schools. Firstly, schools will be able to access high quality, subsidised tuition from a selection of approved Tuition Partners. Schools can access information about Tuition Partners here: <https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/ntp-tuition-partners>. The second pillar supports schools in the most disadvantaged areas to employ in-house Academic Mentors who can provide small group and one-to-one tuition to selected pupils. If schools in Harrow West would like to check their eligibility and register their

interest for a Mentor, they can do so here: <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/hire-academic-mentors>. In addition to the 5-16 programme, the NTP will provide funding to support small group tuition for 16-19 years olds: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-16-to-19-tuition-fund>. The NTP will also provide funding to support an early language skills programme for reception-aged children: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catch-up-premium-coronavirus-covid-19/the-reception-year-early-language-programme-neli>.

The Department will continue to review the pressures schools are facing into next term and what further actions might be needed.

■ Secure Accommodation: Education

Tulip Siddiq: [\[123667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, if he will provide more information on how his Department will use the £24 million provided to maintain capacity and expand educational provision in secure children's homes.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to the answer given on 2 December 2020 to question [121849](#).

■ Special Educational Needs

Tulip Siddiq: [\[123662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to £300 million of funding for new school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities included in the Spending review 2020, what estimate his Department has made of the number of new school places for children with SEND that funding will create; and what proportion of those places will be in mainstream schools.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[123663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the £1.8 billion for maintaining and improving the condition of school buildings included in the Spending review 2020, how much of that funding will go towards making school buildings more accessible for children with SEND.

Nick Gibb:

As announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 25 November 2020, the department will invest £300 million, in the financial year 2021-22, in school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities. This is almost four times as much as the government provided to local authorities in the financial year 2020-21 for this purpose. We estimate this could support the delivery of over 5,000 additional High Needs places, though the figure will vary depending on the type of capital works invested in. Further details on how this funding will be distributed will be announced in due course.

In addition to this, the Spending Review announcement has committed £1.8 billion, in the 2021-22 financial year, for maintaining and improving the condition of the school estate. The majority of condition funding is devolved to local authorities, academy trusts, voluntary aided bodies, and schools, as they are best placed to prioritise investment based on local condition need. We will set out further details of how the funding will be allocated in due course.

■ **Students: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[125276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to ensure that students returning from overseas placements for Christmas 2020 have access to no-symptom covid-19 testing.

Michelle Donelan:

All universities have been asked to work in partnership with the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver an asymptomatic mass testing programme. Asymptomatic testing is an important tool to help students adhere to safety measures to protect themselves, their friends, family, and wider community.

All international arrivals, including domestic students on international placement, are required to complete a passenger locator form on arrival in the UK, and passengers travelling from a country not on the national exemption list are required to self-isolate in their accommodation for 14 days. See: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>.

From 15 December, there will be the option in England to take an accredited COVID-19 test from a private testing provider after 5 days of self-isolation, with a negative result releasing students from the need to isolate from day 6. Students should discuss what provisions are in place to support them in accessing COVID-19 testing.

In addition, asymptomatic testing will be available across participating universities up until the 16 December. Students returning from countries on the national exemption list who would like to take advantage of this provision should discuss what testing provision is available at their university.

■ **Union Learning Fund**

Charlotte Nichols:

[123731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, will he review the decision to end the Union Learning Fund.

Gillian Keegan:

The government does not plan to review this decision. COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on the economy and workforce, resulting in a rise in unemployment. We need to help these people re-skill where necessary and re-enter into employment. The Union Learning Fund operates mostly through larger employers within unionised parts of the economy and is not designed to help those

out of work – only 2% of people supported via the Union Learning Fund are unemployed.

The decision to no longer support the Union Learning Fund after 31 March 2021 was taken as part of the wider Spending Review discussions and in light of our expanded commitment to skills development through the £2.5 million National Skills Fund, and Lifetime Skills Guarantee. This national fund will support individuals to get the training and qualifications they need wherever they are located and regardless of whether they are able to access the Union learn network.

As part of this expanded commitment, we can confirm all the money will be invested in skills and retraining that will be accessible to all.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Avian Influenza

Paul Girvan: [\[123679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the spread of bird flu in the UK.

Paul Girvan: [\[123680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland in the last two weeks on tackling the spread of bird flu in the UK.

Paul Girvan: [\[123681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to provide additional financial support to poultry farmers in Northern Ireland who may have to cull livestock as a result of bird flu, beyond the support available under schemes administered by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Victoria Prentis:

Animal health and welfare policy and responding to outbreaks is a devolved matter. I outline below information about control of the disease in England. I also set out how all four administrations in the UK work with one another in order to develop a response which supports the areas of common interest.

My department, and the departments of all administrations in the UK, have well-established, strong track records of controlling and eliminating outbreaks of Avian Influenza. Our aim is to limit the spread and the economic impact of this disease on the industry, governments and other bird keepers.

Defra's approach to disease control is set out in the Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain and in the Contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases of animals in England. Once disease has been confirmed, susceptible birds are

humanely culled and disease control zones put in place around the infected premises to further reduce the risk of spread. Movement of poultry and captive birds are not allowed in the zones and movements of eggs, poultry carcasses and poultry litter and manure are subject to restrictions.

Veterinary investigations are carried out at each infected premises, including the tracing of all movements on and off, and surveillance within the disease control zones.

Avian Influenza Prevention Zones (AIPZ) were put in place in England, Scotland and Wales on 11 November 2020. These require all bird keepers to take extra biosecurity precautions such as limiting access to non-essential people on their sites, workers changing clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures, cleaning and disinfecting site vehicles regularly and fencing off ponds and standing water. Similarly, an AIPZ was declared in Northern Ireland on 1 December 2020.

In addition, given the increasing risk of incursion of avian influenza to captive birds, from the 14 December 2020 new housing measures will come into force in England for all poultry and captive birds. I refer the hon. Member to my statement of 8 December 2020:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-12-08/hcws631>

Although disease control is a devolved matter colleagues in all administrations are an integral part of the UK-wide decision-making processes. All attend the Defra Group's National Disease Control Centre 'bird table' meetings, are members of the Animal Disease Policy Group and participate in daily stocktakes to review on-going disease control strategy.

I have no plans to amend Defra's responsibilities for compensation for affected keepers.

■ Chemicals

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[123726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to develop a Chemicals Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:

Work on the Chemicals strategy is underway. It will build on a robust statutory regime and our international obligations and set out direction of travel on important policies. The next key milestone is the Call for Evidence in 2021. It will help inform the development of a draft Strategy for consultation.

■ Environmental Health: Scotland

Deidre Brock:

[\[122757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 26 November 2020, Official Report, Column 962, what the source

was for his statement that Scotland was 100 Environmental Health Officers short of requirements; and how that figure was calculated.

Victoria Prentis:

Challenges exist in estimating the number of Export Health Certificates (EHCs) required at the end of the Transition Period. Modelling was carried out to assess possible demand for certification of fish exports and certifier supply in Scotland, to support an understanding of the requirements from 1 January 2021. Demand was calculated using consignment estimates provided by the Scottish Government. The current certifier supply, or number of Food Competent Certifying Officers (who are usually EHOs) per local authority, was provided by APHA. We applied assumptions on the amount of time spent on certification based on local authority engagement and on the range of time taken to certify a consignment. The shortfall of approximately 100 Environmental Health Officers fell within this range.

■ **Organic Food: EU Law**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[123511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the potential effect on sales of organic goods of EU requirements for proof of compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary rules after 1 January 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

EU requirements for proof of compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary rules after 1 January 2020 affect all products regardless of whether they are organic or not. All organic imports from third countries, except from the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, must be accompanied by a GB Certificate of Inspection (COI) from 1 January 2021.

Organic imports from the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland will need to be accompanied by a GB COI from 1 July 2021. We are implementing this phased approach for COIs from the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland to provide additional time for ports to adjust to the new GB organic import process from 1 January 2021. This decision is in line with a number of other phased approaches designed to simplify import procedures in the short term.

■ **Organic Food: UK Trade with EU**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[123512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of securing an equivalency agreement with the EU for sales of organic food and drink products into (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the EU from 1 January 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

On 2 December 2020, the European Commission confirmed that the UK's six organic control bodies will be recognised as equivalent for the purpose of trade in organics. It

will allow British businesses to export organic food, drink, ingredients and feed to Northern Ireland and the EU until 31 December 2021.

On 12 October, Defra notified the European Commission of its intention to recognise the EU as equivalent for the purpose of trade in organics until 31 December 2021. These arrangements will allow EU and British consumers to continue to have access to the wide choice of organic food they currently enjoy, and British businesses will be able to continue to produce the high quality organic foods for which we are internationally renowned.

While this is a temporary solution, we remain of the view that a bilateral organics equivalence agreement is the best basis for our future organics trading relationship with the EU.

■ **Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[123570]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ban polyfluoroalkyl substances after the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Swansea West on 16 November, PQ UIN 113464.

[\[questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113464\]](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113464)

■ **Recreation Spaces**

Zarah Sultana:

[125314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing legally binding targets on widespread access to nature and green space.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra is currently undertaking a number of measures to improve widespread access to nature and green space. The 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our comprehensive and long-term approach to protecting and enhancing our natural landscapes in England for the next generation and to helping people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces. There is lots of work already ongoing to deliver on this approach, such as the National Framework of Green Infrastructure Standards for England, the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, the Green Social Prescribing Project, the Children and Nature Programme, the financial provisions of the Agriculture Act 2020 through the Environmental Land Management scheme, the England Coast Path and a new northern National Trail based on Wainwright's Coast to Coast Walk.

The Environment Bill will give the Secretary of State the power to set long-term, legally binding environmental targets across the breadth of the natural environment. It will specifically require the government to set at least one target each in four priority

areas: air quality, biodiversity, water, and waste reduction and resource efficiency. The power to set targets will not be limited to these four priority areas. Long-term targets could be set in respect of any matter which relates to the natural environment, or people's enjoyment of it, to drive significant improvement of the environment.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Sir Oliver Heald:

[123502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to reduce sewage releases by water companies into chalk streams; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

As part of its planning the Environment Agency (EA) has assessed the impact of sewage discharges on the water environment which has informed the development of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) for the period 2020 to 2025. This programme of work is now being implemented by the water companies at a cost of over £4 billion with many of the improvements targeted at improving river water quality to support fisheries and improved habitats for wildlife. Within the programme there is work associated with sewage discharges at about 39% of the chalk stream water bodies in England. This work consists of improvement monitoring of sewage treatment works' performance, investigations and improvements schemes. These investigations will inform further improvement work in the next investment programme (2025 to 2030).

Additionally, a new Taskforce has been established between Defra, the Environment Agency, Ofwat, the Consumer Council for Water and Water UK to set out clear proposals to address the volumes of sewage discharged into our rivers from storm overflows. The impacts on chalk streams are being considered by the taskforce as part of the prioritisation of work on storm overflows.

■ Rivers: Water Abstraction

Sir Oliver Heald:

[123503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to reduce over-abstraction by water companies from chalk streams.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's Water [Abstraction Plan](#), that was published in December 2017 sets out clear objectives for achieving sustainable abstraction for England, plus mechanisms for delivery. Our approach to addressing these issues has three main elements:

- making full use of existing regulatory powers and approaches to address unsustainable abstraction;
- developing a stronger catchment focus;
- and supporting these reforms by modernising the abstraction service.

Progress was last reported to parliament in May 2019 ([Report to Parliament](#))

The Environment Agency has already made changes to 124 licences to protect chalk streams from over abstraction, returning over 37 billion litres of water per year to chalk streams, and preventing a further 100 billion litres per year being abstracted. In addition, they have revoked 85 unused and underused licences in chalk streams, preventing 7.5 billion litres of water being abstracted every year.

Further sustainability reductions amounting to about 100 million litres per day in chalk streams will be delivered in the next 5 years by water companies through the Water Industry National Environment Programme. In addition, the Environment Agency is working with water companies to prioritise additional voluntary reductions in sensitive chalk catchments.

■ **Sainsbury's: Sustainable Development**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[123526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Sainsbury's on making their organisation more sustainable.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[123527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Tesco Plc on making their organisation more sustainable.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[123528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Asda Stores Ltd on making their organisation more sustainable.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[123529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Waitrose and Partners on making their organisation more sustainable.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[123530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with Marks and Spencer on making their organisation more sustainable.

Rebecca Pow:

All large retailers including Sainsbury's, Tesco Plc, Asda Stores Ltd, Waitrose and Partners and Marks and Spencer are signed up to a series of resource efficiency programmes we support through our work with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

Courtauld 2025 is a voluntary agreement which works across the food chain with the target to, over ten years, cut carbon and waste in the food sector by one fifth by 2025. By collaborating with WRAP and using its tools, guidance and research, retailers can support their supply chains to be more resource efficient, encourage consumers to reduce their waste, and support third-sector organisations to redistribute more surplus food to those in need.

We are also working with WRAP to encourage efforts to reduce other forms of waste.

The UK Plastics Pact is a collaborative initiative to create a circular system that keeps plastic in the economy and out of the natural environment. Led by WRAP and set up in partnership with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation in April 2018, it is a coalition whose members cover the entire plastics value chain, and all of the major supermarkets are members. The Pact brings these organisations together with four key targets for 2025 that aim to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated, which includes action to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging items. Our ambitious reforms to overhaul the waste system will support supermarkets in achieving those targets. This includes making producers more responsible for the products they put on the market, starting with reforming the packaging waste regulations, and making recycling simpler for households and businesses.

We also support WRAP with its industry-led voluntary agreement the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan 2020. This focuses on improving the environmental footprint of the clothing sector, with targets on reducing water and carbon footprints, reducing textiles to landfill and reducing waste produced over whole product lifecycle. A new programme, Textiles 2030, was announced on 10 November and has ambitious targets in line with global goals on carbon, water and resource circularity and aims to drive the shift to a more resource-efficient textiles sector in the UK.

We cannot afford to wait to act against the threat of climate change. We must work together to protect our planet and people and ensure a greener, more resilient future for us all. The UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26 with our partners Italy in November 2021 to bring together world leaders to commit to urgent global climate action. We are encouraging all businesses across the UK to play their part and sign up to the Race to Zero.

■ Water Charges: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[125249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 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 water supplier; and what steps his Department is taking to protect vulnerable households in water arrears during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rebecca Pow:

Regional water companies are regularly assessing the needs of their customers. Across England, all companies have measures in place for households who may struggle to pay their water bills, including the WaterSure, social tariffs and payment breaks. Water consumers are also protected from being disconnected from their water supply if they are unable to pay their bill.

Feedback from companies to date has shown no significant impacts on the number of non-payments by households. This could be attributed to an initial increase in the

take up of water support schemes, which may have reduced the risk of customers falling into long term arrears.

It is too early to fully assess the impacts of COVID-19 on water bills as the impacts of general support is still being understood. However, we continue to work with the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), Ofwat and Water UK to monitor the industry's regional and national response to Covid-19.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[125235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Third Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Flying Home: The FCO's consular response to the COVID-19 pandemic, HC 643, what steps he has taken to improve the (a) quantity and (b) quality of his Department's communications to UK citizens abroad during times of crisis.

Nigel Adams:

We are committed to maintaining and improving the resilience and flexibility of our communications systems during times of crisis. We have increased the capacity and capability in our Consular Contact Centre to ensure greater resilience for surges in demand. We also have a new surge call handling capacity: a cadre drawn from across the FCDO in the UK and in our posts abroad which, in a crisis, will augment our Consular Contact Centre teams. We have also extended the channels by which British nationals can contact us at any time of day or night. For example, during the COVID-19 response, we started providing written answers 24/7 through a dedicated web form on GOV.UK and answering messages posted on the FCDO's Travel Advice social media channels.

We continue to review how we can reach British nationals and how they can reach us as easily as possible. This includes testing and piloting web chat and messaging services such as WhatsApp, as well as integrating our existing channels of phone and sending messages by web form and through social media. We are also exploring how a subscription service would be used, both in a crisis and otherwise, to send messages directly to British nationals who ask for information, using the channel and tool they prefer. We have also reviewed communications for future repatriations operations and developed clear plans to follow if required.

■ **China: Human Rights**

Ruth Jones:

[\[124865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the next UK-China Human Rights dialogue will take place; and whether that dialogue will include concerns on violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief against Christians, Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists and others.

Nigel Adams:

The last round of the UK/China Human Rights Dialogue took place in Beijing on 27 and 28 June 2017. We do not have dates for the next round of the Dialogue, but continue to raise our serious concerns about human rights in China, including violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief directly with the Chinese authorities and at the UN. The Foreign Secretary has raised his concerns with his Chinese counterpart, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on a number of occasions in the past year.

■ **Conflict, Stability and Security Fund****Lisa Nandy:****[125234]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the (a) allocated budget was to and (b) amount spent by the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in each financial year from 2015-16 to 2019-20.

James Cleverly:

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) publishes an Annual Report for each Financial Year, which includes the allocated budget and amount spent. The CSSF Annual Reports for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 are available on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/conflict-stability-and-security-fund/about#important-documents>.

The CSSF Annual Report 2019/20 will be published by January 2021.

The CSSF was established in 2015 and did not produce an Annual Report for Financial Year 2015/16, but the allocated budget is published in this report from the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201617/jtselect/jtnatsec/208/208.pdf> and the amount spent is published in this performance review from the Independent Commission for Aid Impact: <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/CSSF-Approach-Paper.pdf>.

Please find the allocated budget and amount spent for each Financial Year below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	ALLOCATED BUDGET	AMOUNT SPENT
2015/16	£1,008 million	£991 million
2016/17	£1,111.3 million	£1,104.2 million
2017/18	£1,188 million	£1,182 million
2018/19	£1,279 million	£1,258 million

■ Fossil Fuels: Development Aid

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[123636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Government's is on future development assistance for fossil fuel projects to (a) Mozambique, and (b) other developing countries.

James Duddridge:

Tackling climate change is a key priority for the UK. The Government is committed to working with countries across the world, including Mozambique, to unlock their renewable energy potential and support their transition away from fossil fuels to cleaner alternatives. The UK will continue to lead by example through aligning our Official Development Assistance (ODA) with the Paris Agreement temperature goals, including our support for energy. This will include our ODA support for Mozambique and any other developing country.

The Prime Minister announced in January that the Government would end direct ODA, investment, export credit and trade promotion support for thermal coal mining and coal power plants overseas. The Government continues to keep its approach to other fossil fuel investments and financing overseas under review.

■ Health Services

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[124825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to publish a global health strategy.

Wendy Morton:

COVID-19 underlines the urgency of making progress on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. The Government has ambitious strategic objectives on global health, including manifesto commitments on ending preventable deaths of mothers, new-borns and children by 2030, and leading the way in eradicating Ebola and malaria. The Prime Minister has set out a five-point plan to work with others to strengthen global health security, including through our G7 Presidency. The Government has no immediate plans to publish a global health strategy. We will look at how our approach should evolve in light of lessons from the pandemic and the outcomes from the Integrated Review.

■ Hong Kong: Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Jim Shannon:

[\[124189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on reducing the number of military vehicles on the streets of Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

The Chinese People's Liberation Army maintains a Garrison in Hong Kong for national defence purposes, and personnel are permitted to travel around the territory

in military vehicles. The 1996 Hong Kong Garrison Law states that the Garrison shall notify the Hong Kong Government in advance of any military activities it is to conduct, such as training exercises and manoeuvres which 'may affect public interests.' Both Annex I, Section XII of the Joint Declaration and Article 14 of the Hong Kong Basic Law state that Chinese military forces stationed in Hong Kong for national defence purposes shall not interfere in Hong Kong's internal affairs. Under the Joint Declaration, public order is the responsibility of the Hong Kong Government.

We frequently raise our concerns about matters affecting Hong Kong with the Chinese authorities, including summoning the Ambassador on 13 November.

■ Saudi Arabia: Newcastle United Football Club

Ian Mearns:

[\[124723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he and (b) representatives of his Department (i) held meetings and (ii) exchanged correspondence with representatives of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 1 January 2020 and 31 October 2020 on the proposed takeover of Newcastle United football club by a consortium including the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary did not discuss the bid, nor exchange correspondence, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on this issue. The proposed takeover was discussed in meetings between FCDO officials and representatives of the Saudi Arabian Government. I have also discussed the issue with representatives of the Saudi Arabian Government. FCDO officials were clear, in their communication with the English Premier League, that any prospective takeover of Newcastle United Football Club was a matter for the two parties concerned.

Ian Mearns:

[\[124724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he and (b) representatives of his Department (i) held meetings and (ii) exchanged correspondence with representatives of the English Premier League between 1 January 2020 and 31 October 2020 on the proposed takeover of Newcastle United by a consortium including the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The Foreign Secretary did not discuss, nor exchange correspondence, with the English Premier League on this issue. FCDO officials exchanged correspondence and held meetings with the Premier League following a request by the latter. FCDO officials were clear, in their communication with the English Premier League, that any prospective takeover of Newcastle United Football Club was a matter for the two parties concerned.

Ian Mearns:

[\[124725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he and (b) representatives of his Department issued advice to the English Premier League on the proposed takeover of Newcastle United football club by a consortium including the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The Foreign Secretary did not discuss, nor exchange correspondence, with the English Premier League on this issue. FCDO officials were clear, in their communication with the English Premier League, that any prospective takeover of Newcastle United Football Club was a matter for the two parties concerned.

■ **Violence: Females**

Owen Thompson:

[\[122800\]](#)

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 to end violence against women.

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. The new strategic framework for our aid announced by the Foreign Secretary will ensure we can deliver UK aid better, even if our budget is smaller, by combining aid with diplomacy and focusing our efforts where the UK can make a world-leading difference.

It is not possible at this stage to go into the specifics of programme cuts. Amended programmes and projects are reflected on DevTracker and will continue to change in the normal way. Tackling violence against women and girls is a core part of this Government's mission and we remain steadfast in our commitment to this agenda.

■ **Zhang Zhan**

Ruth Jones:

[\[124867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he has made representations to his Chinese counterpart on behalf of the detained Christian lawyer and journalist Zhang Zhan.

Nigel Adams:

We are concerned by Zhang Zhan's case, and will continue to follow it closely. A free press and the free flow of information are vital for good governance. We have consistently raised our concerns about media freedoms in China and will continue to do so

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Abortion: Drugs****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[122627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of women's experiences when receiving remote abortion care; and what weight he plans to give to women's experiences and preferences in the ongoing consultation on the permanent extension of the approval order to allow women to take both abortion pills at home.

Helen Whately:

We have now launched a three month consultation on whether to make permanent the current temporary measure allowing for home use of both pills for early medical abortion up to 10 weeks gestation for all eligible women. We welcome feedback from anyone with an interest or view on this subject, particularly from those who have been directly affected by the current temporary measure. The consultation asks a range of questions, including questions on whether the temporary measure has had an impact on the provision of abortion services for women and girls accessing these services, with a particular regard to safety; accessibility; and privacy and confidentiality of access.

■ **Air Pollution****Marco Longhi:**[\[121374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of air pollution on the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

In 2018 Public Health England (PHE) published an estimation of the potential health burden and costs to the National Health Service and social care system arising due to diseases related to air pollution.

Between 2017 and 2025, the total cost to the NHS and social care from air pollution in England is estimated to be £1.60 billion for fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide combined, where there is robust evidence for an association between exposure and disease. Where the evidence is less robust the cost is £2.81 billion for fine particulate matter and £2.75 billion for nitrogen dioxide.

PHE also published a tool which allows local authorities to quantify the number of expected disease cases and costs in their local area. The tool includes NHS and social care cost data for England and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-a-tool-to-estimate-healthcare-costs>

■ Arthritis

Vicky Foxcroft:

[122803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2020 to Question 105458 on Arthritis, whether NHS England plans to collect data on the proportion of people living with rheumatoid arthritis in England that are in remission.

Edward Argar:

Data is not collected centrally on the number of patients diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis or the proportion of these who are in remission and there are no plans to do so in the format requested.

■ Borderline Substances Advisory Committee

Alex Norris:

[122860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time taken is for the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances to respond to applications for review.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: This data is not routinely collected.

Alex Norris:

[122861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the transparency of decision making by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances to ensure fairness and equity in their approvals process.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: A review began in 2019 to improve the processes of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances. To date, three meetings have been held with industry representatives to take this forward and we are seeking further meetings with them to complete the work.

■ Bowel Cancer: Screening

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[115580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people who have received a faecal immunochemical positive test result through bowel cancer screening are awaiting a diagnostic test for the most recent date at which that information is available.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: This data is not held centrally.

■ **Breast Cancer: Medical Treatments**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[108214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for (a) breast cancer patients and (b) NHS England of making permanent the reductions introduced during the covid-19 outbreak to (i) the number of doses of radiotherapy and (ii) cycles of adjuvant trastuzumab during treatment.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Breast cancer treatments are advancing all the time. 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 10-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.

■ **Breast Cancer: Screening**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[\[122738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Spending Review 2020, what steps he plans to take to increase the breast imaging and diagnostic workforce.

Jo Churchill:

The Spending Review 2020 provides £260 million to continue to grow the National Health Service workforce and support commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan.

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

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[92001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2020 to Question 101055 on Breast Cancer: Screening, what the average waiting list has been for breast screening invitations in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 November 2020]: This data is not available. The NHS Breast Screening programme measures performance via measures of uptake and coverage, rather than waiting lists.

■ **Cancer: Erith and Thamesmead**

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[106512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people waiting for cancer screening tests in Erith and Thamesmead constituency since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held centrally in the format requested.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Helen Hayes:

[\[122813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the projections on the cancer workforce submitted by NHS England and Health Education England as part of their Spending Review 2020 submissions.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: The Government has no plans to publish submissions for the Spending Review 2020. Making sure the National Health Service is well staffed is a top priority for the Government. Full details on funding allocations from Spending Review 2020 towards NHS workforce budgets, including for cancer, in 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ **Cancer: Public Expenditure**

Bob Blackman:

[\[121235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with Health Education England on how the extra £260 million announced in the Spending Review 2020 will support the cancer workforce.

Jo Churchill:

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

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

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments

Alex Norris:

[\[122859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure the hierarchy of medicines is enforced in relation to cannabis-based medicinal products.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: NHS England has disseminated resources to support clinicians and guidance on the prescribing process for cannabis-based products for medicinal use (CBPMs).

The vast majority of CBPMs are unlicensed medicines, which have not been assessed by the medicines regulator. As such these are not first line treatments and specialist doctors must take into consideration the clinical evidence base, and the guidance from the General Medical Council (GMC) on licensed, off label and unlicensed medicines and local National Health Service governance systems when making a decision to prescribe.

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[102698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to enable people with older mobile operating systems to access the NHS track and trace app.

Helen Whately:

The National Health Service COVID-19 app requires users to be owners of smartphones that can install Apple iOS 13.5 and above and Android Marshmallow and above. This is related to the hardware needed for this Bluetooth technology to work effectively and is the same in all countries with apps using the Google and Apple exposure notification API for contact tracing.

People who do not have a compatible smartphone will still benefit from the app and from other people downloading it. This is because people who use the app are helping to break chains of transmission.

The app complements and supports regular contact tracing. They work together to protect vulnerable groups, including those who are unable, or do not wish, to use digital tools, including the app.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[110818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been asked to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace app since its launch.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Work is underway to establish what information can be published about app usage and its role in the COVID-19 response, including information related to self-isolation taking in to account that users of the app are anonymous.

■ Contact Tracing: Consultants**Andy Slaughter:**[\[103455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional consultants he plans to engage to work on the Government's Test and Trace programme; and from which firms he plans to engage those consultants.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: As part of our strategic workforce planning activities the number of consultants engaged is constantly under review and subject to change.

Much of the focus of existing consultancy on the programme is to support the 'build' of the organisation. This support is only required on a temporary basis, and most often used to provide skills that have not been identified within the Civil Service. For example, consultancies are used to provide support on app development.

Call off contracts from the Crown Commercial Framework which contain a preselected list of suppliers with standard terms and conditions have been used in the majority of awards.

Andy Slaughter:[\[103456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what type of contract he has used to engage consultants to work on the Government's Test and Trace programme; and what tendering process he used to let those contracts.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: Call off contracts from the Crown Commercial Framework (CCF) which contain a preselected list of suppliers with standard terms and conditions have been used in the majority of awards. Payment rates are as per the CCF rate card with discounts attained depending on value and length of role.

As part of our strategic workforce planning activities the number of consultants engaged is constantly under review and subject to change. Much of the focus of existing consultancy on the programme is to support the 'build' of the organisation. This support is only required on a temporary basis and most often used to provide skills that have not been identified within the Civil Service. For example, consultancies are used to provide support on app development.

■ Contraceptives: Health Services

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[121838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reintegrating Public Health England's contraceptive care responsibilities and workflows within the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan committed the Government to reviewing the commissioning arrangements for a range of services including sexual and reproductive health, to ensure that they can deliver the best outcomes for the people who need them. The Department confirmed in 2019 that local authorities will continue to be responsible for commissioning sexual and reproductive health services, but that they must work much more closely with the National Health Service to deliver joined-up care for patients and to embed prevention into the full range of health and other public services.

The Department are currently considering a range of options for where Public Health England's wider public health functions, including supporting the commissioning and delivery of sexual and reproductive health services, could sit in the future as part of the reform to the public health system. We will be engaging in more detail on these issues and setting out next steps on the reform programme over the coming months.

■ Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[96100]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to highlight the common symptoms of covid-19 in children that differ from those commonly seen in adults.

Jo Churchill:

Evidence suggests that while children can contract COVID-19, it is less often than adults and appears to take a milder course.

The National Health Service has published general COVID-19 advice on symptoms which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

The NHS has published specific advice for parents and carers of very young children regarding when to seek medical help if the child has a raised temperature. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/coronavirus-in-children>

■ Coronavirus Self-isolation Payment Scheme

Justin Madders:

[\[109428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications for the payment for people self-isolating his Department (a) received and (b) accepted from 28 September 2020 to 28 October 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

Justin Madders:

[\[99000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications for the payment for people self-isolating in highest risk areas were (a) received and (b) accepted between 28 September and 4 October 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 October 2020]: We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Congleton

Fiona Bruce:

[\[90108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of covid-19 tests for people in Congleton constituency.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The Department is working to increase the availability of COVID-19 testing in Congleton and the United Kingdom through the expansion of the testing network through home testing, regional and local testing sites and mobile testing units which travel the UK.

The nearest test centre to Congleton is the walk-through testing site at the Synetics Solutions Car Park in Stoke. The nearest drive through site is at the Bet365 Stadium in Stoke.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Karl McCartney:

[\[102768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what lessons the Government has learnt from the approach taken to tackling the covid-19 pandemic by Governments in (a) South America, (b) Asia and (c) elsewhere in the world.

Jo Churchill:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has maintained regular contact with many other countries, including those in South America and Asia, on a wide range of issues relating to COVID-19. We continue to monitor the outbreak around the world and, guided by the science, we will continue to work with other countries to defeat the virus.

Thangam Debbonaire:**[122765]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to communicate (a) covid-19 risks, (b) guidance and (c) mitigation measures to non-English language speakers.

Jo Churchill:

Since March 2020, Public Health England has translated key public guidance on COVID-19 in multiple languages including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (traditional), Chinese (simplified), French, Gujarati, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi and Urdu. These include shielding guidance in Bulgarian, Hindi and Nepali. Examples of guidance documents that have been translated are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Local councils have also produced translations into various community languages.

Emma Hardy:**[122863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and living under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions should attend work if they cannot work from home from 2 December 2020.

Jo Churchill:

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable and living under tier 3 COVID-19 restrictions are strongly advised to work from home where at all possible. If they cannot work from home, a clinically extremely vulnerable person can still go to work as their employer is required to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a person has any concerns about their health and safety at work, they should raise them with their workplace union, the Health and Safety Executive or their local authority.

Dean Russell:**[91934]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote the importance of disinfecting (a) surfaces and (b) skin in (i) offices, (ii) schools and (iii) other public spaces during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has published guidance on GOV.UK on the importance of cleanliness and hygiene and on promoting the importance of disinfecting surfaces in

offices, schools and public spaces and on sanitising hands throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Health England has published guidance on how to disinfect and sanitise non-healthcare settings, including offices and public spaces, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

The Department has also published guidance to support the 'Hands. Face. Space' public information campaign. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-to-prevent-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-this-winter>

■ **Coronavirus: Mortality Rates**

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[97684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the infection fatality rate is (a) overall, (b) for women, (c) for men, for covid-19 cases; and what the infection fatality rate is by age group.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 October 2020]: Public Health England does not publish data on the infection fatality rate or the case fatality rate of COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: Older People**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[111435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of his Department's guidelines which state that people over the age of 70 are vulnerable to covid-19 with the finding of the World Health Organization which states that people over the age of 60 are clinically vulnerable to covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The national restrictions guidance published on 31 October recognises that people over 60 could be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The guidelines recommend that people over 60 follow the same advice as those in the clinically vulnerable category. People aged 70 or over remain in the clinically vulnerable category. Further guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Caroline Lucas:

[113051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November 2020 to Question 106954 on Coronavirus: Protective Clothing, what proportion

of modelled demand his Department is meeting for the largest adult social providers where 100 per cent of their modelled demand is not being met.

Helen Whately:

With the exception of a small number of the largest domiciliary care providers, the personal protective equipment (PPE) portal meets 100% of modelled requirements for type IIR masks, gloves, aprons and hand hygiene. We are working to ensure that all domiciliary care providers receive all the PPE they need as soon as possible.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) monitor demand on covid-19 testing stations and (b) increase the testing capacity.

Helen Whately:

Allocation decisions are frequently and systematically reviewed to ensure we are using our testing where it can be most effective. We are increasing our testing capacity, both through current swab testing and new, rapid lateral flow tests to cut the spread of COVID-19 nationwide.

The United Kingdom's daily testing capacity passed the 500,000 on 31 October. Testing capacity in the UK across all pillars between 12 November and 18 November was at 4,474,864 tests.

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

Sarah Owen:

[\[90278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether private contracts between the NHS and providers of covid-19 tests permit the moving of supply of covid-19 tests to areas of the UK with unmet demand.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: At times during the National Testing Programme, demand has been high and as such test sites in areas with higher prevalence were prioritised. Public Health England, the Joint Biosecurity Centre and National Health Service Test and Trace monitor infection levels across the country so higher volumes of testing are targeted where they are needed most. We are working closely with local authorities and local Directors of Public Health, sharing data on a daily basis to understand and tackle outbreaks

Further we regularly redistribute completed tests across the Lighthouse Lab network to ensure best possible utilisation of the network. We are 'future-proofing' capacity so that we can respond to increases in demand. We can expand testing to new use-cases – such as asymptomatic testing of NHS staff in high-prevalence areas and the mass testing pilot in Liverpool.

■ Dental Services

Munira Wilson:

[123717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2020 to Question: 91042 on Dental Services, what recent progress he has made on improving access to NHS dental care.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: Dentistry has been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to the need to regularly undertake aerosol generating procedures, such as high-speed drilling, which present a high risk for transmission of COVID-19. Dental practices have, therefore, been asked by NHS England and NHS Improvement to prioritise urgent care, care for vulnerable groups and delayed planned treatment. Over 600 urgent dental care centres also remain open to support the provision of face to face care and improve access.

Public Health England's infection, prevention and control guidance, published in October, has reduced the time needed to rest a room between patients. The guidance is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928034/COVID-19_Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_Dental_appendix.pdf

■ Diabetes: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[121924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support his Department is providing to people living with diabetes who are more likely to experience serious complications from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 December 2020]: Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic diabetes care has remained a priority and general practice has supported patients with long term conditions to access care and support.

Recognising that access to face to face care has been limited, NHS England and NHS Improvement have expedited a procurement, to make two remote programmes available to provide education and self-management support for children and adults living with type 1 diabetes. The national diabetes programme team has also developed an on-line education programme of resources for people living with type 2 diabetes.

The NHS England and NHS Improvement Diabetes Programme Team has helped to develop a COVID-19 risk prediction model to support shared decision making between clinicians and patients based on more accurate information as well as discussions on how to reduce risk of COVID-19 for all, including those with diabetes.

■ Dietetics

Alex Norris: [\[95733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with registered dietitians to inform (a) the obesity strategy and (b) wider nutrition policy.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 30 September 2020]: My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has not had any discussions with dietitians to inform the obesity strategy and wider nutrition policy.

■ Down's Syndrome: Coronavirus

Mike Amesbury: [\[117362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the increased health risk from covid-19 for young people over 18 with Down's syndrome compared with the risk for those under 18.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers recently reviewed the latest data to examine whether there was a need to add further conditions to the definition of clinically extremely vulnerable. This analysis showed that the vast majority of those adults over 18 with Down's syndrome were at the very highest risk of death from COVID-19 and this group were added to the clinically extremely vulnerable list.

As our knowledge of COVID-19 has grown, we now know that very few children are at highest risk of severe illness due to the virus, even those with other health conditions. Using the information on COVID-19 and outcomes for people who have had it, we have not found evidence that children who have Down's syndrome are at higher risk than other children. General practitioners and hospital specialists still have discretion to add patients to the list based on careful, clinical assessments of each individual's needs. Clinical guidance has been issued to support these decisions.

■ Drugs: Expenditure

Sir George Howarth: [\[116400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 August 2020 to Question 72910 on Drugs: Expenditure, if he will provide a breakdown of the savings in each month since March 2018.

Jo Churchill:

As a result of improvements at the NHS Business Services Authority in how it stores and reports prescribing data, there have been changes to the drug classification structure and an increase in the number of products included in the over the counter (OTC) product list. This change has particularly affected some OTC items, including vitamins and minerals, emollients and creams. The effect has been to change the total spend on OTC items in each year and the reduction in spend.

After taking account of the changes, the figures now show a reduction in spend of £10 million from the baseline year of 2017-2018 to the last full year of 2019-2020. A review of the guidance is planned for next year, taking into account updates to the evidence, data on impact, feedback from patient groups, and will include a review of expected savings.

The following table shows the net savings, by month, since NHS England and NHS Improvement and National Health Service clinical commissioners published 'Conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for Clinical Commissioning Groups'.

FINANCIAL YEAR	MONTH	NET INGREDIENT COST (MILLIONS)	ROLLING 12 MONTH NET INGREDIENT COST (MILLIONS)	SAVING OVER PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS VERSUS 2017/18 FINANCIAL YEAR (MILLIONS)
2017/18	March	£43.3	£521.9	£0.0
2018/19	April	£41.9	£521.9	£0.0
2018/19	May	£44.1	£519.6	-£2.2
2018/19	June	£43.4	£515.6	-£6.3
2018/19	July	£42.5	£513.7	-£8.2
2018/19	August	£42.6	£514.1	-£7.8
2018/19	September	£40.1	£511.4	-£10.5
2018/19	October	£42.8	£510.3	-£11.6
2018/19	November	£40.9	£507.0	-£14.9
2018/19	December	£39.7	£504.5	-£17.4
2018/19	January	£42.4	£503.4	-£18.5
2018/19	February	£38.4	£502.2	-£19.7
2018/19	March	£41.8	£500.7	-£21.2
2019/20	April	£41.2	£499.9	-£21.9
2019/20	May	£44.0	£499.9	-£22.0
2019/20	June	£40.9	£497.4	-£24.5
2019/20	July	£42.3	£497.2	-£24.7
2019/20	August	£43.6	£498.2	-£23.7

FINANCIAL YEAR	MONTH	NET INGREDIENT COST (MILLIONS)	ROLLING 12 MONTH NET INGREDIENT COST (MILLIONS)	SAVING OVER PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS VERSUS 2017/18 FINANCIAL YEAR (MILLIONS)
2019/20	September	£41.3	£499.5	-£22.4
2019/20	October	£43.6	£500.2	-£21.7
2019/20	November	£41.8	£501.0	-£20.9
2019/20	December	£41.8	£503.2	-£18.7
2019/20	January	£44.1	£504.9	-£17.0
2019/20	February	£40.3	£506.7	-£15.2
2019/20	March	£46.8	£511.7	-£10.1

■ Drugs: Misuse

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[121887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of substance misuse.

Jo Churchill:

No formal assessment has been made.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[121888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to increase access to community services to support people suffering from substance misuse disorders.

Jo Churchill:

We are committed to ensuring that anyone with a substance misuse problem can access the help and support they need. This includes providing support for those who misuse drugs and additional funding over 2020/21 to 2021/22 to drug and alcohol treatment in targeted local authorities to individuals experiencing rough sleeping, including those currently in emergency accommodation following the COVID-19 response.

The second phase of Dame Carol Black's independent review on drugs focuses on prevention, treatment services and recovery. The recommendations will be made available to Ministers in due course and will feed into wider Government work to tackle the serious harms caused by substance misuse, including through increasing access to services.

■ Eating Disorders

Andrea Jenkyns:

[124262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department made of the potential effect of (a) mandatory calorie counts on menus and (b) other measures in the Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives policy paper on people with eating disorders prior to the publication of that policy paper.

Jo Churchill:

Eating disorders are serious, life-threatening conditions and it is important that people have access to the right mental health support, in the right place, at the right time. We carefully considered all views on our measures to reduce obesity and will continue to do so. This includes feedback from a wide range of experts in response to our public consultations on specific policy proposals in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives'.

In response to feedback to our consultation on out-of-home calorie labelling, we will introduce legislation to require large out-of-home sector businesses with 250 or more employees, to calorie label the food they sell. An equalities assessment and impact assessment were published alongside the consultation response and is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/calorie-labelling-for-food-and-drink-served-outside-of-the-home

■ Flour: Folic Acid

Jessica Morden:

[121824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to proceed with proposals on the mandatory fortification of flour and gluten-free products with folic acid.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 December 2020]: The Department published a United Kingdom-wide consultation on the proposed mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid which ran from 13 June to 9 September 2019. A post consultation update was made available on GOV.UK. We received 1,442 responses from a wide range of stakeholders. Publication of the consultation response has been delayed due to COVID-19 related work taking priority. We will publish our response as soon as possible.

■ Gender Recognition: Health Services

Dr Rupa Huq:

[122814]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for transgender people to be seen at NHS gender clinics.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: Following significant increased demand for National Health Service gender services, three new clinics are being established in London, Merseyside and Cheshire, and Manchester working to a new service specification. The first of these clinics, London, began seeing patients in July 2020. The clinics will be evaluated over a period of up to three years and planning is underway to establish similar services in other parts of the country.

General Practitioners: Registration**Munira Wilson:**[\[123718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of the population in England that is not registered with a GP surgery.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: No such estimate has been made.

Alberto Costa:[\[124229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the 30 day time period for patients to find a new GP surgery having left the catchment area of their old service.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made.

Health**Elliot Colburn:**[\[124315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government will publish its response to the Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020's Green Paper consultation.

Jo Churchill:

The Government response to the consultation has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the announcement of the National Institute for Health Protection in August, we are also considering the best future arrangements for the wide range of Public Health England's non-health protection functions that are vital to support health improvement, prevention and delivery of health services and we will be setting out further details of our approach in due course.

Health Foods: Prescriptions**Alex Norris:**[\[122862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the pricing policy of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances in relation to nutritional borderline substances.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: The pricing policy of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances is published on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidelines-on-the-pricing-of-acbs-products/information-on-the-pricing-of-acbs-products>

■ Heart Diseases: Health Education

Paul Bristow:

[R] [122913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of heart failure as a long-term condition amongst system leaders and generalist healthcare professionals.

Jo Churchill:

To raise awareness of heart failure as a long term condition, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Health Education England to develop e-learning to support health care professionals to better recognise the symptoms of heart failure and to improve heart failure diagnosis, management and support.

In addition, NHS Long Term Plan work on heart failure, including raising awareness of heart failure symptoms, remains a priority for NHS England and NHS Improvement during the COVID-19 pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement's work includes improving the early diagnosis and management of patients with heart failure in primary care.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Paul Bristow:

[R] [122910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the access heart failure patients have had to health care during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Throughout the pandemic, patients have been encouraged to come forward for the treatment that they require and urgent treatments continued to be delivered.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 2020, the National Health Service has run an ongoing media campaign 'Help us to help you' encouraging patients to seek urgent medical help when they are unwell, including clear messaging for patients with heart attack symptoms to call 999.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have promoted restoration of services as a priority, including diagnostic and treatment services for patients with heart failure, as soon as the peak of the first wave of the pandemic began to decline.

NHS Long Term Plan heart failure work, including ensuring early and rapid access to heart failure diagnostic tests and treatment, remains a priority for NHS England and NHS Improvement during the pandemic.

■ Influenza: Vaccination**Sarah Owen:****[109698]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on meeting the target of administering 30 million flu vaccinations during the 2020-21 flu season.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: Public Health England collect provisional weekly data on flu vaccine uptake levels in key cohorts, including those aged 65 years and over, at risk groups, pregnant women and children aged 2 and 3. The weekly reports are available at the following link:

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

Monthly data on the number of people who have been vaccinated from these cohorts, together with monthly data on uptake in healthcare workers and school age children, Reception to Year 7, is available at the following link:

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

The first monthly data was published on 26 November on the number of people who have been vaccinated up to 31 October 2020.

It is still very early in the flu season to provide an assessment on overall uptake.

Sir Christopher Chope:**[111992]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of the mass vaccination of vulnerable people in England against influenza in winter 2019-20 and (b) potential effect of the influenza vaccine programme in 2020-21 on levels of virus contraction among those vaccinated.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 10 November 2020]: Public Health England (PHE) monitors the vaccine effectiveness of influenza vaccines each year against all the strains in circulation. Vaccine effectiveness varies from one season to the next. Overall effectiveness has been estimated at between 30-60%.

Data published by PHE has shown that the flu vaccine was 42.7% effective in all age groups, which includes individuals in clinical at-risk groups in the 2019/20 season. A further breakdown of vaccine effectiveness by age and virus strain is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-flu-reports>

Preliminary vaccine effectiveness estimates for 2020/21 will be available next year. Effectiveness depends on a number of factors including composition of the vaccine, the circulating strains, the type of vaccine and the age of the individual being

vaccinated. For those who do develop flu after vaccination, the risk of hospitalisation from flu is lower.

Sarah Owen:

[122894]

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

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: The first provisional monthly influenza vaccine uptake data amongst frontline healthcare workers in England, published by Public Health England, is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2020-to-2021>

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

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[121883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of NHS volunteer covid-19 supported the mental health and wellbeing people who were shielding during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service volunteer responders carry out simple, one-off tasks to support people in England who need help with accessing essentials and to help prevent loneliness.

‘Check-in and Chat’ tasks provide telephone support to individuals during self-isolation because talking to someone has been shown to help people stay healthy. Check-in and Chat Plus gives regular telephone support over several weeks providing peer support and companionship to people who have previously been advised to shield.

From 1 April to 29 November, there have been 304,193 completed Check in and Chat tasks, plus 43,272 Check in and Chat Plus tasks. In the week ending 29 November, 8,244 Check in and Chat tasks were completed, as well as 2,190 Check in and Chat Plus tasks.

Up to 15 November, NHS volunteer responders completed a total of 1,089,923 tasks in support of shielding and self-isolating groups.

■ NHS: Pensions

Drew Hendry: [\[120077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of individuals who have had access to an NHS Survivor Pension removed as a result of pre-2008 co-habitation and remarriage NHS Survivor Pension rules.

Helen Whately:

Since 1 April 2018, 136 individuals have had their entitlement to a survivor pension withdrawn following re-marriage or co-habitation.

Drew Hendry: [\[120078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential cost of backdating NHS Survivor Pension changes to include people who are unable to enter into new marriages or co-habit with a partner as a result of the pre-2008 NHS Survivor Pension rules.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: There are no plans currently to review existing arrangements in these circumstances.

Making changes to pension schemes retrospectively results in improvements for members who have already retired, with costs that can only be borne by the active membership and/or taxpayers in the case of the public service schemes. Such costs are frequently large, and backdating is rarely undertaken. The most recent cost estimate, in 2013, of the cost of retrospectively removing the provision for survivor pensions to cease on remarriage was around £40 million.

■ Nurses: Students

Bill Esterson: [\[118521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the safety of student nurses working on covid-19 wards; and what assessment he has made of the effect on the finances of student nurses of being at a high risk of having to self-isolate and lose the ability to do other part-time work.

Bill Esterson: [\[118522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of placing student nurses on pay Band 4 while on nurse placement during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 November 2020]: The Government appreciates the challenges faced by student nurses whilst completing their clinical placements. We are therefore keen to ensure that they have access to the support they need.

On 13 November, the Chief Nursing Officer for NHS England and the Chief Nurse for Health Education England, published a letter to all nursing and midwifery students to

inform them of the support available, which includes appropriate access to personal protective equipment, testing and wellbeing support whilst on placement.

In terms of financial support, eligible nursing students will continue to receive payments from the student loans company and also access the Learning Support Fund from the NHS Business Services Authority, which includes a non-repayable grant of at least £5,000 for eligible students, travel and dual accommodation expenses and parental support.

The Government has no further plans for paid placements during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Obesity: Departmental Coordination**

Alex Norris:

[\[95732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of cross-departmental collaboration on the obesity strategy.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 30 September 2020]: Government departments work very closely on reducing obesity and share responsibility for delivering the measures set out in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives'.

Areas of collaboration include the Department working with:

- HM Treasury on fiscal measures including the soft drink industry levy;
- the Department for Education on early years, school food and sports in schools;
- the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on advertising restrictions, the Nutrient Profiling Model, and broader sport and physical activity policy;
- the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government on planning;
- the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on food labelling including the marketing and labelling of infant foods, the National Food Strategy and the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services;
- the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on regulatory measures impacting businesses;
- the Department for Transport on promoting active travel and the living streets project;
- the Department for Work and Pensions on food poverty; and
- the Department for International Trade on front-of-pack nutrition labelling.

■ **Oral Cancer: Health Education**

Bob Blackman:

[\[121233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase public awareness of the (a) risks of mouth cancer and (b) effect of smoking on mouth cancer.

Jo Churchill:

The National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training has developed guidance for dentists to provide very brief advice to tobacco users and refer to local stop smoking services. Public Health England have also published the Delivering Better Oral Health guidance that contains a chapter on smoking and tobacco use, along with self-assessment tools to improve local tobacco control work and an oral cancer registrations indicator in the Public Health Profiles data for local commissioners to access.

The Government has introduced various pieces of legislation to address the harms from tobacco use and this includes graphic warnings on some tobacco packaging. We continue to educate the public about the dangers of tobacco use and help people quit. In addition to this, the Oral Health Foundation Mouth Cancer Action Month campaign held in November has raised the profile of mouth cancer and the Government welcomes this.

■ Orthopaedics**Emma Hardy:**[\[109592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to reduce the number of lower limb amputations; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Service restoration guidance from the Vascular Society and the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme promotes early identification of critical limb ischaemia. GIRFT has also worked with hospitals to help reduce vascular-related lower limb amputation rates. NHS England also commissions the National Vascular Registry (NVR), with NVR data informing work to improve care for chronic limb-threatening ischaemia.

The proportion of hospitals offering access to multidisciplinary footcare teams has increased from 58 % in 2011 to 82 % in 2019, and major amputation rates in England are amongst the lowest internationally at 8.2 per year per 10,000 people with diabetes.

Ensuring improvements in foot care continues to deliver improvements in outcomes will be important going forward. Continued investment in multi-disciplinary footcare services by NHS England and NHS Improvement will drive access.

■ Physiotherapy: Finance**Stuart Anderson:**[\[113223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he plans to allocate to improve access to affordable physiotherapy.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have been clear in their guidance that non-COVID-19 health services such as physiotherapy should be maintained as far as possible. The 'Help Us to Help You' campaign is underway to encourage the public to

access the NHS services they need. Anyone who is concerned or needs treatment should come forward.

To further support the National Health Service, the Government is providing an additional £3 billion of funding, which includes funding for continued access to independent sector providers to carry out routine NHS treatments and procedures for non-COVID-19 health services, including physiotherapy. Furthermore, the five-year GP Contract announced funding for 20,000 new primary care healthcare professionals, such as physiotherapists. By 2024, all adults in England will be able to see a musculoskeletal first contact physiotherapist at their local general practitioner (GP) practice without being referred by a GP.

■ **Physiotherapy: Protective Clothing**

Rosie Duffield:

[124284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides to non-NHS physiotherapy services to ensure that those services can access suitable personal protective equipment.

Jo Churchill:

The personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for non-National Health Service physiotherapists are set out in the COVID-19 infection prevention guidance, which is published on GOV.UK. This recommends that where possible and clinically appropriate remote consultations rather than face-to-face should be offered to patients. Where this is not possible, guidance on what PPE is required in different settings is set out. Non-NHS physiotherapists are essentially commercial enterprises and are able to procure PPE from their normal suppliers.

■ **Pregnancy: Obesity**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[95713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government plans to take to support pregnant women to maintain a healthy weight during pregnancy as part of the obesity strategy.

Jo Churchill:

Through the new obesity strategy, published on 27 July, we are delivering a range of measures on weight management including a National Health Service 12-week weight loss plan app, expanding weight management services to help more people get the support they need, accelerating the expansion of the NHS diabetes prevention programme and making conversations about weight in primary care the norm. Further details about these measures will be available later in the year and we will engage stakeholders throughout this process.

■ Public Health: Finance

Bambos Charalambous: [\[121898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether public health funding grants to local authorities will be increased to meet the specific demands and needs of each local area.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[121899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to announce further details of public health funding announced in the Spending Review 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 December 2020]: Local authority spending through the public health grant will be maintained, meaning local authorities can continue to invest in prevention and essential frontline health services. Local authority public health grant allocations for 2021-22 will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

■ Rare Diseases

Anne Marie Morris: [\[123604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timeline is for releasing the new rare disease framework.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Government plans to publish a new United Kingdom Rare Diseases Framework by the end of 2020 which will replace the UK Strategy for Rare Diseases.

Anne Marie Morris: [\[123605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there is a timetable for devolved nations to agree an implementation plan to support the new rare disease framework.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: All four United Kingdom nations have signed up to the development of a new UK Rare Diseases Framework, set for publication at the end of 2020. The Rare Diseases Framework will be followed by nation-specific action plans that will detail the steps each government will take to meet the shared priorities of the Framework. The devolved administrations have agreed to publish nation specific action plans within two years of the Framework publication.

■ Smoking

Bob Blackman: [\[122663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's Smokefree 2030 target, when the new Tobacco Control Plan setting out

the further measures promised in the Green paper to help meet that target will be published.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed in addressing the harms from smoking. The Department, working with Public Health England, will develop and publish a new Tobacco Control Plan to deliver its Smokefree 2030 ambition. The new plan is expected in July 2021.

■ **Social Prescribing**

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[122649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Spending Review 2020, what specific steps the Government is taking to scale-up green social prescribing services to help improve mental health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]:

Green social prescribing is funded by HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund and therefore does not form part of the Spending Review 2020. This fund recently awarded £4.27 million to deliver a joint project with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England, NHS England, Public Health England and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to test green social prescribing in multiple pilot locations, run national experimental work to understand its scalability, and deliver a robust project evaluation.

■ **Test and Trace Support Payment**

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[111431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people eligible for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment for self-isolating have (a) claimed and (b) received that payment in England; and what the total cost to the public purse has been of those payments.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing, and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[117339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when people who have been notified to self-isolate by the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app will be able to qualify for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: Work is underway to establish what information can be published about app usage and its role in the COVID-19 response, including information related to self-isolation taking in to account that users of the app are anonymous.

HOME OFFICE■ **AK Party UK: Islam****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[122607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the level of co-operation between the AK Parti's Centre for British Turkish Understanding and Islamist groups in the UK.

James Brokenshire:

The Home Office has not undertaken an assessment on co-operation between the AK Parti's centre for British Turkish Understanding and Islamist groups.

■ **Amazon Web Services****Chi Onwurah:**[\[103510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2020 to Question 49691 on Amazon Web Services, whether she set out the liability caps and evaluation of compliance with the Managing Public Money code.

James Brokenshire:

The AWS contract signed December 2019 includes the parties' liability caps. The contract complies with HM Treasury Managing Public Money.

A redacted AWS contract is published on Contract Finder at <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/6936638d-c785-4d8d-b7ef-76dcdd801bd6>

■ **Asylum: Wales****Jessica Morden:**[\[124151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of living conditions at temporary accommodation sites for asylum seekers in Wales.

Chris Philp:

The Government demands the highest standards from contractors and their accommodation and monitor them closely to ensure this is maintained.

Accommodation providers are required to provide safe, habitable, fit for purpose and correctly equipped accommodation that complies with the Decent Homes Standard in addition to the standards outlined in relevant national or local housing legislation.

These standards apply to all accommodation used by the Home Office including the Ministry of Defense site in Pembrokeshire.

The Home Office is in daily contact with service providers to ensure that the Government continues to meet its statutory obligation to house destitute asylum seekers and to ensure that all contracted support services are delivered, and service users are housed safely. This is in addition to the monthly and quarterly formal performance boards.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

Hywel Williams:

[\[114080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been unable to (a) work, (b) access healthcare, (c) access social security benefits and (d) enrol onto further or higher education courses as a result of the time taken by her Department to provide biometric residence permits.

Hywel Williams:

[\[114081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to minimise the time taken by her Department to issue biometric residence permits.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold the data in a way that would allow it to provide an accurate estimate of people who have been unable to (a) work, (b) access healthcare, (c) access social security benefits and (d) enrol onto further or higher education courses as a result of the time taken to provide Biometric Residence Permits (BRP). Finding the requested information would be likely to breach the disproportionate cost threshold.

The Home Office process includes daily checks on any failure by decision makers to request a Biometric Residence Permit and to identify any request for a BRP which has not been produced. The Home Office aims to deliver a BRP within 10 working days of an immigration application being approved.

The Home Office works closely with the DVLA, which produces BRPs, and TNT/Fedex, which delivers them, to ensure that service level agreements are met and performance is improved, through improved reconciliation reporting and clearer escalation processes.

The DVLA has an SLA to complete 90% of production requests within one working day and the remaining 10% within two working days. While this was met consistently until early 2020 the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions and safe working practices have caused occasional delays of up to four working days since April.

TNT/Fedex is required to attempt first delivery of 99% of BRP within two working days of collection from DVLA. This target was met up until February 2020 and is 91% since then.

■ Development Aid

Peter Kyle: [\[123642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of the recent decision to reduce the Official Development Assistance budget on trends in the number of (a) economic migrants and (b) asylum seekers.

Chris Philp:

The Spending Review settlement provides £459.5 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) resource funding to support and protect vulnerable people in the asylum system, to deliver refugee resettlement, and to support victims of modern slavery.

However, the final allocations by departments has yet to be settled owing to the ongoing review into how ODA is allocated against the government's priorities. The full impact assessment will not be known until this has concluded.

■ Driving Offences: Ethnic Groups

Dawn Butler: [\[123537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to require police services to collect and publish data on the ethnicity of vehicle drivers stopped under the Road Traffic Act 1988 as part of the Home Office Annual Data Requirement.

Dawn Butler: [\[123538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the Codes of Practice supporting the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to include road traffic stops.

Kit Malthouse:

There are currently no plans to extend the Codes of Practice that support the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to include road traffic stops.

For motoring offences, there are currently no plans to require police forces to collect data for vehicle stops under section 163 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. For non-motoring offences, the Home Office already collates data on vehicle stops as part of the stop and search data collection, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2020>

The statutory basis for data collection, the Annual Data Requirement (ADR) process, is set by the Police Act 1996. This process works closely with policy and operational colleagues, other government departments, National Policing Leads and other key police stakeholders to ensure that routine statistical data required on police forces remains proportionate and justified and eliminates unnecessary burdens. This ensures a proper balance between the accountability and efficiency of police operation and is reviewed on an annual basis.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Pay

Mike Amesbury:

[\[105536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason fire fighters have been offered a pay award below that offered of teachers, doctors, dentists, police and prison officers.

James Brokenshire:

The pay awards announced on 21 July 2020 related to workforces covered by Pay Review Bodies (PRBs) which are: the armed forces, teachers, police officers, the National Crime Agency, prison officers, doctors, dentists, the Judiciary, senior civil servants and senior military personnel.

Pay awards for firefighters are agreed independently outside this process by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services which include representatives of employers, devolved administrations and trade unions. Central Government has no role to play in this process.

■ Hamas

Stephen Crabb:

[\[95050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the extent of the links between the political and military wings of Hamas; and if she will make a statement.

James Brokenshire:

The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters.

■ Immigrants: Sleeping Rough

Apsana Begum:

[\[124880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of rough sleeping migrants from the European Economic Area that will be deported as a result of changes to immigration rules.

Kevin Foster:

The new Immigration Rules, which make provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping, will not apply to those with (or eligible for) leave granted under the EU Settlement Scheme or other cohorts protected by the Withdrawal Agreement.

The provision in the immigration rules will be used as a last resort where a person repeatedly engages in anti-social behaviour and refuses offers of support. If we cancel a person's permission to stay in the UK we will ask them to leave voluntarily with government support.

■ Immigration Rules: Sleeping Rough

Sarah Champion:

[\[121847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect on modern slavery of immigration rules that would allow officials to refuse leave to remain in the UK on the grounds that an applicant has been rough sleeping.

Chris Philp:

The new Immigration Rules make provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping. The new rule will apply on a discretionary basis to non-EEA citizens from 1 December 2020 and to newly arriving EEA citizens from 1 January 2021. The provision will be used sparingly and only where individuals have refused support offers such as accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

The safety and security of modern slavery victims remains a top priority. The Victim Care Contract (VCC) provides support to potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery who have received a positive Reasonable Grounds decision, and who have consented to support. The VCC provides support through accommodation (where needed), financial support and specialist support workers.

Following a positive Reasonable Grounds decision, adult victims will be provided with a period of recovery and reflection of at least 45 calendar days. During that period, support and assistance will be provided on a consensual basis and potential victims will not be removed from the UK. A period of recovery and reflection will not be observed where grounds of public order prevent it.

■ Immigration: Children

Stella Creasy:

[\[106331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to consult on a new resettlement scheme for unaccompanied minors.

Chris Philp:

Protecting vulnerable children is a key priority for the Government. In 2019, the UK received more asylum applications from unaccompanied children than any country in the EU and accounted for approximately 20% of all reported UASC claims made in the UK and the 27 EU Member States.

We have had significant numbers of children crossing the Channel on small boats and this is in addition to many other unaccompanied children who are currently being cared for in the UK. The latest Department for Education statistics confirm that there are over 5,000 UASC in English local authorities alone – a 146% increase from 2014. This has placed significant pressure on local authorities and it is important that we focus on ensuring that we can care of those who are already here before we agree to taking more children.

In July the Government announced it had successfully completed the transfer of 480 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Greece, France and Italy under

Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 – known as the ‘Dubs’ scheme. Parliament was clear this was a one-off scheme which is now complete.

■ **Immigration: EU Nationals**

Steve McCabe:

[\[124658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department will take to (a) monitor the effectiveness of the digitalisation of EU citizens’ immigration status and (b) report any failures in that scheme to the House.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is developing a border and immigration system which is digital by default for all applicants, which over time means we will increasingly replace physical and paper-based products for all routes with accessible, easy to use online and digital services. This includes evidence of UK immigration status for all nationalities who hold it, which will increasingly be made available to individuals via online services.

We already monitor the use of these online status services. This includes through user feedback provided via the online services, through ongoing user research and testing and through other channels, and these are used to inform improvements to the services. We also monitor usage volumes and user satisfaction scores for our online services, both of which are already published on a quarterly basis as part of Home Office transparency data.

Any system failures would be reported through appropriate mechanisms, including to Parliament where appropriate.

■ **Immigration: EU nationals**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[125288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what routes for settlement will be available to unmarried durable partners of EU citizens with pre-settled status after 31 December 2020.

Kevin Foster:

After the transition period ends on 31 December 2020, the durable partner of an EU citizen with pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme can also apply to the scheme, where the partnership was formed and was durable before that date and the partnership remains durable at the date of application.

Where the durable partnership was formed after the end of the transition period, the durable partner of an EU citizen with pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme can apply to come to or remain in the UK as their unmarried partner under Appendix FM to the Immigration Rules.

■ Immigration: Sleeping Rough

Apsana Begum: [\[123728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason recently announced changes to immigration rules make rough sleeping a grounds for refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK.

Apsana Begum: [\[123729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent (a) impact assessments, (b) public sector equality duty assessments and (c) consultations with stakeholders have been conducted in relation to changes to immigration law and rough sleeping.

Chris Philp:

The new Immigration Rules make provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping. The new rule will apply on a discretionary basis to non-EEA citizens from 1 December 2020 and to newly arriving EEA citizens from 1 January 2021. The provision will be used sparingly and only where individuals have refused support offers such as accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for all the Immigration Rules laid on 22 October 2020.

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government are working together to encourage local authorities and approved charities to resolve the immigration status of eligible rough sleepers and unlock access to any benefits and entitlements that rough sleepers may be eligible for.

■ Informers

Stella Creasy: [\[117246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many covert human intelligence sources identified as vulnerable have been notified to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner in each of the last five years.

James Brokenshire:

For under 18s, the most recent available data published by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner reported that 17 juvenile covert human intelligence source authorisations were approved across 11 public authorities during the four-year period between January 2015 to the end of 2018. Data for the period beyond the end of 2018 has yet been published. Information is not collated on vulnerable adults.

■ Informers: Children

Stella Creasy:

[\[117245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many covert human intelligence sources under the age of 18 have been notified to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner since January 2019.

James Brokenshire:

For under 18s, the most recent available data published by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner reported that 17 juvenile covert human intelligence source authorisations were approved across 11 public authorities during the four-year period between January 2015 to the end of 2018. Data for the period beyond the end of 2018 has not been published. Information is not collated on vulnerable adults.

■ Islam

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[101987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the growing (a) influence and (b) networks of Turkey's Justice and Development Party in (i) United Kingdom and (ii) the European Union on Islamist activity.

James Brokenshire:

We are aware that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey has offices in the UK and certain EU member states. All foreign political parties with representation in the UK must act in accordance with UK law in relation to their activities in the UK.

The Home Office has not undertaken an assessment of Turkey's Justice and Development Party's (AKP) influence on extremist Islamist activity.

■ Liberal Democrats: Criminal Investigation

Peter Gibson:

[\[124870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the status is of the Metropolitan police investigation into the former chief executive of the Liberal Democrats following a request by the Electoral Commission for a prosecution.

Kit Malthouse:

At the conclusion of the Electoral Commission's investigation into the Liberal Democrat Party's 2015 UK Parliamentary General Election campaign spending return, it made a referral to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) for its consideration of possible offences outside its remit. The decision to prosecute or not, following such a referral, is an operational matter for the MPS and it would not be appropriate to comment further.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Spellar: [\[124659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 8 September 2020 on Mrs Abukshim.

Kevin Foster:

A reply was sent on 4 December 2020.

John Spellar: [\[124660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 8 October 2020 on Mr Musa.

Kevin Foster:

A reply was sent on 4 December 2020.

John Spellar: [\[124661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter of 15 October 2020 from the right hon. Member for Warley regarding Mrs Zankanah.

Kevin Foster:

A reply has been sent on 4 December 2020.

Rosie Cooper: [\[124699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 14 October 2020 on a constituent's asylum eviction case, reference ZA54115.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Hon. Member's correspondence. A response will be sent by 7 December 2020.

■ Police: Greater London

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[123573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many additional police officers have been allocated to the Barnet, Brent and Harrow Basic Command Unit.

Kit Malthouse:

We are increasing the number of police officers in England and Wales by 20,000 over the next three years.

The Metropolitan Police Service was allocated 1,369 additional officers in the first year of the police uplift which covers the period to the end of March 2021. As at 30 September 2020 the Metropolitan Police Service has already recruited its year one allocation.

The deployment of these officers is an operational decision for the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

■ Police: ICT

Apsana Begum:

[\[124895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which senior police officer is responsible for the police national strategy on digital intelligence and investigations including Islamophobic online abuse.

Kit Malthouse:

Islamophobic online abuse is completely unacceptable and has no place in British society. In instances where content of this nature reaches the illegal threshold, the police may treat it as a hate crime.

Deputy Chief Constable Mark Hamilton is the National Police Chiefs' Council Hate Crime Lead. His role includes promoting Hate Crime standards and awareness across the UK.

■ Police: Recruitment

Dawn Butler:

[\[123539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals for police officer recruitment to maximise the number of black recruits.

Kit Malthouse:

Police forces that reflect the communities they serve are crucial to tackling crime and maintaining public trust and confidence in a modern diverse society. While the police workforce is more representative in terms of gender and ethnicity than it has ever been, there is still much more to be done.

We have been clear that the uplift in officers is a once in generation opportunity to improve diversity. The Equality Act 2010 includes positive action provisions to enable employers to address identified under-representation of protected groups in the workplace, such as black officers in the police, as well as Asian and other minority ethnic officers. There is much greater scope than has been used so far for the police to use the positive action provisions of equalities legislation to improve recruitment and progression of officers from under-represented groups.

Some forces have made significant improvements in the rate of black, Asian and minority ethnic joiners through successful positive action measures. The relative rates of representation vary from force to force. However, we are clear that every force should be striving to become representative of the communities it serves. Information is available on police.uk that shows the ethnicity and gender representation for each police force compared to local force area populations. This allows the public to hold forces to account.

There is already work in train across the sector to support forces in doing this. The College of Policing has delivered a major programme of work to support forces in their efforts to address under-representation in the recruitment, retention and progression of officers and has published advice on the lawful use of positive action

to address under-representation in policing at all levels. The National Police Chiefs' Council has also published a workforce representation toolkit which includes practical actions forces can take to increase the recruitment, retention and progression of officers from under-represented groups in policing

The Government has also supported innovative schemes, such as Police Now, which are making the police workforce more diverse than ever before; showing that we can attract the brightest and best into policing, whilst introducing new perspectives from some of the country's most challenging neighbourhoods.

■ Visas: Proof of Identity

Catherine West:

[124271]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa applications are being processed each week on average using the new Identity Verification (IDV) app; and what the average waiting time is for applicants submitting a visa application through that process.

Kevin Foster:

This information is not readily available nor held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The published information on processing times for visa applications is published as part of the Migration Transparency data, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Council Tax: Arrears

Colleen Fletcher:

[125250]

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

Luke Hall:

The Department does not collect data on the number of households that have fallen into council tax arrears. The Government has made available a £500 million Hardship Fund to councils in England to provide support to economically vulnerable households, including through further reductions in council tax to recipients of working age local council tax support.

■ Housing: Construction

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[125210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a snagging retention scheme for the sale of new houses; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

We expect all housing developers to deliver good quality housing, to deliver it on time, and to treat house buyers fairly. Most snags found in new build homes occur within the first two years of the occupant moving in. Where there are problems, regardless of whether they are large or small, they should be corrected promptly by developers. Our plans for the New Homes Ombudsman scheme will increase homebuyer protection, including resolving disputes about snags and defects within the first two years after purchase. It will be a requirement for developers of new build homes to be members of the New Homes Ombudsman scheme.

■ Local Government: Carbon Emissions

Steve Reed:

[\[125245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support local authorities in meeting the target of cutting UK carbon emissions by at least 68 per cent of 1990 levels by the end of 2030.

Luke Hall:

Half of English councils have committed to reducing their direct emissions to zero by 2030, enormously supporting the ambition set by the Prime Minister. Local action can accelerate deployment of new technologies and drive significant cost efficiencies through strategic coordination, including vital new energy and transport infrastructure.

As we continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic we need to ensure that our recovery plans support our climate change response. By building back greener and better, we can achieve our climate goals, protect our biodiversity and natural capital, and sustain climate-resilient economic development, all in a fair and inclusive way.

A significant amount of support has been made available for councils to act on climate change, from heat networks to cycle paths to flood defences. Councils are uniquely positioned to align local needs, opportunities and resources to deliver strategic interventions at all scales. We will continue to work with councils to enable them to build back greener and better locally, through an effective planning framework and devolution.

Environmental principles are embedded in growth funds and the national planning framework. To give a few examples:

- The £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Skills Fund is part of the Chancellor's 'Plan for Jobs 2020' commitment to support the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19, supporting up to 30,000 skilled jobs in the low carbon and

energy efficiency sectors: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-decarbonisation-scheme-psds>

- The Green Homes Grant includes £500 million for local authorities to improve the energy efficiency of low-income households. This will help reduce fuel poverty and support the installation of low carbon heating: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-local-authority-delivery-scheme-entering-a-bid>
- The £250 million emergency active travel fund is designed to help local authorities create an environment that is safe for both walking and cycling in their regions. The money will help create pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors. We want to support all communities across England who want to change the way they use their streets and new guidance has already been published to tell councils how they can give more road space to cyclists and pedestrians: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

Finally, MHCLG is supporting clean growth initiatives through existing funding pots, including the Towns Fund and Local Growth Fund, and local institutions are using strategic plans to support the UK's net zero by 2050 commitment. My officials are working with other departments including BEIS and DEFRA to ensure that green recovery and clean growth form a key part of our emerging local economic recovery planning.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[125239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2020 to Quesetion 122692 on Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus, whether small businesses that do not pay business rents due in December 2020 can be evicted by their landlord in January 2021.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government recognises that this is a very challenging time for everyone, and Covid-19 is having a significant impact on our businesses. That is why we have introduced temporary measures to further safeguard the high street and millions of jobs.

Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 provides for a moratorium on forfeitures of commercial leases due to the non-payment of rent accrued during the pandemic. Government has announced that it has now extended the measure for a final time by three months until 31 March 2021.

This means that until this date, landlords of commercial properties will not be able to evict tenants for not paying rent due after 23 March 2020.

The Government has published a voluntary Code of Practice to encourage constructive dialogue between tenants and landlords; and is clear that those tenants

who can pay in full should do so, those who cannot should pay what they can, and those landlords who can grant concessions should do so. We will publish further guidance to support negotiations between landlords and tenants in the new year.

■ Planning Permission

Dan Carden:

[\[125298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to increase public engagement on planning applications in growth and renewal areas.

Christopher Pincher:

Our proposals will put effective community engagement at the heart of planning. We recognise that the current planning system has a very poor record on community engagement, with information that is hard to find, and difficult to understand, use and trust.

Our proposals seek to prioritise engagement; with better input from communities at the stage of preparing plans and design codes, local people will have real influence over both the location and design of development. And by taking a digital-first approach to modernise the planning process, we can use new tools and platforms to improve the user experience. From making applications to improving citizen engagement, our reforms will make it easier for people to understand what is being proposed and to feed their views into the system.

Rather than having to react to unexpected and ad hoc planning applications, our reforms will give communities a genuinely meaningful voice from the start of the planning process.

Dan Carden:

[\[125299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of public engagement proposed for planning applications in the Planning for the Future White Paper.

Christopher Pincher:

The current planning system excludes residents who do not have the time to contribute to the lengthy and archaic planning process. A poll carried out last year found that only seven per cent of participants trusted their local council to make decisions about large scale development that will be good for their local area.

Improving engagement is at the heart of our proposals. The White Paper *Planning for the Future* sets out our ambition to give neighbourhoods and communities an earlier and more meaningful voice in the future of their area as plans are made. We have also proposed more and better use of digital technology, which will make it much easier to access and understand information about specific planning proposals. The proposals will move us away from notices on lampposts to an interactive, and accessible map-based online system – placing planning at the fingertips of people, and bringing it into the 21st century.

The White Paper consultation has recently closed, and we will be reflecting upon the views of those that have responded as well as working with the local government sector and community groups to consider further how best to implement these reforms.

■ **Property Development: Environment Protection**

Dan Carden:

[\[125300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of simplifying the environmental impact assessment for new developments.

Christopher Pincher:

Planning for the Future sets out our intention to reform the current framework of environmental assessment. It is vital that environmental considerations are considered properly as part of the planning and development process. However, the current frameworks for doing so – which include Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal, and Environmental Impact Assessment – can lead to duplication of effort and overly-long reports which inhibit transparency and add unnecessary delays.

Reform of environmental assessment is being taken forward as part of the government's planning reforms in order to:

- speed up decision-making and the delivery of development projects;
- simplify the requirements for environmental assessment and mitigation; and
- ensure that we take advantage of opportunities for environmental improvements.

These reforms will bring benefits across planning, including for new developments.

■ **Retail Trade: Urban Areas**

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[125287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made a local authority level assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on retail shops on the high street.

Kelly Tolhurst:

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

Our High Street Task Force collates and publishes data on the health of our high streets and town centres, making this information available to local leaders, communities and businesses.

Government recognises the impact that Covid-19 has had on business turnover since March. That is why we have provided a comprehensive package of support of £200 billion, including small business grants, business rate reliefs, coronavirus loan schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as deferral of income tax payments.

Further, Government has announced the £50 million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund to support local authorities with rolling out extra measures to support their business communities as they reopen, supporting our businesses and helping to reinvigorate our communities.

In addition to this support, Government has provided protection to businesses through a moratorium on landlords' ability to evict tenants due to the non-payment of rent and restrictions on the servicing of statutory demands and winding-up petitions.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Export Controls

Joanna Cherry:

[\[125256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the longest number of days her Department has taken to make an export licence decision 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:

I refer the Hon. Lady to the answer I gave on 8th December 2020 to Question (UIN: 124773).

■ Export Licences

Joanna Cherry:

[\[125257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proportion of applications for export licences have been declined where the item is being exported to (a) China and (b) a third country where the purchaser is a Chinese registered firm or has been deemed to have links with China, in each quarter of (i) 2018, (ii) 2019 and (iii) 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: gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data

However, the information requested by the Hon. Lady can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Riot Control Weapons: USA

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[124871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether riot gear sold to the US has been used against peaceful protestors.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Honourable Lady to the answer I gave on 23rd November (UIN: 117290).

■ Sonar: Export Controls

Joanna Cherry: [\[125255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the Government's policy is on granting export licences for non-military sonar equipment to (a) China and (b) a third country where the purchaser is a Chinese registered firm.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, last updated in a Written Ministerial Statement on 25th March 2014, sets out the policy framework for assessing all export licence applications.

■ Trade Agreements

Emily Thornberry: [\[122631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many of the countries with whom agreements have not yet been secured to continue with current preferential trading arrangements beyond 31 December 2020 have to date refused to engage in negotiations with her Department.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We will always defend the British national interest, and will not agree deals if they are not right for our country, whatever the deadline. Whilst we have reached mutually beneficial agreements in most cases, we have been unable to do so with some.

As a result, we have confirmed that we do not expect to have agreements in place with Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, by 1st January 2021. They are all valued partners on a range of issues so, if these countries wish to do a deal with us in 2021, they will find a willing partner in the United Kingdom.

The Rt Hon. Lady will know that British exports to these countries together represented 0.1% of our total exports in 2019 – and that much trade with these countries will be unaffected by not having a trade agreement. For example, the large majority of exports from Algeria are zero-tariff hydrocarbons.

JUSTICE**■ Children: Maintenance****Simon Jupp:**[\[125318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Child Maintenance Service cases have been (a) received and (b) overturned by HM Courts & Tribunals Service in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

Information about (a) receipts and (b) outcomes for Child Maintenance Service appeals to the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS) is published at www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics.

The latest period for which data are available is January to March 2020. The most recent tribunal statistics publication covering the period April to June 2020 does not include SSCS data due to issues identified as the Tribunal was being migrated to a new operational system. The data will be made available as soon as this is resolved and the data quality assured.

■ Courts**David Johnston:**[\[909944\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to introduce problem-solving courts.

Chris Philp:

Problem-solving courts, which strengthen the judicial involvement in the oversight of sentences being served in the community, will provide a way to closely manage and rehabilitate those offenders who are frequently both prolific and vulnerable. The MoJ are committed to piloting Problem Solving Courts in up to five locations in the Sentencing White Paper, published 16 September. We will be taking forward the necessary legislative provisions to enable these pilots when Parliamentary time allows.

Pilots, based on international best-practice, will focus on offenders with substance misuse issues, domestic violence offences and female offenders.

The Court Service and Probation Service are closely involved in the design of the pilots, taking into consideration operational resources and the location of the necessary treatment services.

Edward Timpson:[\[909947\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to introduce problem-solving courts.

Chris Philp:

Problem-solving courts, which strengthen the judicial involvement in the oversight of sentences being served in the community, will provide a way to closely manage and rehabilitate those offenders who are frequently both prolific and vulnerable. The MoJ are committed to piloting Problem Solving Courts in up to five locations in the

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The Court Service and Probation Service are closely involved in the design of the pilots, taking into consideration operational resources and the location of the necessary treatment services.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Ethnic Groups

Peter Kyle:

[123644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish updated figures from the Relative Rate Index (RRI) model for the measures specified in the 2016 Ministry of Justice paper entitled Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales.

Alex Chalk:

In February 2020, a report on [Tackling Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice](#) was accompanied by tables which included a 5 year time-series of RRIs up to 2018. The report is the most up to date analysis and links to the biennial [Race and the Criminal Justice System Statistics \(2018\)](#) published in November 2019.

Relative rate indexes (RRIs) are currently being used across a number of Ministry of Justice publications including in the Race in the Criminal Justice System, Youth Justice annual publications and the Judicial Selection and Recommendations for Appointment publications. RRIs allow clear comparisons to identify and understand disparity. A consistent approach across the criminal justice system ensures that the treatment and outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups can be examined in more detail, with a greater degree of analysis in order to understand disparities and direct reforms where they cannot be explained.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Coronavirus

Dr Julian Lewis:

[124641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answers of 2 July 2020 to Questions 65895 on Magistrates' Retirement Ages and Question 65896 on Court Backlogs, what his latest estimate is of the increase in the average time taken to bring cases to trial in magistrates courts; for what reason emergency legislation has not been brought forward to allow experienced magistrates to sit beyond the age of 70 until the backlog of cases has been reduced to an acceptable level; and if he will make it his policy to ensure by introducing primary legislation if necessary that such magistrates are not lost to the justice system on reaching the age of 70.

Chris Philp:

Due to COVID-19, it has not been possible to produce criminal court timeliness estimates for Q1 and Q2 of 2020. However, timeliness estimates for magistrates'

courts are expected to be published later this month as part of the Q3 2020 Criminal Court Statistics.

As a result of the recovery work undertaken, we are listing more summary trials every week than we were prior to the pandemic. Our capacity is not currently limited by the number of magistrates. Every week we are sitting more sessions in the magistrates' courts than in the same period in 2019.

Since August, we have been sitting additional magistrates' courts on a Saturday and have dealt with thousands of cases in the additional court sessions. During this time, magistrates' courts have been consistently completing more cases than they have received and reduced the number of outstanding cases.

The public consultation on proposals to raise the mandatory retirement age for most judicial office holders, including magistrates closed on 16 October and analysis of the 1000 responses from the magistracy, the judiciary, and stakeholders is well underway. The government intends to publish the government response as soon as practicable with a view to legislate for any change required at the earliest opportunity.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Freedom of Information**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[909934\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure the equitable treatment of freedom of information requests by his Department.

Chris Philp:

It is important that freedom of information requests are handled in the correct manner and it is equally important to ensure that there are steps in place to achieve this.

A freedom of information request is a valuable means to obtain information that is not otherwise publicly available and to increase government transparency in line with the legislation.

The MoJ is proudly leading the way across Government on performance handling freedom of information requests. The Department have met the Information Commissioner's Office performance target of responding to at least 90% of FOI requests in time for over thirty-six months consecutively.

■ **Road Traffic Offences: Sentencing**

Scott Mann:

[\[909940\]](#)

What assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing sentences for driving offences.

Chris Philp:

Whilst many deaths and injuries are the result of a tragic accident, too many of these incidents involve criminal behaviour. Every avoidable death is one too many.

The government has committed to bring forward changes to ensure the courts have the powers they need to deal with those drivers who kill by dangerous driving or where they are over the limits for alcohol and drugs.

The Department want to close a loophole in the law that fails to recognise the harm caused where drivers cause serious injury by their careless driving.

■ Shared Ownership: Repossession Orders

Mike Amesbury: [\[123690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many shared ownership properties have been repossessed in the last (a) five and (b) ten years in England.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Animal Products: Northern Ireland

Esther McVey: [\[124177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the use of export health certificates for products of animal origin moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK after the transition period.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has regular discussions with the DEFRA Secretary of State on a wide range of issues relating to implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol. Responsibility for the requirement for and recruitment of veterinary and other technical staff within Northern Ireland, including at points of entry from Great Britain, rests with the Northern Ireland Executive with whom we work closely.

Our commitment to unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods to the rest of the UK remains unequivocal and we have brought forward draft regulations that establish the definition of Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods, ensuring no changes in how Northern Ireland businesses move goods directly to the rest of the UK from 1 January 2021. In addition to this, the UKIM Bill will ensure that qualifying Northern Ireland goods can continue to be placed on the whole UK market, even where the Protocol applies different rules in Northern Ireland - and prohibit checks and controls as goods move from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[\[124794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Police Service Northern Ireland on threats from loyalist paramilitaries to journalists in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government condemns any and all threats made towards journalists, and those linked to the journalistic profession, who play a vital role in our society. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regularly engages with the Police Service of Northern Ireland Chief Constable on a range of security matters.

Paramilitarism is not and has never been justified. The UK Government is committed to working with the Northern Ireland Executive in their work to tackle paramilitarism. Through the Fresh Start Agreement we have, to date, provided £25 million of match funding to the Executive's Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[125317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether officials in his Department have attended discussions on legacy convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government is listening to people from all communities, victims and survivors regarding legacy issues, and is committed to working with civic society, including victims groups, the NI parties and the Irish Government to seek a way forward for everyone.

The Archbishop of Canterbury hosted a seminar at Lambeth Palace in November to discuss a presentation from a team of academics at Queen's University on the legacy of the Troubles. Officials from the Northern Ireland Office attended in a listening capacity. The Northern Ireland Office is often invited to discussions on this important issue. Events hosted by the Archbishop are a matter for Lambeth Palace, and not the Government.

SCOTLAND

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jessica Morden:

[\[909889\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support the steel industry in Scotland.

David Duguid:

We recognise that global economic conditions continue to be challenging for the steel industry.

The UK Government is working with the sector, unions, and devolved administrations to support the UK steel sector, and to develop a long-term viable solution for the industry.

The UK Government has put together an unprecedented package of support to help businesses through the current crisis. We have established the £250 million Clean Steel Fund, which will help UK steel producers to reduce emissions in line with our target to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This is complemented by the £315 million Industrial Energy Transformation Fund to help energy intensive industries, such as steel, transition away from carbon-intensive energy sources.

■ **Coronavirus: Scottish Borders**

John Lamont:

[\[124826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what covid-19 testing sites have been made available in the Scottish Borders since the beginning of the outbreak; and how long those sites have been operational.

Mr Alister Jack:

The UK Government has worked with the Scottish Government to ensure that support is there to significantly increase testing capacity in Scotland to respond to Covid-19 in addition to NHS Scotland's own capacity. This has included funding six drive through centres, 20 mobile testing units, 22 walk in sites and support for mass testing with one million lateral flow test kits so far.

In the Scottish Borders, there has been a Mobile Testing Unit operating in the area since May 2020 where it regularly visits Galashiels and previously Hawick.

■ **Scotland Office: Apprentices**

Robert Halfon:

[\[909881\]](#)

What steps he is taking to increase the number of apprentices in the Scotland Office.

Iain Stewart:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland does not employ staff directly; all staff that join - including apprentices - do so on an assignment, loan, or secondment from other Government bodies.

The Office remains committed to apprenticeships as part of a modern employment route into the Civil Service and across the wider economy.

■ **United Kingdom**

Selaine Saxby:

[\[909884\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to strengthen the Union.

Robbie Moore:

[\[909885\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to strengthen the Union.

Mr Alister Jack:

This Government has always stressed the importance of the Union.

The recent spending review showed this Government's commitment to investing in all parts of the UK, from city and growth deals, to driving the development of innovative technologies across Scotland.

TRANSPORT**■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus****Drew Hendry:**[\[125263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the DVLA on using driving assessment mobility centres for standard driving tests during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is responsible for delivering driving tests.

No discussions have taken place with the DVSA on this issue. In order to be able to conduct driving tests, mobile centre trainers would be required to cease all their instructional activities and meet the requirements of Directive 2006/126/EC, which includes satisfying the various competences and undertaking an initial qualification and examination. There are no current plans to take this kind of action.

■ Electric Vehicles**Fleur Anderson:**[\[125315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he taking to ensure that electric vehicles bought prior to the implementation of regulations on Acoustic Vehicle Alerting Systems will be made compliant with those regulations.

Rachel Maclean:

Requirements to fit sound generators, known as Acoustic Vehicle Alerting Systems (AVAS), on quiet electric and hybrid-electric vehicles will become mandatory for new vehicles being registered from 1 July 2021. These requirements do not apply retrospectively to vehicles already on the road. Manufacturers may optionally choose to install AVAS in vehicles ahead of this date, and some have chosen to do so.

■ Railways: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[125292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to make available additional covid-19 testing capacity for rail workers from 23 to 27 December 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I am committed to ensuring that every transport worker who requires testing has access. My officials are working closely with stakeholders and the DHSC to ensure

that a robust testing process is in place for transport workers over the Christmas period and beyond. On the 3rd December, the Secretary of State announced that he is putting in place a number of different measures to help manage the demands of the Christmas travel period. These measures include pilots for lateral flow testing for transport workers to ensure that key transport workers are available and healthy to work.

■ **Railways: Devon**

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[125241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2020 to Question 120953 on Network Rail: Finance, what his policy is on funding the Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth rail resilience project.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth resilience project is within the portfolio of rail enhancement schemes and we will manage its progression within that portfolio balancing the needs of taxpayers and passengers.

■ **Railways: Fares**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[125296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date in 2021 the annual rise in rail fares is planned to come into effect.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is considering plans for regulated rail fares and further details will be communicated soon. This year the industry, commuters and society are all facing unusual pressures due to the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Taxpayers have been very generous in their support to keep trains running throughout the pandemic, and it is only fair that passengers also contribute to maintaining and improving the services they use. Any fares rise will help fund crucial investment in maintaining railway services to enable social distancing and support our economic recovery.

These are unprecedented times and our immediate focus must be on ensuring that we keep the railway available and safe for those who need to rely upon it.

■ **Railways: Franchises**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether equalities targets are included in railway franchise agreements between train operating companies and his Department.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to include equalities targets in future direct award agreements between train operating companies and his Department.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether equalities targets are included in (i) Emergency Measures Agreements and (ii) Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements between train operating companies and his Department.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Regardless of the type of contract they have, the Department expects that train operating companies will undertake the diversity impact assessments required through their current contracts and comply with all other diversity requirements.

As the Emergency Measures Agreements (EMAs) were prepared as a short-term measure to keep the railways running at a time of national emergency they did not include specific equalities targets. The EMAs are all published on Gov.UK.

Following the expiry of EMAs, the government introduced Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) in September 2020. I can confirm that each ERMA contains an obligation on the operator to prepare, submit and agree with the Secretary of State a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which must include key performance indicators relating to diversity. Performance against these indicators will be carefully monitored. Full details are contained in the ERMAs themselves, which will be published as soon as practicable.

For future direct agreements we are currently reviewing the equality, diversity and inclusion requirements.

■ Railways: Tickets

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[125294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with rail operators on the use of mobile train tickets.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[125295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of mobile tickets.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Tickets held on mobile phones are convenient for passengers to obtain and use. They can be bought at short notice and there's no need to queue at stations.

My department continues to explore opportunities to expand acceptance of mobile ticketing where not already accepted. We have encouraged operators to use and promote mobile ticketing widely, including agreeing targets with operators to increase smart ticketing usage.

■ Railways: West Midlands

Stuart Anderson:

[\[123693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to increase the (a) line speed and (b) services on the Birmingham-Black County-Shrewsbury route.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is working with local stakeholders such as Midlands Connect to consider the suitability of options to reduce rail journey times on the section of line between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury.

Since the pandemic began West Midlands Trains has been operating one train per hour between Birmingham and Shrewsbury, with extra services at peak times, alongside the hourly Transport for Wales service. My officials are working with West Midlands Trains, Network Rail and the West Midlands Rail Executive to assess options for the best future service pattern to balance frequency, capacity and reliability for the route given the uncertainty in passenger demand caused by the pandemic.

In addition, Avanti West Coast provides a direct peak time return service from Shrewsbury and Telford to London via Birmingham.

Roads: Freight**Alan Brown:**[\[125270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of European Conference of Ministers of Transport international road haulage permits that will be required for the movement of goods into the EU from 1 January 2021; and how many have been (a) applied for and (b) issued.

Rachel Maclean:

European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) permits may be used to cover any gaps in market access for international road haulage after the transition period ends: exact requirements will depend on the outcome of negotiations with the European Commission.

An application window closed on 20 November 2020 during which a total of 10,059 applications for ECMT permits were received. We will take account of the latest negotiations on market access before allocating ECMT permits. No permits have yet been issued.

Alan Brown:[\[125271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of trailer registration permits that will be required for the movement of goods into the EU from 1 January 2021; and how many such permits have been (a) applied for and (b) issued to date.

Rachel Maclean:

Following the UK's ratification of the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic, the UK introduced a trailer registration scheme in February 2019. To date, around 21,000 trailers have been registered on the scheme.

Trailer owners who wish to register their trailer can do so on gov.uk and will be charged a fee of £26. There is no limit to the number of trailers that can be registered on the scheme.

TREASURY■ **Agriculture: Wales****Ben Lake:**[\[123674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he had with the Welsh Government on Welsh farm payments prior to the 2020 Spending Review.

Steve Barclay:

There has been significant engagement with the Welsh Government at ministerial and official level ahead of the 2020 Spending Review, including on the topic of farm payments.

At Spending Review 2020, the government provided £240 million of Exchequer funding for Welsh farmers, land managers and the rural economy for 2021/22. This meets the government's manifesto commitment to maintain the current annual budget to farmers, ensuring that Welsh farmers will receive the same total funding in 2021/22 as they received in 2019 when the manifesto commitment was made.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[123572\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to undertake his review of alcohol duty.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government launched its call for evidence on 1 October as the first stage of the review. You can access the call for evidence here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-duty-review-call-for-evidence>.

The deadline for the call for evidence was 29 November. The Treasury is now in the process of analysing responses.

■ **Beer: Excise Duties****Elliot Colburn:**[\[123713\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish a summary of the evidence provided by brewers to the 2019 consultation as part of the review of Small Brewers' Relief.

Kemi Badenoch:

The consultation document for the review of Small Brewers Relief will be published later this year.

■ **Beer: Small Businesses****Elliot Colburn:**[\[123714\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many small breweries there are at each of the following levels of production in hectolitres (a) 0-1000, (b) 1001-2000, (c) 2001-3000,

(d) 3001-4000, (e) 4001-5000, (f) 5001-6000, (g) 6001-7000, (h) 7001-8000, (i) 8001-9000, (j) 9001-10,000 and (k) above 10,000.

Kemi Badenoch:

Information on the levels of small brewery production is due to be published within the technical consultation on Small Brewers Relief later this year.

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Helen Hayes:

[\[123651\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

Jesse Norman:

In delivering these schemes, the Government had to prioritise helping the greatest number of people as quickly as possible.

As of 15 November 2020, the CJRS had helped 1.2 million employers across the UK furlough 9.6 million jobs, protecting people's livelihoods at a total value of £43bn.

By midnight on 19 July, the first SEISS grant had helped 2.7 million self-employed people across the UK, who had claimed £7.5 billion. By midnight 20 September, 2.2 million people had claimed the second SEISS grant with the value of these claims reaching £5.6 billion.

The Chancellor has acknowledged that the Government has not been able to support everyone as they would want.

Those not eligible for the CJRS or SEISS may have access to other elements of the package of financial support available, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

Universal Credit is a benefit that provides a safety net for low income households. It therefore assesses total household income, including partner earnings and household savings, in order to ensure support is targeted at those families most in need, who do not have access to additional financial assistance.

It is not possible to determine the precise number of people ineligible for Universal Credit, as eligibility is dependent on many different factors, including household size, housing costs, and level of earnings and savings. These factors are reported and assessed when an individual makes a claim for Universal Credit.

■ **Hospitality Industry: VAT**

Carla Lockhart:

[\[123734\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in VAT for the hospitality industry to 5 per cent on the viability of that sector.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT (five per cent) was introduced 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. This relief comes at an estimated cost of £2.54 billion and is therefore expected to have benefited the sector by reducing its VAT liabilities by this amount.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[125252\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of households that have fallen into arrears with their mortgage provider in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to supporting borrowers that have fallen into payment difficulty as a result of Covid-19, and that is why we have introduced a package of support including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. We have also introduced mortgage payment holidays to give borrowers time to get back on their feet. Alongside payment holidays, we have confirmed the lender ban on repossessions until 31 January 2021, meaning no one will lose their home during this uncertain period.

HM Treasury does not hold arrears data at regional or constituency level, however, Bank of England data released on 8 December confirms that the proportion of total loan balances with arrears was broadly unchanged at 0.90% across the UK. Any borrowers worried about being able to pay their mortgage should get in touch with their lender to discuss their options.

■ Offshore Industry: Coronavirus**Mary Glendon:**[\[123594\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total value of covid-19 related grants and payments is from the public purse to duty holders in the UK sector of the offshore oil and gas industry, broken down by support for (a) revenue streams, (b) capital investment and (c) employment costs.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government does not publish the level of data requested in order to prevent the release of potentially disclosive information.

The Government is closely monitoring the impacts of the pandemic and period of low oil prices on the upstream oil and gas industry and continues to engage closely with a range of stakeholders from the sector.

Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods, and support businesses and public services across the UK. The Government has spent over £280 billion to do so this year.

Covid-19 related grants and payments available to businesses and individuals across the country include the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Further grants to help businesses include the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to local authorities in England.

■ Public Expenditure: East Midlands

Alex Norris: [\[125297\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the benefits for the East Midlands of the Spending Review 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

We are committed to levelling up opportunities across the UK, including in the East Midlands. At the Spending Review, we announced that the East Midlands would benefit from; £90m for flood defences in Skegness, Tattershall and Boston to better protect over 17,000 properties; Over £500m investment to upgrade the A46 Newark Bypass and A38 at Derby, and over £75m in Leicester, Derby and Nottingham in 21/22 to improve public transport, boost connectivity and reduce congestion through the Transforming Cities Fund.

■ Recycling

Alexander Stafford: [\[123736\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the development of a circular economy through the national infrastructure strategy.

Kemi Badenoch:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave on 04/12/2020 to PQ UIN 43550.

■ Renewable Energy: Finance

Ian Mearns: [\[125225\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's policy paper, National Infrastructure Strategy, published on 25 November 2020, when he plans to consult on the introduction of more stringent supply chain plan requirements in the Contract for Difference process.

Jesse Norman:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) published a consultation on the introduction of more stringent supply chain plan requirements, including a consequence for the non-delivery of Supply Chain Plan commitments, on 24 November. This consultation will close on 18 January 2021.

BEIS intend to consult separately on the proposed Supply Chain Plan Questionnaire in early 2021.

■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[125316\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what VAT rate he plans to apply to reusable menstrual products in January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

At Spring Budget on 11 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that a zero rate of VAT will apply to women's sanitary products from 1 January 2021, at the end of the transition period. This will apply to those products which are currently subject to the reduced rate of five per cent, for example, tampons and pads, and to reusable menstrual products, such as keepers.

WALES

■ Wales Office: Electric Vehicles

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[124850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what proportion of the vehicles used by his Department on Government business are electric vehicles.

David T C Davies:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales does not operate or own any vehicles.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Children: Maintenance

Drew Hendry:

[\[125264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the response timeframe for Child Maintenance Service complaints.

Guy Opperman:

Complaints received about the Child Maintenance Service are handled in line with the overall Departmental complaints process published on Gov.uk. We aim to contact customers within 15 working days to clear the complaint or agree how to investigate it if it will take longer.

As part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to make changes to our complaints model to allow staff to be deployed to support processing claims and payments. From 9 July 2020, DWP now triage complaints giving priority to vulnerable customers who may be at risk, and those with benefit payment issues.

We continue to look into all complaints as quickly as we can and, as part of the triage process used to determine lower priority, we write to those customers explaining there may be a delay in answering their complaint.

We plan to review the effectiveness of the approach we have taken throughout the pandemic as part of an ongoing review into complaints handling.

■ Disability Premium

Apsana Begum: [\[124879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has of the number of claimants whose disability premium on their employment support allowance has ceased to as a result of an automatic extension of a personal independence payment award has not been communicated to employment support allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

The specific information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

We are aware of the impact that extending PIP award end dates has had on the Severe Disability Premiums of a number of ESA claimants, between April and July 2020. Work is being undertaken to correct this issue and an alternative procedure has been put in place.

■ Social Security Benefits: Veterans

Jon Trickett: [\[123525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the findings of the Royal British Legion in its report entitled Making the benefits system fit for service, improving support for veterans with military compensation, published in November 2020, that 8 per cent of survey respondents claiming personal independence payments and 6 per cent claiming employment support allowance felt that the assessor had knowledge of the Armed Forces and Service-related conditions.

Will Quince:

We are currently giving this report the careful consideration it deserves. However, our early analysis finds some of the themes highlighted in the report – such as, effectively identifying veterans; making best use of data and evidence; and improving staff awareness and training - are areas where DWP has already taken action to improve the service we offer to veterans, or have future plans to do so. For example, where possible the healthcare professionals undertaking assessments will use paper based evidence alone, this will include Service Medical Board reports, where available.

For Personal Independence Payment, assessors have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder guidance which was developed with the help of the Royal British Legion.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Ian Blackford: [\[125254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will overturn benefit reductions taken from some universal credit recipients whose payments have been

adversely affected by receiving a small grant from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme which covers individual months but due to being paid quarterly has resulted in recipients losing money.

Will Quince:

SEISS payments are treated as self-employed earnings for Universal Credit, which are taken into account in the month that they are received. We will not therefore readjust previous months' awards.

■ **Work Capability Assessment**

Steve McCabe:

[\[123514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many paper-based work capability assessments were carried out from April 2019 to March 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

There were 295,000 paper-based Work Capability Assessments carried out from April 2019 to March 2020.

All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 100.

All of the above data is derived from internal departmental management information.

Please note: the above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication standards.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS634\]](#)

My Right Honourable friend Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Climate Change and Corporate Responsibility (Lord Callanan) has today made the following statement:

The Government has today published three further consultations to take forward its plans to reform the UK's register of company information and give businesses greater confidence in who they are doing business with.

These consultations follow the Government's response to the 2019 consultation to enhance the role of Companies House and increase the transparency of companies and other legal entities, which was published on 18 September 2020.

The key proposals of the consultations are:

- **Querying power consultation:** Companies House will have new powers to query information, which will be exercised on a risk-based approach. The consultation also explores how its powers will be strengthened in a range of areas, including to close various loopholes and remove information from the companies register.
- **Accounts filing consultation:** This consultation invites views on how companies might in future be able to file accounts once with government, instead of providing separate filings to Companies House, HMRC and other agencies. We are also reviewing the way small companies submit accounts to get the balance right between minimising burdens whilst ensuring the information provided is actually informative. We are also proposing to require all companies to file accounts to Companies House in digital formats, and to give Companies House more powers to check information in those accounts.
- **Corporate directors' consultation:** To tackle opaque corporate structures, we propose that corporate directors will be prohibited unless their own boards comprise all natural persons, and those natural persons have their identities verified.

These consultations are another important step in the developing the detail of our package of reforms and will have a negligible impact on the speed at which incorporation and other filings are completed: we still expect the vast majority of companies to be able to incorporate easily within 24 hours.

A copy of the consultations will be deposited in the libraries of the House.

EDUCATION

■ Further Update on the Lifetime Skills Guarantee

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[[HCWS632](#)]

In his announcement about the Lifetime Skills Guarantee in September, the Prime Minister set out his vision to transform the training and skills system for the 21st century economy and help the country to build back better from the coronavirus pandemic. As a country, and as a government, we believe passionately that everyone should be helped to reach their potential, and that opportunities to do so, across a lifetime, must be increased. Today I am pleased to be able to update both Houses on key steps we are taking to deliver the Lifetime Skills Guarantee through a major extension to the Level 3 entitlement for adults, which will be funded from the National Skills Fund.

Now more than ever we need to ensure adults can upskill and retrain, to support the immediate economic recovery and to boost the nation's skills with the expertise employers need, which is a key part of the Government's Plan for Jobs. It is also vital that we deliver for the large number of adults who do not go straight from school to university.

The National Skills Fund is a long term, substantial investment of £2.5bn (£3bn including devolved administrations) which will drive adult retraining and support our ambitious agenda for reform to Further Education. It is essential that adults reap the benefits of our reform through a skills system that meets their needs along with the needs of employers across the nation.

Starting from April 2021 any adult looking to achieve their first full Level 3 (which is equivalent to a technical certificate or diploma, or two full A levels) will be able to access a fully funded course. This will give them new skills and greater prospects in the labour market. We will ensure that, if they choose to study a short course this will not prevent them from taking a further course. We plan to spend £95 million on this important new commitment in year one. This will include a funding uplift for qualifications included in this offer, to support providers to scale up their level 3 provision for adults and meet the needs of learners as we build back better from the pandemic.

It is important that this is a truly national offer, and we must ensure that all learners can access this valuable training regardless of where they live. We are working closely with providers and local areas, including the Mayoral Combined Authorities and Greater London Authority, to ensure this national offer is delivered effectively across the nation and that funding is targeted at valuable subjects that are a key priority for the nation.

We have identified a range of qualifications that will meet current and future skills needs across the nation, and have engaged with business representatives, local areas and education and training providers on the development of the qualifications list. We have focused on provision that ensures good returns for individuals, employers and the economy, as well as those most critical skill areas.

We will keep the course list under regular review to ensure it adapts to the changing needs of the economy. Adults accessing this new level 3 adult offer can do so in the confidence that they will be gaining skills that are valued by employers and will help them

secure a better job that may have previously been out of reach. There will be a facility for Awarding Organisations and local areas to suggest additions to the list.

The courses on offer will deliver a wide range of skills that will open the door to many jobs and sectors. Qualifications in these sector subject areas will help individuals access new jobs and, in many cases, earn higher wages too. From April we will be offering access to qualifications to support the following areas:

- Engineering
- Building and Construction
- Manufacturing Technologies
- Transportation Operations and Maintenance
- Business Management
- Public Services
- Accounting and Finance
- Medicine and Dentistry
- Horticulture and Forestry
- Health and Social Care
- ICT Practitioners
- ICT for Users
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Science
- Agriculture
- Nursing and Vocations and Subjects Allied to Medicine
- Child Development and Wellbeing
- Environmental conservation
- Teaching and lecturing
- Warehousing and distribution

We will continue to build on our wider plans for adult skills and I will update the House on our progress in due course. In the meantime, we will continue to engage closely with stakeholders as we progress and develop detailed plans for the National Skills Fund, including our consultation planned for spring next year.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ High Streets Update**

**Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
(Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS633\]](#)

I have today laid a statutory instrument that will extend the moratorium on commercial landlords' right to forfeit a lease due to the non-payment of rent until 31 March 2021.

This will also automatically amend the Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery measures led by the Ministry of Justice, through which landlords can seize goods in lieu of unpaid rent. To ensure alignment between this measure and the moratorium, from the next quarter date on 25 December the total number of days' outstanding rent required for this tool to be used will be increased to 366 days, and this will be in place until 31 March.

Accompanying restrictions on the service of statutory demands and winding-up petitions, currently in place until 31 December, are also being extended until 31 March 2021. This means formal demands for the repayment of debt and requests to the courts to liquidate a businesses owing rent, cannot be made until after the final moratorium comes to an end.

The moratorium was established via Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and was due to expire on 31 December 2020. It has now been extended for a final time by three months and will expire on 31 March 2021.

The objective of this extension is to protect businesses unable to pay their full rent from eviction until March 2021, taking the length of these measures to one year. This will give them time to start to recover from the impact of the pandemic, plan for the future and protect jobs. The Government has brought forward this measure to support the businesses struggling the most during the pandemic, such as those in hospitality. We are clear that those able to pay their rent, must do so.

We recognise the impact that this extension has on landlords and lenders, therefore Government is being clear that this is the final extension to this temporary measure. We expect both sides of the sector to use this time to negotiate and the Government will issue further guidance to facilitate constructive discussions.

We are aware of concerns that some tenants who could pay rent are refusing to do so. The Government is clear that this measure is not a rent holiday: where a tenant is unable to pay in full, landlords and tenants should be coming together to negotiate in good faith, using the principles set out in the voluntary Code of Practice we published in June. This recommends that those tenants who can pay in full should do so, those who cannot should pay what they can and those landlords who are able to grant concessions should do so. This Code of Practice and approach was supported by a wide range of sector bodies representing tenants and landlords.

While we have seen many constructive discussions happening between landlords and tenants, I am aware there are growing concerns that the current commercial leasehold legislation has not kept pace with the commercial realities of the sector.

I am therefore also announcing we will be launching a review of the commercial landlord and tenant relationship in the new year. The review will make recommendations to Government on how to ensure a flexible and fit-for-purpose legislative framework that enables sustainable occupation of thriving high streets/town centres in the future. It will consider a broad range of issues including the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 Part II, different models of rent payment, and the impact of Coronavirus on the market; for example if we can improve the experience of UK businesses by ensuring that foreign based landlords have an agent operating in the UK. Both landlords and tenants have previously called for such a review and I will make further announcements on the detail, including a timeline and full scope, in due course.

England, Northern Ireland and Wales are covered by the protection from forfeiture in the Coronavirus Act. Section 82 relates to England and Wales, and the Welsh Government are currently considering an extension to their equivalent moratorium. Section 83 relates to Northern Ireland, who are also considering a similar extension. The Scottish Government passed separate emergency legislation to implement similar measures.