

**Daily Report****Tuesday, 15 December 2020**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:46 P.M., 15 December 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Food: Advertising

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[125949\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the legal basis to extending the scope of the public consultation for an online advertising ban of foods high in fat, salt or sugar to communication and marketing restrictions to brands' and companies' own websites and social media channels.

Michael Ellis:

This policy is led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC).

The Law Officers regularly meet ministerial colleagues to discuss important issues of common interest.

However, it is a fundamental and longstanding principle of our system of government that the fact that the Law Officers have advised (or not advised) and the content of any such advice is, by convention, not disclosed outside Government, without their consent.

John Stevenson:

[\[126832\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what input she has had in the policy-making process for the public consultation on the online advertising ban on foods high in fat, salt or sugar; and whether she has made an assessment of the legal implications of introducing proposals to restrict the commercial and marketing activities of large and small companies.

Michael Ellis:

Reducing obesity levels is a key priority for this Government and our ambition is to halve childhood obesity by 2030. That is why in the Tackling Obesity strategy, published in July, restrictions to advertising of foods high in fat, salt or sugar were announced.

This policy is led by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Health & Social Care (DHSC), and they are now consulting on how a total online advertising restriction would be introduced. This consultation is ongoing and will close on 22 December 2020.

The Law Officers regularly meet ministerial colleagues to discuss important issues of common interest.

However, it is a fundamental and longstanding principle of our system of government that the fact that the Law Officers have advised (or not advised) and the content of any such advice is, by convention, not disclosed outside Government, without their consent.

■ Immigration: Prosecutions

Stuart C McDonald: [\[128182\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many prosecutions there have been under section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 in each of the last 10 years; and how many of those prosecutions related to having control of a vessel on the sea.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[128183\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether she has issued guidance, advice and instructions to Crown prosecution lawyers on prosecutions under section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 in the last 18 months; and if she will make a statement.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[128184\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what representations (a) her Department and (b) the CPS has received from the Home Office on prosecutions under section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 in the last 18 months.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) maintains a central record of the number of offences in which a prosecution commenced, including the offences charged by way of the Immigration Act 1971.

During the last 10 years, up to the end of March 2020, the number of offences charged by way of section 25 of the Immigration Act 1971 is as follows:

	IMMIGRATION ACT 1971 { 25(1) }	IMMIGRATION ACT 1971 { 25(2) }	IMMIGRATION ACT 1971 { 25(A)(1) }	IMMIGRATION ACT 1971 { 25(B)(1) }
2010-2011	397	4	3	5
2011-2012	390	0	6	1
2012-2013	430	0	13	2
2013-2014	311	0	2	0
2014-2015	382	0	0	1
2015-2016	321	0	13	0
2016-2017	440	0	4	0
2017-2018	330	1	14	0
2018-2019	295	0	8	1
2019-2020	273	0	1	0

Data Source: CPS Case Management Information System

There is no indication of the number of individual defendants prosecuted for these offences or the final outcome of the prosecution proceeding or if the charged offence was the substantive charge at the time of finalisation. It is often the case that defendants will be prosecuted for more than one offence in the same set of proceedings.

It is not possible to separately report whether any offences involved the use or control of a vessel at sea other than by manually examining case files at disproportionate cost.

The Law Officers have not issued any guidance, advice or instructions to Crown Prosecution Service lawyers on prosecutions under section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 in the last 18 months. However, the CPS has clear and published policy guidance on the prosecution of immigration offences, which reflects the Memorandum of Understanding agreed between the CPS and Home Office Immigration Enforcement in 2016. This establishes the agreed approach and public interest factors which prosecutors must consider when reviewing immigration cases. No further recent guidance has been issued to Crown Prosecutors on section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Neither the Attorney General's Office nor the CPS have received representations from the Home Office on prosecutions under section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 in the last 18 months. The joint approach between the CPS and Immigration Enforcement is to consider prosecution under section 25(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 for anyone who has been involved in organising and planning the offences.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Arcadia Group: Insolvency**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[126158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will undertake an inquiry into the collapse of Arcadia.

Paul Scully:

The administrators of Arcadia have three months from the date of administration to make a report on the conduct of the directors to the Insolvency Service. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the Insolvency Service on 1 December asking it to review this report as soon as it is received. The Insolvency Service will do so and consider what further steps may be necessary.

■ **Carbon Emissions**

David Johnston:

[\[910324\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

My Rt hon Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will turbo-charge our path to net zero with £12 billion of government investment.

Yesterday, we published our ambitious Energy White Paper, and will publish further plans to decarbonise key sectors of the economy ahead of COP26, including our Net Zero Strategy.

■ **Climate Change****Helen Hayes:**[\[128212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and (b) local authority leaders on support for councils' programmes for tackling climate change and improving climate resilience.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As COP President, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State is co-Chair of the COP26 UK Mayors and Regions Advisory Council. The role of the council is to engage with mayors and local leaders across the UK and work with them to engage communities so that COP is truly representative of the whole country.

Since 2017, BEIS has funded five regional Energy Hubs across England. The Hubs work with LEPs and local authorities in their region to help them to identify a pipeline of low carbon projects and provide practical support for the initial stages of project development.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme****Jamie Stone:**[\[126195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure compliance with the guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for employees eligible for that scheme who have been refused furlough by their employer.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been designed to be a comprehensive, flexible and generous support for jobs and incomes. The guidance clearly sets out who is eligible for the scheme, and the Government encourages all businesses experiencing a reduction in business demand due to COVID make use of the scheme to protect jobs. Whether to place employees on the CJRS remains a business decision to be made by employers.

Should businesses opt against placing employees on the CJRS, it should be noted that employees retain all their usual employment rights

Nick Smith:[\[910322\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of ending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on levels of employment.

Amanda Solloway:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has safeguarded 9.6m jobs to date and will be reviewed in January. The Government is also supporting the recovery of the economy by focussing on job creation initiatives like Kickstart and Restart. The public health situation continues to evolve and we will continue to take the necessary steps to protect jobs and businesses.

Coronavirus: Disease Control**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[126143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with pre-existing health conditions living in an area under Tier (a) One and (b) Two covid-19 restrictions do not have to go to a workplace environment that is not covid-secure.

Paul Scully:

The Government has provided employers with comprehensive [guidance](#) on safer working which complements the Department of Health and Social Care's [guidance](#) to clinically extremely vulnerable people. The safer working guidance is clear that employers must be mindful of their responsibilities. We highlight that failure to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and put in place sufficient control measures to manage the risk may be considered a breach of health and safety law. Any issues identified by a worker can be escalated according to the steps in the guidance.

Employment: Coronavirus**Jamie Stone:**[\[126194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is able to take in response to reports of eligible employees being refused furlough by their employers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has been designed to be a comprehensive, flexible and generous support for jobs and incomes. The guidance clearly sets out who is eligible for the scheme, and the Government encourages all businesses experiencing a reduction in business demand due to COVID make use of the scheme to protect jobs. Whether to place employees on the CJRS remains a business decision to be made by employers. When employers make decisions about which staff to furlough, equality and discrimination laws apply in the usual way.

Energy: Housing**Sarah Olney:**[\[128222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Exchequer Secretary to the Environmental Audit Committee of 2 December 2020, on what calculations she based her assessment that it would cost only

£3,000 on average to raise each existing English home to an Energy Performance Certificate Band C rating.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is currently consulting on proposals to raise the energy performance standard to EPC Band C for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in England and Wales. This is proposed as a phased trajectory for achieving the improvements, applying to new tenancies only from 2025 and all tenancies from 2028. The consultation proposes a cost cap of £10,000, requiring landlords to spend up to this amount to improve their properties.

Under this cap, the average cost per household for all properties treated under these regulations is £4,700. This includes properties that do not meet the required standard, and is specific to the PRS. Spend towards this cap, to comply with these regulations, can only be counted from 2023. The Green Homes Grant provides vouchers to homeowners in England to cover two thirds of eligible energy efficiency improvements, up to a total government contribution of £5,000. Landlords are eligible to apply for funding through the Green Homes Grant, however this would not count towards the £10,000 cost cap as the scheme ends before 2023.

The £3,000 figure relates to the contribution the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme can make towards a property that requires, on average, the same level of energy efficiency work as those under the PRS analysis above.

■ **Facebook: Competition Law**

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[128115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has he made of the implications for his Department's policy of the antitrust charges brought against Facebook by the Federal Trade Commission.

Paul Scully:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is the independent non-Ministerial department responsible for investigating competition issues in the UK. The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers to investigate and act if it finds that companies are behaving anti-competitively in a market.

In July 2020, the CMA published the final report of its market study into online platforms and digital advertising. In the recent response to the market study, the Government agreed with the CMA's findings that Google and Facebook are dominant in the search and social media markets and that this is leading to higher prices for goods and services, less innovation and less choice for consumers.

The Government also announced the intention to establish and fund a Digital Markets Unit (DMU) within the CMA from April 2021, to create a new pro-competition regime for digital markets. A consultation on the DMU will be published in early 2021 and the Government will legislate to put it on a statutory footing as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Karen Bradley:

[\[128161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional financial support for the hospitality sector in areas under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

Paul Scully:

We are providing hospitality sector in Tier 3 with a wide package of support. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, government-backed loans, Local Restrictions Support Grants and additional funding provided to Local Authorities to support businesses. On 1 December, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs' in tiers 2 and 3.

■ Hydrogen: Garages and Petrol Stations

Alexander Stafford:

[\[126184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support the installation of hydrogen refuelling points on garage forecourts in the UK.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government's £23m Hydrogen for Transport Programme is increasing the uptake of fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs) and growing the number of publicly accessible hydrogen refuelling stations. The programme is delivering new refuelling stations, upgrading some existing stations as well as deploying hundreds of new hydrogen vehicles. Government has also been supporting public and private sector fleets to become early adopters through the £2m FCEV Fleet Support Scheme.

■ Public Houses: Wakefield

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[126167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many pubs in Wakefield constituency are classified as wet pubs and are eligible for the Government's £1,000 Christmas grant for pubs located in Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas of covid-19 restrictions as a result of that classification.

Paul Scully:

Officials are working closely with local authorities to establish the number of wet-led pubs in each area that are in scope for the Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs.

Full guidance to local authorities will be issued shortly setting out the process local authorities must undertake to enable eligible pubs to apply for the payment.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Jon Trickett:

[\[910327\]](#)

What recent progress his Department has made on the Government's levelling-up agenda.

Amanda Solloway:

We have a clear commitment to level up all areas of the country. The recent announcement of our 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution to support green jobs, and a forthcoming Industrial Strategy refresh, are a critical part of this.

■ Renewable Energy: Urban Areas

Helen Hayes:

[\[128213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support projects which produce renewable energy in densely populated urban centres.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The five regional energy hubs in England are supporting the development of low carbon and renewable energy projects at the local level, including those within our towns and cities.

Heat networks, in particular, are best suited to an urban setting.

Heat networks are the only way we can exploit larger-scale renewable and recovered heat sources (like the latent heat from large rivers and urban recovered heat - such as from the London Underground). The Department's Heat Network Investment Project (HNIP) is investing £320m up to April 2022 to support the construction of heat networks and accelerate the growth of the market. We expect around £1bn of private and other investment to be leveraged by HNIP.

In the March Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced additional £270m of funding for the creation of the Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF). The GHNF is intended to be a targeted successor to BEIS' Heat Network Investment Project, and to run to 2025, and we believe it will be a significant source of funding for projects in urban areas looking to make use of renewable energy sources. A full public consultation was launched on 30 November, to run until 29 January 2021.

■ Sanitary Protection: Safety

Hywel Williams:

[\[128088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December to Question 122583, whether the current Product Safety Framework adequately protects the health of those who use menstrual products.

Hywel Williams:

[\[128089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December to Question 122583, what discussions he has had with the Office for Product Safety and Standards as part of the review of the Product Safety Framework on the adequacy of protections in place for those who use menstrual products.

Paul Scully:

The UK has one of the most robust product safety systems in the world and only safe products, including safe menstrual products, may be placed on the market. The safety of sanitary products is regulated by the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR).

These regulations are within scope of the review of the Product Safety Framework which is being carried out by the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

This work will ensure that the UK product safety framework continues to be fit for purpose and adequately protects consumers so that our product safety system remains one of the best in the world.

■ **Shops: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon:

[\[126036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support shops that closed as a result of lockdown and have not yet been able to reopen.

Paul Scully:

In order to support businesses across the UK, we have extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of March 2021, extended the existing loan schemes and Future Fund to the end of January 2021, with an ability to top-up bounce back loans, and increased the support available to the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[126149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic benefit of exempting certain business travellers from self-isolation after travel from countries outside England's travel corridors.

Paul Scully:

This exemption facilitates a limited amount of business activity where the individual has a reasonable belief that the activity would be more likely than not to create or preserve 50 UK jobs or provide equivalent value.

■ Utilities: Ownership

Derek Thomas: [\[126092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of utility companies adopting a household ownership model similar to South West Water's WaterShare+ scheme.

Paul Scully:

The WaterShare+ scheme is model in which customers can choose whether to have their share of the outperformance payment as either a credit on their water bill or shares in Pennon Group plc, SWW's parent company.

We welcome companies supporting customers in different ways. In addition to South West Water's WaterShare+, some water companies make a financial contribution to their social tariff schemes and others have established charitable trusts.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Consumer Goods: Safety**

Stephen Farry: [\[126183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure UK access to warnings from the EU Safety Gate site with respect to goods placed on the market in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) Great Britain.

Penny Mordaunt:

Alerts under the EU Safety Gate system are publicly available, the UK will continue to monitor and assess relevant public notifications.

■ Government Departments: Databases

Chi Onwurah: [\[128167\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Information Gateways are in operation across the Government; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Julia Lopez:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Honours

Daisy Cooper: [\[128283\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2020 to Question 123698, whilst individuals are not required to give a reason for refusing honours, how many of those who refused and did give a reason cited either (a) anti-imperialism or (b) an unwillingness to be associated with the former British empire in the last five years.

Chloe Smith:

Nominees' reasons, if any, for declining an award are given in confidence and the Government does not comment on the reasons given.

■ Prime Minister: Electric Vehicles**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[124844\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of the vehicles used by the Prime Minister's office on Government business are electric vehicles.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[124846\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of the vehicles used by his Department on Government business are electric vehicles.

Julia Lopez:

Further to the answer given to PQ [112105](#), the Cabinet Office uses vehicles from the Government Car Service, alongside other providers.

The Government Car Service is already electrifying its vehicles, with nearly 50% of their fleet either full battery electric or plug-in hybrid.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan and Iraq: Reserve Forces****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[R\] \[128045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Royal Naval and (b) Royal Marines Reservists have served on operations in (i) Afghanistan and (ii) Iraq for each year for which figures are available; what recent estimate his Department has made of the added value to each campaign of such service; what specialist skills Reservists have brought to those campaigns from their full-time civilian careers; what assessment he has made of how such skills would have been made available in the absence of volunteer Reservists; and what estimate he has made of the effect on the morale of volunteer Reservists of standing them down for a protracted period.

James Heappey:

Since 2006, 95 Royal Naval Reservists (RNR) and seven Royal Marine Reservists (RMR) have served on operations in Iraq and since 2005, 180 RNR and 330 RMR have served on operations in Afghanistan.

As you know, Reservists bring valuable skills from their civilian employment and their contribution to operations is fully understood and appreciated. This year, Maritime Reserves have used their civilian skills on numerous occasions as part of the Defence contribution to the UK's Government COVID-19 campaign, providing niche expertise, including pandemic statistical modelling, chemistry and pharmaceutical expertise, communications, logistics supply and contract management.

The temporary cessation of some in-year Maritimes Reserves activity may result in disappointment for individual Reservists during the short period that it remains in force, but the current measure will not impact on any Royal Navy operational tasking. Activity undertaken by those on FTRS or Additional Duties Commitments will continue as normal; as will some Transformation projects that are deemed critical to meeting future Royal Navy and Defence outputs.

■ **Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[127693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that British armed forces personnel residing in the UK receive a covid-19 vaccine as quickly as possible.

James Heappey:

Defence is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and other Government Departments to ensure that Armed Forces personnel residing in the UK receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the earliest practicable opportunity. Defence is being guided by JCVI guidance, ensuring individuals most at risk from complications of COVID-19 are being offered the vaccine first.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[127694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that British armed forces personnel serving overseas will receive a covid-19 vaccination as quickly as possible.

James Heappey:

Defence is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other Government Departments to ensure that Armed Forces personnel serving overseas receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the earliest practicable opportunity. Defence is being guided by JCVI guidance, ensuring individuals most at risk from complications of COVID-19 are being offered the vaccine first.

■ **Armed Forces: Finance**

Stephen Morgan: [\[128239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to maintain the level of funding for the armed forces in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

This year's Spending Review not only maintains the level of funding for the Armed Forces in the next year, but commits to providing Defence with additional funding of £24.1 billion in cash terms over four years.

The defence of the UK will always be led by the threats that we must deter and defeat. This means making changes and taking hard decisions about our previous commitments. This multi-year settlement will enable Defence to make new

investments in Research & Development, space and our shipbuilding pipeline to deliver a modern force, fit for the future.

■ Army: Training

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[128175]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many recruits were discharged as (a) voluntary and (b) non-voluntary outflow during the first 6 weeks of their training at the Army Foundation College in 2019.

James Heappey:

Regular Army Foundation College (Harrogate) Recruits Outflow During First six Weeks of Training from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019 by Exit Reason.

EXIT REASON	2019
Total	150
Non-Voluntary	40
Voluntary	70
Not Required for further Army Service.*	30
Reason not Recorded	10

Notes/Caveats

*Not Required for further Army Service - Queens Regulations code 9.411 apply.

1. Figures are for AFC (Harrogate) Trainees only.
2. Information is as recorded by the Army Administration Systems.
3. Exit reasons have been supplied by Army Recruitment Initial Training Command (ARITC). Exit reasons are based on the Queens Regulation paragraphs under which they have been discharged.
4. Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes; numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.
5. Totals and sub-totals have been rounded separately and so may not appear to be the sum of their parts.
6. Recruits under the age of 18 may change their minds about joining the army after applying and are free to do so. (Recruits must serve 28 days before they are able to exercise this right).

■ Autonomous Weapons

Alyn Smith: [\[128271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of supporting a ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK considers the extant international legal framework on the development, assurance and deployment of military systems as sufficient.

Alyn Smith: [\[128272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans the Government has to develop systems that operate without human intervention in the weapon command and control chain.

Jeremy Quin:

The United Kingdom has no intention of developing systems which operate without any human intervention in the weapon command and control chain.

■ Clyde Naval Base

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[127572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what risk assessment his Department has made of the effect on (a) industrial relations and (b) matters of operational safety of the revised procurement process for facilities management at HMNB Clyde under the Future Maritime Support programme.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[127573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring all successful bidders across HMNB Clyde for facilities management contracts under the Future Maritime Support Programme to maintain a single collective bargaining unit for purposes of industrial relations.

Jeremy Quin:

The transition of support services at HM Naval Base Clyde from the existing Maritime Support Delivery Framework will be carefully managed in order to avoid any adverse effect on operations.

As the Future Maritime Support Programme (FMSP) is currently under commercial tender and negotiation, the number of future providers is yet to be finalised. Although support at HM Naval Base Clyde is currently provided through a Prime Contract with Babcock, it is delivered through a number of sub-contractors. FMSP will require industry partners to meet applicable legal obligations under the terms of the Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment legislation.

■ Defence: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[128094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the compatibility of the premium service of Defence Contracts Online and Chapter 10 of NATO's Security Procedures.

Jeremy Quin:

It is MOD policy to advertise through Defence Contracts Online all requirements for goods, services or works valued at £10,000 and above, unless the requirement meets the approved grounds for exclusion. One such ground for exclusion is on National Security grounds where an exemption from advertising also applies. Our adverts are formatted to prevent the release of sensitive information; NATO security requirements are also accounted for as part of this process. Registered users have free access to Defence Contracts Online which is provided under contract to the MOD by BiP Solutions.

BiP solutions also offer a "premium service" called Defence Contracts International (DCI). This is not sponsored by the MOD and is purely a commercial venture entirely separate from the the Defence Contracts Online platform provided for the MOD. We understand that the opportunities advertised through DCI are lifted directly from a number of international defence advertising platforms, including Defence Contracts Online.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[128096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of whether the subscription costs for Defence Contracts Online are compatible with his Department's policy to work more with SMEs.

Jeremy Quin:

Registration for, and access to, opportunities to tender for contracts with the Ministry of Defence published through Defence Contracts Online is completely free of charge, and therefore consistent with the Department's intent to make as many of our contracts accessible to SMEs as possible. We have set a challenging target for 25% of our procurement spend to be with SMEs by 2022 and are making good progress, achieving 19.3% in 2018/19, the latest year for which figures are available.

■ Mali: Armed Forces

Stephen Morgan:

[\[128244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to ensure that UK armed forces deployed to Mali are adequately equipped to perform their duties safely; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

MINUSMA operates in a challenging environment. UK personnel have been appropriately trained and are equipped for the task.

By way of example, the vehicles deployed have been selected following thorough analysis of the tasks the UK contingent will conduct on mission, and the terrain, environment and threat they will face and will provide the mission with a range of capabilities.

Troops will also deploy with a full-spectrum Explosive Ordnance and Search capability to mitigate the risk posed by explosive threats.

UK troop exposure to risk will be reviewed to mitigate any threats to their safety.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[128245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has undertaken an assessment of the potential risks to UK armed forces personnel deployed to Mali; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

Deploying to MINUSMA does not come without risk. However, our forces are world class, and we have provided them with training, equipment and preparation to succeed in a complex operating environment. The Department has taken steps to mitigate the risks.

We take the assessment of risk extremely seriously and UK troop exposure to risk will be monitored and reviewed routinely to mitigate any threats to their safety.

The initial objective of the first rotation will be to understand the operating environment in which the LRRG(M) will operate.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[128246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the deployment of UK troops to Mali.

James Heappey:

The National Security Council, on which both the Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary sit, has taken the strategic decisions behind the MINUSMA deployment. It is a key priority for both the Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary.

Both Departments agree that the UK's military contribution to UN peacekeeping in Mali is a clear illustration of how our defence and security capabilities can contribute to the UK's role as a force for good in the world, working hand in hand to support the Government's development and diplomatic agenda.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[128247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the deployment of UK armed forces to Mali is being funded through the conflict, stability and security fund; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

Net additional costs for the operation are approximately £80million over three years, provided from the Conflict Stability and Security Fund. The deployment is funded

using non-ODA and is therefore not affected by the Government's recent announcement to reduce aid spending to 0.5% in 2021.

■ Military Aid

John Healey:

[128053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to publish updates on Military Aid to the Civil Authorities requests; and how frequently he plans to provide copies of those updates to the Library.

James Heappey:

Updates on Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) activity have been made available to Members weekly since 10 November 2020. The latest version, as at 7 December, can be accessed at:

<https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2282763/details>

■ Military Aircraft

Stephen Morgan:

[128242]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to decrease the RAF's Boeing E-3 Sentry aircraft fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Sentry has provided excellent service and intelligence capability to both NATO and the UK since its first operational mission in 1991. The drawdown of Sentry is ongoing. Since 2017 the fleet has reduced from six airframes to three. As is normal in fleet transition, the numbers of aircraft and crews needed to support frontline operations naturally reduce approaching the formal out of service date. It will continue to deliver this operational capability and the ability to undertake operational tasking all the way to its out of service date.

■ Ministry of Defence: Recruitment

Stephen Morgan:

[128243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to recruit officials to his Department before Spring 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

As part of a suite of decisions designed to address the Department's In-Year financial position and begin the process of defence reform, we are pausing some Civil Service recruitment to the Department. All in-year decisions have been carefully worked on to ensure there is no detrimental impact to our Service personnel, frontline commands at home and overseas and our main responsibility of defending the United Kingdom and overseas territories.

■ Reserve Forces**Dr Julian Lewis:****[R] [128044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of standing down the Royal Naval Reservists (RNR) on the incomes of (a) part-time and (b) full-time RNR personnel; how many in each category have served on immigration-related duties in each of the last five years; what contingency plans exist to use RNR personnel for fishery-protection duties; what recent estimate he has made of the value to the (i) reputation and (ii) recruitment goals of the Royal Navy of the role of Royal Naval Reservists as ambassadors for the Royal Navy in wider society; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The Maritime Reserve is an integral and highly valued part of the Royal Navy and the brief cessation of some activity will not diminish the relationship between Reservists and their local communities or affect Regular recruitment which is currently experiencing a surge of interest.

There will be no effect on the income of those Royal Naval Reservists who currently have a full-time commitment. It is recognised that there may be some impact for those unable to complete their authorised training due to the current pause, but advice and support will be provided by their Reserve units.

In each year since 2015, less than five Naval Reservists have been deployed to provide assistance to the UK Border Force, except for 2016-17 when 36 Reservists were deployed.

A small number of Reservists are routinely employed in the Overseas Patrol Squadron which conducts fishery patrols alongside their other Defence tasks.

Dr Julian Lewis:**[R] [128046]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the reasons for the decision to stand down Reservists serving in the Royal Navy but not those serving in the (a) Army and (b) Royal Air Force; and if he will make it his policy to (i) reconsider and (ii) reverse that decision.

James Heappey:

As a result of significant pressure on the Defence budget, sensible and timely decisions have been taken to reduce the in-year financial challenge and this has resulted in the temporary cessation of some Maritime Reserves activity until the beginning of the next financial year.

This decision is part of a package of broader in-year savings measures across the Ministry of Defence, taken following consultation with each of the services, it forms part of the first and necessary step of Defence reform.

These are short term measures and don't reflect our longer-term plans that continue to place an emphasis upon the Maritime Reserve, and nor will they impact the necessary support that is required of the Navy this winter in support of the nation.

■ Reserve Forces: Pay

Dr Julian Lewis:

[R] [\[128043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Royal Naval and (b) Royal Marines reservists received their bounty in 2019-20; what estimate he has made of those respective personnel who will receive their bounty in 2020-21; and if he will make it his policy to award their bounty to those reservists who would have qualified for it in 2020-21 but for the decision to stand them down.

James Heappey:

In 2019-20, the reserves bounty was paid to 1,587 Royal Naval Reserves and 335 Royal Marines Reserves. It is estimated that approximately 65% of the maritime reserves will achieve the Certificate of Efficiency and consequent bounty payment in 2020-21 compared to 55% in 2019-20.

Reservists who are unable to complete the authorised training due to the current pause in activity will be invited to apply for a waiver to the Bounty Waiver Board.

■ Reserve Forces: Training

Stephen Morgan:

[\[128240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to (a) reform and (b) pause the training programme for navy reservists; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The Maritime Reserves is committed to transforming to best support the Royal Navy on future operations, at home and abroad. The Maritime Reserves training capability will be remodelled and integrated into the Royal Navy's training reform programme which is designed to deliver better trained people more quickly to operations.

The Royal Navy is currently working on a solution which will enable some elements of Reserves training to continue to ensure that there is no lasting impact beyond the end of the financial year.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[128241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to reduce the number of Army Reserves training days; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

As a result of significant pressure on the Defence budget, sensible and timely decisions have been taken as part of routine management of Army's in year budget, as part of a broader package of in-year savings measures across Defence. The Army have scaled back Army Reserve service from an average of 38 to 32 days until the beginning of the next financial year.

This does not affect the 243 Reservists currently deployed in support of COVID-19 activity (Op RESCRIPT).

These are short term measures and do not reflect our longer-term plans that continue to place an emphasis upon the Army Reserve and nor will they impact the necessary support that is required of the Army this winter in support of the nation.

■ **Russia: Navy**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[126170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of recent Russian Naval activity near British Territorial Waters on UK security.

James Heappey:

In the week of 23 November, nine Russian naval vessels were observed in international waters around the UK. The presence of four surface ships, four support vessels and a submarine were tracked and observed by Royal Navy units including HMS Lancaster and HMS Northumberland. These ships were supported by Royal Air Force assets including F-35 jets, Typhoon and P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

All of these units were at readiness for homeland security tasks such as this and responded with professionalism and skill. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force's response was coordinated with and supported by NATO allies who had ships and aircraft in the region.

The Russian naval presence had no impact on force generation for planned future naval activity.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Military Aid**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[126103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the 16th Regiment Royal Artillery by (a) rank and (b) role are deployed with the Giraffe radars in Saudi Arabia.

James Heappey:

For operational and personal security reasons I cannot disclose the number, ranks or roles of those deployed.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[126104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which organisations in Saudi Arabia the 16th Regiment Royal Artillery is working with during its Giraffe radar deployment to Saudi Arabia.

James Heappey:

This deployment supports the Royal Saudi Air Force in defending the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against the increased air threats that it currently faces.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles

John Healey:

[\[125944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Military Aviation Authority and (b) Civil Aviation Authority on the certification for safe use of drones.

Jeremy Quin:

The Secretary of State for Defence has requested advice from the Military Aviation Authority with regard to the procurement and governance of small Remotely Piloted Air Systems.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband

Chi Onwurah:

[\[126868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the National Audit Office report, Improving Broadband, published 16 October 2020, what steps his Department taking to clawback the estimated £900 million from its Openreach contracts.

Matt Warman:

The estimated £900m clawback from Superfast contracts is made predominantly of take-up clawback. Take-up clawback is paid on contracts where the supplier achieves higher customer take-up than originally expected. Clawback is declared by the supplier at agreed annual or bi-annual take-up review points, starting after the contract build has been completed and continuing for up to 7 years. This means that the full value of this clawback is currently not expected to be returned until around 2028.

Openreach is contractually obliged to return this funding to the public purse, holding all clawback contributions in a designated "Investment Account" which will be returned to Local Bodies no later than the end of the take-up review period. Total take-up clawback to be returned to the Department will be based on the funding contribution split for each contract. That is, the funding investment ratio, which varies under each contract, will determine the amounts of clawback to be retained by the Local Bodies and the amounts they will return to the Department over the next seven to eight financial years.

While the supplier holds the cash, it attracts interest, which also must be repaid. Openreach is now choosing to make cash repayments of take-up clawback realised to date in order to avoid high interest charges.

DCMS will reclaim the Department's portion of cash amounts repaid by Openreach to the Local Bodies, the remaining portion sits with the public purse under the ownership of the respective Local Body. We are currently in the process of identifying and validating these repayments with the aim to invoice the Local Bodies for the

Department's portion in the new year. Once received, the amounts will be returned to HM Treasury.

The other clawback is implementation clawback (also referred to as underspends). The Local Bodies will return implementation clawback after a decision to discontinue with the furtherance of delivery within their area, or when they decide to withdraw their portion from the programme to be repurposed on other priorities.

■ **Broadband: Hemsworth**

Jon Trickett: [\[124671\]](#)

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

Matt Warman:

Officials have checked the Ofcom Connected Nations performance data at constituency level, and it reports that as at May 2019, the average download speed in Hemsworth is 37.7 Mbit/s. This is the most recent performance data available - unlike coverage data it's only published once a year.

■ **Culture Recovery Fund**

Nickie Aiken: [\[128274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much of the £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund has yet to be allocated; to what programmes and projects funding has already been allocated; and when he plans to announce the mechanism for allocating the remaining funding.

Caroline Dinenage:

As of 11 December, £1 billion worth of funding from the Culture Recovery Fund has been allocated across all four nations of the UK. That includes:

- Direct support to national institutions and the Devolved Administrations, who have received £188 million through the Barnett formula;
- Over £500million in recovery grants to almost 3000 arts and heritage organisations in England;
- Over £100million in capital grants;
- And over £160million in generous repayable finance to some of our most iconic national institutions

Some capital awards and independent cinema recovery grant awards are still to be allocated - this will happen over the coming weeks.

Additionally, a second round of funding was announced on 11 December, which utilises the remaining Culture Recovery Fund funding. There will be over £300m available in grants delivered by DCMS' delivery partners, and £100m of repayable finance delivered by Arts Council England specifically.

Further information on this will be available shortly.

■ Culture: Gravesham

Adam Holloway:

[\[128104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether funding from the Cultural Capital Fund will be allocated to Gravesham.

Caroline Dinenage:

As of Friday 11 December, £1bn has been allocated from the Culture Recovery Fund so far. Within that Gravesham have received the following to date:

- Arts Council England recovery grant of £108,635 to Nocturnal Touring and Rooting Productions
- Heritage Stimulus Fund award of £97,928 to Church of England, Northfleet, St Botolph

■ DVDs and Film: Internet

Carla Lockhart:

[\[128325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of different content ratings systems on different streaming platforms which are not aligned with standards for cinema or DVD releases nor based on research into the expectations of UK audiences.

Caroline Dinenage:

As the designated body for age classification of film content, the government has great trust in the British Board of Film Classification's best practice age ratings. While adoption of the BBFC's age ratings by online platforms is currently voluntary, we welcome their usage by Video on Demand platforms.

This includes Netflix who on December 1st announced that they have become the first platform to achieve complete coverage of their content under the BBFC's ratings.

According to recent BBFC research, nearly nine in ten parents find BBFC age ratings on Netflix useful in helping them to choose content well for their family. To build on this success, we will continue to engage with industry to encourage other platforms to adopt the same ratings, and will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review.

■ Exercise: Coronavirus

Darren Jones:

[\[126108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reasons group fitness classes are not permitted in areas under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

Nigel Huddleston:

As the Prime Minister said on 23 November national restrictions ended on Wednesday 2 December, and gyms and sport facilities will reopen across all tiers. As set out in the COVID Winter Plan the decision to allocate tiers is based on a range of factors and will be reviewed every 14 days. In Tier 3 areas we have taken further

measures to limit social interactions and therefore opportunities for the virus to spread.

Outdoor organised sport can resume, but the Government will advise against contact sports with a higher risk of transmission, although these can still go ahead for under 18s and disabled groups. Group activity and exercise classes indoors are also advised against.

■ Government Departments: Flags

Claire Hanna:

[\[128306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to publish the designated days for Union Flag flying in 2021.

Caroline Dineneage:

DCMS is responsible for informing UK Government Departments of the designated days for the flying of the Union Flag throughout the year and in conjunction with FCDO, No.10 and the Royal Household, informing Departments of any instructions on the half-masting of flags, any other flag instructions and silences. Guidance is published on our GOV.UK page.

There is no specific Government policy regarding the flying of flags other than the Union Flag. Individuals, local authorities and other organisations may fly flags whenever they wish, subject to compliance with any local planning requirement.

DCMS will publish any updates to the designated days list for Union flag flying in January 2021.

■ Ice Skating: Coronavirus

Alberto Costa:

[\[126064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance his Department has issued to ice/inline skating rinks for their safe reopening in areas subject to tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

Nigel Huddleston:

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.

Government has published overarching guidance for grassroots sport but does not publish guidance for individual sports. It is for the National Governing Body of the sport to consider the steps that would need to be taken, and the conditions that would

need to be met, for their activity to resume. The National Governing Body should also publish relevant guidance.

■ Internet: Children

Carla Lockhart:

[\[128326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to use British Board of Film Classification age verification guidance in setting standards to restrict the most harmful content from access by children under legislative proposals on online harms.

Caroline Dinenage:

It is vital that children are protected from accessing age-inappropriate, harmful content online. The government's Online Harms legislation will establish in law a new 'duty of care' on companies towards their users. The 'duty of care' will ensure companies have robust systems and processes in place to keep their users safe and will deliver a higher level of protection for children than for the typical adult user. Details of how the online harms legislation will protect children from harmful content will be published later this year in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation.

■ Nuisance Calls

Darren Jones:

[\[126109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to protect vulnerable people from fraudulent cold calling.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Fraudulent calls can have significant and devastating impacts on people's lives, particularly the most vulnerable in society. As well as being a nuisance, cold calling is the most common method used to initiate fraud, especially relating to pensions. That's why the government has taken action to ban pension cold calling.

HM Treasury has introduced a ban on pension cold calling in order to reduce the chance of individual's being enticed into fraudulent schemes.

Further to this, Home Office has collaborated with UK Finance to run the Take Five fraud awareness campaign. The campaign is designed to equip the public to challenge fraudulent approaches with confidence – be they face-to-face, on the telephone or online.

The Government continues to work on practical solutions to address nuisance and scam calls. DCMS have provided over £1 million in the last 3 years to the National Trading Standards for distribution of call blocking devices to vulnerable people. This funding helped to protect some of the most vulnerable in society from nuisance calls and scams, including those originating from overseas.

■ Pornography: Internet

Carla Lockhart:

[\[128327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to include in legislative proposals on online harms provisions that (a) protect children from online pornography and (b) apply to all pornographic sites accessible from the UK regardless of where they are based and whether their content is user-generated.

Caroline Dinenage:

Our Online Harms proposals will deliver a higher level of protection for children than for the typical adult user. We expect companies to use a proportionate range of tools, including age assurance and age verification technologies, to prevent children accessing age-inappropriate content, such as online pornography, and to protect them from other harms. The new regulatory framework will cover social media companies, where many children access pornography, and all sites on which there is user-generated functionality, including pornography sites, regardless of where they are based. Further details of how the online harms legislation will protect children from harmful content, including online pornography, will be published later this year in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation.

■ Social Media: Disinformation

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[128078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure social media companies tackle the spread of misinformation on the covid-19 vaccine on their platforms.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government takes the issue of misinformation and disinformation very seriously. That is why we stood up the Counter Disinformation Unit up on 5 March to bring together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities.

We are working closely with social media platforms to help them identify and remove incorrect claims about the virus, particularly around the vaccine, and to promote authoritative information. Vaccine misinformation is harmful and it is everyone's responsibility to access information from authoritative sources and not share false or misleading information.

In a meeting with the Digital Secretary and Health Secretary last month, social media companies agreed to continue to work with public health bodies to ensure that authoritative messages about vaccine safety reach as many people as possible; to commit to swifter responses to flagged content; and to commit to the principle that no user or company should directly profit from COVID-19 vaccine mis/disinformation.

EDUCATION

■ Assessments

Alex Cunningham:

[128163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of potential discrepancies in examination and test performance between children who (a) have and (b) have not missed more than 20 days of schooling.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises the challenges faced by schools, teachers, and students, and is aware that disruption has been felt differently across the country and between schools and colleges in the same area and between students within individual institutions.

The Department collects data from early years settings, schools and colleges detailing absences related to COVID-19. We are also conducting research to understand the learning lost by school aged pupils as a result of disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department has also confirmed the launch of an expert advisory group to consider the differential impacts of the pandemic on students and recommend mitigations for these impacts. Furthermore, Primary assessments in 2021 will be focused on those most important for schools, pupils and parents. The assessments that are going ahead will help assess the impact of lost time in education and ensure pupils receive the teaching that will best enable them to address any impact.

In recognition of the challenges faced by students, the Department has announced a package of measures that will ensure students have a fair chance of showing their knowledge and understanding of a subject in exams. The announcement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-support-the-summer-2021-exams>.

These include grading that is more generous than previous years and adaptations to exams, such as giving students advance notice of topic areas and exam support materials. These adaptations will allow students to use the remaining time before the exams more effectively, which will be of particular benefit to those most affected by learning loss.

■ Institutes of Technology

Adam Holloway:

[128103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress has been made on the IOT Wave 2 competition; and for which areas applications were submitted.

Gillian Keegan:

The Institutes of Technology Wave 2 competition was launched on 8 October 2020. It is open to parts of the country without an Institute of Technology. Applicants had until 14 December to submit their proposals. We expect to conclude Stage 1 of the

Competition in Spring 2021 and shortly thereafter launch Stage 2. We are aiming to announce successful proposals in Summer 2021.

■ Nurses: Students

Emma Hardy:

[126113]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to provide financial support to student nurses for their time on placement during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

Students who volunteered on a paid placement as part of the COVID-19 response received a salary and automatic NHS pension entitlement at the appropriate band. Since September 2020, all eligible new and continuing nursing, midwifery and many allied health students on pre-registration courses at English universities can benefit from at least £5,000 per academic year of additional maintenance grant funding, which they will not need to pay back. This funding is in addition to the support that students can already access through the student loans system, subject to eligibility, and the existing learning support fund, which includes funding for childcare, specific support for placements through travel and dual accommodation expenses and support for exceptional hardship.

■ Private Tutors: Coronavirus

Adam Holloway:

[127507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether in-person one-on-one tuition in a residential setting with appropriate personal protective equipment is permitted in an area with Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions for pupils with additional needs for whom online lessons are not possible.

Vicky Ford:

One-to-one tuition for children that is not provided by a school, such as a private tutor working in a residential setting (i.e. their own home, or their pupils' homes), would typically be considered to be an out-of-school setting.

As of 2 December 2020, out-of-school settings, including providers of one-on-one tuition, have been able to open for both indoor and outdoor provision in all local restriction tiers, for all children, including those with additional needs. We have updated our guidance for providers of after-school and holiday clubs and other out-of-school settings on the measures they should put in place to ensure they are operating as safely as possible:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#educational-visits-and-trips>. Providers offering one-to-one tuition should ensure they are implementing these protective measures to reduce the risk of infection and transmission of the virus. Additionally, if a private tutor

normally offers provision in their own home, or pupils' homes, they should also follow the guidance on working safely in other people's homes during the COVID-19 outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>.

■ **Schools: Food**

Richard Burgon:

[126074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will allocate at least 50 per cent of the income from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy to food-related projects in schools.

Vicky Ford:

In 2016, the government announced investments in several children's health initiatives alongside the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, including doubling the primary sports premium to £320 million a year from September 2017, and introducing the National Schools Breakfast Programme from March 2018.

The Spending Review 2020 has now concluded and confirmed the Department for Education's overall budget for the 2021/22 financial year. In due course, the department will confirm how much funding from within that settlement has been allocated to these schools programmes for 2021/22.

■ **Schools: Inspections**

Alex Cunningham:

[128165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the head of Ofsted on changes to the (a) frequency of and (b) methodology used in school inspections for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has regular discussions with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector about a range of matters, including Ofsted's inspection approaches and programmes. On 3 December, the Secretary of State for Education confirmed the intention that routine, graded school inspections would not resume until the summer term, and that in the meantime, Ofsted would carry out monitoring inspections in schools most in need of support.

The Department will continue to engage with Ofsted as it implements its inspections in the spring term, and prepares for the resumption of routine, graded inspections.

■ **Shukri Abdi**

Apsana Begum:

[126156]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will undertake an investigation into the actions of (a) public bodies and (b) staff that fall under his remit relating to the death of 12-year-old Shukri Abdi.

Nick Gibb:

The death of Shukri Abdi was a tragedy. On 4 December 2020, the Coroner concluded that Shukri's death was an accident. Public bodies and their staff will have their own responsibilities for undertaking processes in response to recommendations made from the Coroner's Report and indeed any other recommendations from any review into Shukri's death. If this report finds recommendations for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, or the Department, we will of course respond appropriately.

Special Educational Needs: Tribunals**Daisy Cooper:****[126136]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will commence a pilot study as permitted under section 58 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to allow claims to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Tribunal to be brought by children in England.

Vicky Ford:

Children are at the centre of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system, with person-centred planning and co-production a key part of the Children and Families Act (2014). Local authorities in England are already under a duty to present the child's views to the tribunal.

The Children and Families Act (2014) included powers to pilot a right for children under 16 to bring an appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) in England.

A written ministerial statement on 20 December 2017 confirmed that, after careful consideration, the decision had been taken not to pilot these powers, which were automatically repealed in March 2019 as per the provisions of the Children and Families Act (2014). The written ministerial statement can be found at the following link: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-12-20/debates/17122029000015/SpecialEducationalNeedsAndDisability?highlight=special%20educational%20needs#contribution-D73DDB22-DC0A-4A07-94F8-BA43908D6585>.

Students: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[126952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students can return safely to university after the Christmas period safely.

Michelle Donelan:

On 2 December, the Department published guidance related to the return of students to higher education (HE) for the spring term:

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

The guidance sets out that all HE providers should offer asymptomatic mass testing to all students on their return. Improved access to asymptomatic testing for the initial

return of students in the spring term provides further support to universities to manage the risk of transmission and take swift action to respond to any cases.

Universities have put a wide range of measures in place to make teaching and learning environments as safe as possible. We have not seen evidence of an increased transmission risk in these carefully managed teaching environments.

To help reduce the risk of transmission from mass movement we have advised that students return to university during a period staggered over five weeks. This will reduce the number of people travelling at once while balancing the importance of reducing disruption to education. The staggered return approach will also support testing capacity.

■ **Supply Teachers: Coronavirus**

Alex Cunningham:

[128164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will provide additional funding to cover the increased supply teacher costs in schools as a result of teachers self-isolating during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department appreciates the continued and significant efforts by schools and their staff to keep schools open this term. Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and wellbeing, and has rightly been a national priority. The latest published figures show that, on average, 99% of schools are open on a daily basis. The Department published guidance to support schools to welcome back all children full-time. The guidance can be viewed at:

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

Schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Following last year's Spending Round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year compared to 2019-20.

The Department has also announced a new Covid workforce fund to support schools that are eligible with some of the costs of covering staff absences in schools, including employing supply staff to cover these absences. Relevant information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-to-support-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-pandemic>.

Ministers and officials continue to engage regularly with school leaders and their representatives on a wide range of issues around COVID-19, including discussions in relation to costs faced by schools at this time. The Department will continue to review the pressures schools are facing into next term.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Experiments****Ruth Jones:**[\[126131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ensure that the UK leaving the EU REACH will not result in an increase in animal testing.

Rebecca Pow:

Under UK REACH, we will recognise the validity of any animal tests on products that have already been undertaken and so avoid the need for further testing. The grandfathering of all existing GB-held EU REACH registrations into the UK system will further avoid the need to duplicate animal testing associated with re-registration.

We are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a chemical that has already been registered, unless it is subject to further evaluation that shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. This is known as the "last-resort principle", which we will retain and enshrine in legislation through our landmark Environment Bill.

■ Animal Welfare: Pest Control**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[128322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 124350 on Pest Control: Animal Welfare, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on animal welfare and animal-related measures.

Victoria Prentis:

On 3 December, the Government launched an eight-week consultation on the ban of live animal exports for fattening or slaughter. The Government is also consulting on proposals to further improve animal welfare in transport more generally, such as reduced maximum journey times, animals being given more space and headroom during transport, stricter rules on transporting animals in extreme temperatures and tighter rules for transporting live animals by sea.

On 12 December, the Government launched proposals to ban keeping primates as pets in England, inviting the public to have their say on the issue over the next eight weeks. Findings from a recent call for evidence found that these animals' complex needs cannot be met in a home environment. Under these new plans, it will be an offence to keep a primate as a pet in England. Only those keeping primates to zoo level standards will be permitted to keep primates.

The Government is in the process of refining proposals for the manifesto commitments on the introduction of laws on animal sentience, a ban on the import of

hunting trophies and tackling puppy smuggling, and will be publishing further detail in the coming weeks. We are still considering the best legislative vehicle to bring forward these reforms in the near future. We will be engaging with stakeholders and other Government departments as necessary.

Our manifesto commitment to introduce mandatory cat microchipping will be brought forward via secondary legislation in the coming months. The Government continues to support the passage of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill in Parliament to deliver our manifesto commitment to increase the maximum available penalty for the worst animal cruelty offences from six months to five years.

■ Cattle Tracing System

Paul Girvan:

[\[126948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has for a UK-specific system of cattle identification.

Victoria Prentis:

At present, cattle are identified with a pair of approved ear tags, showing the same unique individual identification number.

Defra is working with industry on proposals for the introduction of Bovine Electronic Identification (bEID) in England. bEID is the identification of cattle with a tag which contains an electronic identifier. bEID would allow the use of electronic readers to capture the animals' identity, removing the possibility of human errors of omission and transposition.

The Devolved Administrations are also working on plans for implementing bEID. Defra is working in close collaboration with the Devolved Administrations to ensure the timing and approach to implementation of bovine electronic identification in each part of the UK does not create burden or confusion for keepers.

In the event of a disease outbreak, it is essential that animals can be identified, and movements can be traced effectively.

Currently, keepers and livestock markets report cattle movements to the current British Cattle Movement Service. In the future, each Administration will run a fully separate system for livestock traceability, including for cattle. We are working closely together to ensure the future systems are fully interoperable so that effective arrangements for disease control and trade are maintained across the UK.

■ Cattle: Pneumonia

Paul Girvan:

[\[126949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote an uptake in vaccination of cattle against pneumonia.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to tackling endemic diseases in animals in the UK. The vaccination of livestock against pneumonia is a major means of controlling

pneumonia in cattle and is best coordinated by farmers with the assistance of their local veterinarians. This approach enables development of a targeted vaccination programme for each farm. The promotion of such vaccinations is conducted by industry bodies and trade organisations, which are well placed to provide relevant and timely communications to their members.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Ruth Jones:

[\[126132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the financial cost to businesses of compliance with UK REACH regulations.

Rebecca Pow:

We recognise that businesses may incur additional costs as a result of the transition to an independent UK regime, and to maintain their access to EU markets. The main costs for business will be accessing the data they need to support a registration for the GB market. These costs will vary depending on the ease and extent to which the company in question can obtain the data, which will be a matter of commercial negotiation. It is therefore difficult to put a single meaningful estimate on these costs, though our estimates broadly align with those of industry.

The extension to the deadlines for data submission we recently announced allows industry more time to adapt and comply with UK REACH. This is particularly beneficial to SMEs who are more likely to have smaller tonnages, giving them up to 6 years and 300 days to supply the data. If the extra time does not enable industry to agree data access at lower cost, it will enable the costs to be spread over a longer period and reduce the need for companies to redirect resources onto REACH compliance.

■ Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme

Luke Pollard:

[\[126980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support is available to SMEs when they are applying to the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

Applications for the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme ran from Wednesday 29 April to Monday 11 May 2020. The Scheme has now closed to bids.

Luke Pollard:

[\[126981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what consultation process took place prior to the establishment of the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

The Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme was part of a wider emergency funding package to support the seafood sector through the impact of market closures as a result of Covid-19. This funding package was delivered at speed to support the

industry given the emergency circumstances and no formal consultation was conducted.

Luke Pollard:

[126983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many SMEs turning over less than £10 million in revenue have received support from the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

The Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme provided funding to a total of 20 projects that demonstrated the potential to deliver significant collective benefits for the seafood industry in England. We did not assess and do not hold information on the turnover of applicants to the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme.

A list of the successful bids is available on GOV.UK at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892089/DSSS_Approved_Projects_12.06.2020.csv/preview

■ **Flood Control: Wakefield**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[126173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help minimise the risk of flooding in Wakefield constituency.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[126174]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent flooding from the River Calder.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) is working on a number of flood defence schemes to minimise the risk of flooding in the Wakefield constituency and on the River Calder.

On the River Calder, upstream of the Hon Member's constituency, the EA is completing a flood alleviation scheme this year at Mytholmroyd to better protect 216 homes as well as businesses. It is commencing construction on a scheme in Hebden Bridge to better protect 400 homes and businesses, and on a scheme in Brighouse in summer 2021 which includes natural flood risk management features.

In the Wakefield constituency, the EA is reviewing the standard of protection offered by existing flood defences at Horbury Bridge. It is also updating its flood modelling for the River Calder in Horbury Bridge and Reid Park Beck. This modelling will allow the EA to better assess opportunities for future flood defence investment.

At Reid Park Beck, Wakefield Council has undertaken work to ensure the local pumping stations operate as designed, and the EA is working with the Council to secure funding to investigate potential upgrades. Across its district, Wakefield Council is also progressing a programme of culvert surveys and investigations to identify flood risk issues and inform a future programme of works.

Downstream of Wakefield, the EA is investigating opportunities for flood alleviation interventions to better protect Castleford from flooding from the River Calder and River Aire.

The EA is maintaining its flood defences throughout the River Calder and is working to ensure that its defences and flood response capabilities are ready for the winter.

■ Furs: Imports

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[128321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning the import of animal fur into the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government shares the British public's high regard for animal welfare and, after the transition period, the Government plans to retain current regulations banning the import of fur from domestic cats and dogs, and has laid secondary legislation to retain the ban on commercial seal hunts. Legislation has prohibited farming of animals for their fur since 2000 in England and Wales, and 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Once the UK assumes an independent seat on international bodies such as CITES and OIE we will have an opportunity to promote our high standards in these international fora.

Once our future relationship with the EU has been established there will be an opportunity for the Government to consider further the steps it could take in relation to fur imports.

■ Lesley Griffiths

Ruth Jones:

[\[126128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Lesley Griffiths MS Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs.

Ruth Jones:

[\[126986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Edwin Poots MLA on Government assistance to Northern Ireland in its environmental policy preparation for the end of the transition period.

Ruth Jones:

[\[126987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Fergus Ewing MSP on Government assistance to Scotland in its environmental policy preparation for the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The Secretary of State met with Lesley Griffiths and Fergus Ewing on 2 November, 16 November and 7 December and with Edwin Poots on 2 November and 16 November at the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Preparations for the end of the transition period were discussed including progress on the common frameworks being developed on a range of environmental policy issues. Communiqués from the meetings are published at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/communique-from-the-inter-ministerial-group-for-environment-food-and-rural-affairs

■ Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:****[128087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 16 September, 14 October and 19 November 2020 on his constituent Mr Howell.

Rebecca Pow:

A reply to the hon. Member is being prepared and will be issued very shortly.

■ Plastics: Recycling**Dr Matthew Offord:****[126002]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's timetable is to publish its response to the July 2019 call for evidence on Standards for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics.

Rebecca Pow:

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

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus**Taiwo Owatemi:****[126148]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the restriction on selling alcohol in Tier 2 pubs without an accompanying substantial meal on levels of food waste.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has not made assessment of the impact of food waste levels as a result of this policy.

■ Rural Development Programme

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[126937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme underspends are in the 2021-22 financial year as used to calculate the funding for agricultural support and rural development announced on 25 November 2020 in (a) Wales, (b) Scotland, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) England.

Victoria Prentis:

In our 2019 manifesto we promised to maintain the current annual budget to farmers for the lifetime of this parliament. At the recently concluded Spending Review the UK Government met this commitment by providing new exchequer funding on top of the remaining EU funding in each nation to ensure that farmers receive the same total funding next year as they received in 2019 when the manifesto commitment was made.

■ Waste Management

Ruth Jones: [\[126129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to prevent the stockpiling of waste in the event that the UK and EU do not reach an agreement on their future relationship at the end of the transition period.

Ruth Jones: [\[126130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to prevent an increase in waste related crimes in the event that the UK and EU do not reach an agreement on their future relationship at the end of the transition period.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has been planning a number of contingency measures in the event of disruption at ports. In the event of disruption, our immediate focus is to keep waste away from the affected ports and instead closer to points of production. Our primary objective is to protect human health and the environment and waste holders are legally expected to manage waste to achieve that aim in line with waste regulations and legislation.

We are working closely with local authorities and the waste industry to ensure the continued provision of key waste services. People who commit a waste-related crime remain liable to prosecution. We all have a role to play in keeping our environment clean and people must work together to support their communities during this challenging time. We expect all waste operators to adhere to their permits. We are encouraging businesses who export waste to consider and continue to plan alternative options in case of disruption at borders. Permits and licences will still apply and the waste industry is expected to meet the high standards of protection for people and the environment and work to sound waste management practices.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ China: Sanctions****Marco Longhi:****[126152]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to mobilise international sanctions against China for its violations of Hong Kong's freedom and autonomy.

Nigel Adams:

We will continue to consider designations under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations. It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated under the sanctions regime in the future. To do this could reduce the impact of the designations.

We continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his foreword to the Six-monthly Report on Hong Kong, the international community has been vocal in setting out its concerns about Hong Kong.

At the UN Human Rights Council in June the UK delivered a joint statement on behalf of 28 countries raising China's assault on Hong Kong's autonomy and rights and freedoms. At the Council in September, the UK reiterated these serious concerns in a national statement, and the UK joined a statement on these issues at the UNGA Third Committee on 6 October; 39 countries supported the statement, a significant increase from June.

■ Colombia: Civil Disorder**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[128223]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of Colombian police opening fire against unarmed protestors during protests in Bogota on 10 September 2020.

Wendy Morton:

We are aware of the concerning reports of some police firing at crowds outside police stations in Bogotá during September's protests. The UK has been clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully. We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully the excessive use of force against protesters, and take appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints being thoroughly investigated.

■ Colombia: Peace Negotiations**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[128225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funding the Government has made available to support the implementation of the six chapters of the Colombian peace agreement signed in 2016.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has provided significant funding to support the implementation of the historic Peace Accords signed between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Since 2015, we have committed over £60 million through the Conflict, Security, and Stabilisation Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the peace agreement.

The UK is the largest single donor to the UN Trust Fund for Colombia. UK funding has included, but is not limited to, support for the Colombian institutions tasked with implementing and overseeing the different chapters of the peace agreement; supporting reintegration, rural development, and assistance to victims; the transitional justice mechanisms, including the work of the truth commission to gather testimony from Colombians in the UK; and a number of Colombian NGOs working on peace and stability.

■ Colombia: Police**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[128224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what police training arrangements there are between the UK and Colombian governments.

Wendy Morton:

Through the Conflict, Security, and Stabilisation Fund (CSSF), the UK provides assistance to the Colombian police to improve its work with communities, its approach to gender-based violence, and wider respect for human rights. The FCDO is currently supporting projects helping with the transformation of the Colombian National Police in the wake of the peace accords, including work with the police to help build better police-community relationships, and improve their capacity to work on conflict prevention and mitigation.

■ Giulio Regeni**Hywel Williams:**[\[128090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to support Italian prosecutors in prosecuting members of Egypt's National Security Agency for the murder of Giulio Regeni.

Hywel Williams:[\[128091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions against Egyptian

security officials charged by Italian prosecutors with involvement in the murder of Giulio Regeni.

James Cleverly:

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

■ **Hong Kong: HSBC**

Marco Longhi:

[\[126153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the chairman and chief executive of HSBC UK on its policy of freezing the accounts of Hong Kong pro-democracy campaigners.

Nigel Adams:

We are in close contact with a wide range of businesses in Hong Kong, but it is for businesses themselves to make their own judgement calls. We are concerned that a number of recent decisions by the authorities in Hong Kong are further evidence of a determined campaign to stifle opposition and silence dissent. As a signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China must abide by the legally binding commitments it made to uphold fundamental rights and freedoms, and respect Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy for at least 50 years from 1997. The UK will continue to pursue an approach in Hong Kong that is rooted in our values, defends the rights of the people of Hong Kong and respects the provisions of the Joint Declaration.

■ **Iran: Baha'i Faith**

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[126190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Iranian counterparts on reports of members of the Baha'i community being denied access to university through the Iranian state university application process; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

We remain deeply concerned by the continuing systematic discrimination, harassment and targeting of the Baha'i community in Iran, including that members of the community are being denied access to university. The Government continues to raise our concerns on this and other persistent human rights violations with Iran.

On 26 October, we made a statement on this matter, during the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran. We called on

Iran to ensure members of all religious and ethnic groups are treated equally before the law and allowed to participate fully in society.

■ **Iran: Nuclear Power**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[125999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Iran's recent announcement that it will seek to install three more cascades of advanced centrifuges at the Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz.

James Cleverly:

Iran's recent announcement to the International Atomic Energy Agency that it intends to install an additional three cascades of advanced centrifuges at the Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz is contrary to the JCPoA and deeply worrying. We are deeply concerned by Iran's continued and systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the JCPoA. Iran must return to compliance with the deal and not implement these measures.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[126000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the Iranian regime's restrictions on the comprehensiveness of the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspections of Iran's nuclear capability.

James Cleverly:

We note with great concern the recent law passed by the Iranian Parliament, which - if implemented - would substantially expand Iran's nuclear programme and limit International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring access. We are deeply concerned by Iran's continued and systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the JCPoA. The JCPoA remains the best means to monitor and constrain Iran's nuclear programme. It is imperative that Iran returns to compliance with its commitments under the deal, and this includes continuing to allow full IAEA access.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[126001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the compatibility of the nuclear enrichment bill being considered by the Iranian parliament with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

James Cleverly:

We note with great concern the recent law passed by the Iranian Parliament, which - if implemented - would substantially expand Iran's nuclear programme and limit International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring access. These measures would be incompatible with the JCPoA and Iran's wider nuclear commitments. We are deeply concerned by Iran's continued and systematic non-compliance with its nuclear

commitments under the JCPOA. Iran must return to compliance with the deal and not implement these measures.

■ **Mohsen Fakhrizadeh**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[127019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

James Cleverly:

We are concerned about the situation in Iran and the wider region following the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. The UK has repeatedly and consistently condemned extrajudicial killings whenever and wherever they take place and Iran is no exception. The assassination of Fakhrizadeh has not changed UK policies towards Iran, and so we continue to urge Iran to return to compliance with the JCPOA and take the important opportunity for a return to diplomacy that the incoming US Administration offers.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[128118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the declaration by Genocide Watch that all 10 stages of genocide have been fulfilled against the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh in the recent conflict.

Wendy Morton:

The UK takes its moral and legal obligations seriously, and is fully committed to focusing on conflict prevention as the best means to prevent most mass atrocities. The UK Government adopts a consolidated, whole-of-government effort, using our diplomatic, development, defence and law enforcement capabilities, to help find pathways to global peace and stability. The policy of the UK is that any determination on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for competent judicial bodies, rather than for governments. The UK is fully committed to the principle that there must be no impunity for the most serious international crimes. The UK welcomes the news that the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed to end the fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

■ **Syria: Detainees**

Allan Dorans:

[\[126133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he (a) has taken and (b) is taking to put pressure on the Syrian regime to release detainees; and what steps the UK is taking as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to (i) push for the release of those detainees and (ii) recognise justice and accountability for detainees as a central issue in a future peace process.

James Cleverly:

The UK uses several tools to put pressure on the Syrian regime to release detainees, which is a key tenet of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. We recognise that justice and accountability for detainees is a central issue for the UN-led political process and we fully support the UN Syria Envoy's efforts to work for the release of detainees, as a vital step towards a political settlement to end the conflict. The UK has contributed over £13 million since 2012 in support of Syrian and international efforts to gather evidence and assist victims of human rights abuses and violations. Additionally we continue to pursue sanctions as a policy tool to hold the Syrian regime to account and to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict. We have raised the plight of detainees at the UN Security Council and through our leadership at the Human Rights Council where we have included language on enforced disappearance in recent Syria Resolutions. We support the UN's call to the Assad regime and Syrian armed groups to release a sufficient number of detainees to prevent COVID-19 spreading in detention facilities, as well as their urgent request to allow humanitarian actors and medical teams unhindered access to prisons.

■ Syria: Peace Negotiations**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[128215\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

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

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Breast Cancer****Rosie Cooper:**[\[107617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with (a) Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership and (b) NHS England on the potential merits of a national secondary breast cancer audit.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: The Department, along with stakeholders, is currently reviewing the proposal of a secondary breast cancer audit.

The Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership commissions, develops and manages the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme on behalf of NHS England and the devolved administrations. The programme currently consists of over 30 national clinical audits, six clinical outcome review programmes and the National Joint Registry.

The existing audit of breast cancer in older women does include some sections on women with metastatic breast cancer. The latest audit is available at the following link:

https://www.hqip.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REF212_NABCOP-2020-Annual-Report-V1_high-res_20200702.pdf

■ Breast Cancer: Health Services**Tracey Crouch:****[110112]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to conduct a national secondary breast cancer audit.

Jo Churchill:

The Department, along with stakeholders, is currently reviewing the proposal of a secondary breast cancer audit.

The Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership commissions, develops and manages the National Clinical Audit and Patient Outcomes Programme, on behalf of NHS England and the devolved administrations. The programme currently consists of over 30 national clinical audits, six clinical outcome review programmes and the National Joint Registry.

The existing audit of breast cancer in older women does include some sections on women with metastatic breast cancer. The latest audit is available at the following link:

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■ Breast Cancer: Screening**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[115777]**

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 estimate his Department has made of the length of time it will take for the waiting list to return to the same level experienced in March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: The number of women waiting for screening having received a breast screening invitation prior to the first wave of COVID-19 has decreased from 468,548 women on 1 June 2020 to 8,356 women on 4 November 2020.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Paula Barker:**[\[100556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that people who have contracted covid-19 and are in a hospital setting are not discharged into a care home.

Helen Whately:

It is our priority to ensure that everyone receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time. This includes ensuring people are discharged safely from hospital to the most appropriate place, and they receive the care and support they need.

Building on the commitments of the Adult Social Care Winter Plan, we are working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the NHS to ensure that everyone due to be discharged to a care home has an up-to-date COVID-19 test result, with anyone who is COVID-positive being discharged to a setting that the CQC has assured is able to provide care and support for people who are COVID-positive.

Grahame Morris:[\[106316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will bring forward legislative proposals to allow relatives to be designated as unpaid keyworkers to access care homes and help provide care for care home residents in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

On 16 November, we began a trial of testing visitors to care homes. Testing is one way of minimising the risk of visiting a care home. If a visitor has a negative test, is wearing appropriate personal protective equipment, and following other infection control measures then our guidance advises that visitors can provide personal care and have physical contact with their loved one, such as holding hands.

We want to bring an end to the pain of separation and help care homes bring families and loved ones together. The launch of visitor testing is a crucial step to making that happen. We aim to rollout visitor testing nationwide by Christmas.

Stephen Timms:[\[109143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to allow (a) ministers of religion and (b) pastoral chaplains to visit residential care homes during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: Our first priority is to prevent infections in care homes and protect staff and residents. As part of the winter plan, we have set out

tightened infection prevention and control measures to enable visits to continue safely. This was incorporated in the update we made on 15 October to our care home visiting guidance, first published on 22 July 2020.

These measures build on the published framework that allows local decision making, based on the assessment of the Director of Public Health and the care provider.

Where there is a restriction on visiting, alternative ways of communicating between residents and their families and friends should be discussed and offered. The care home should also provide regular updates to residents' loved ones on their mental and physical health, how they are coping and identify any additional ways they might be better supported, including any cultural or religious needs.

Helen Hayes:

[\[91679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions have taken place between his Department and the Care Quality Commission on the need to require care homes to participate in the programme of weekly Covid-19 testing for care home workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: Testing in care homes is a crucial part of our strategy to help prevent and control outbreaks, and we have done everything we can to encourage care homes to register to receive test kits, including contacting every eligible care home provider that has not registered to receive test kits and sending test kits to all eligible care homes. We share our regular COVID-19 testing update with Care Quality Commission (CQC) colleagues, care home managers and providers, keeping them informed of important announcements and updated guidance including webinars from the National Testing Programme as well launching the care home testing 119 helpdesk.

It is not within the CQC's regulatory powers to enforce participation in weekly COVID-19 testing for care home workers. However, during calls with providers and when out on inspection, CQC staff use an Infection Prevention Control (IPC) tool to gather information on the matter and do strongly encourage participation in weekly testing. The CQC is planning to report on their findings regarding IPC on a regular basis.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[113014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on single parents who care for adult disabled children of the restriction on support bubbles to households of one adult during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Helen Whately:

The Government knows that social distancing restrictions are difficult for everyone, especially those with caring responsibilities. We have tried to reduce the impact of restrictions so that carers, including those with adult children with disabilities,

continue to receive support during this time. From 2 December, if someone is the only adult in their household who does not need continuous care as a result of a disability, they can form a support bubble with another household of any size.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[114249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to enable single-parent carers of adult disabled children to form a bubble during the covid-19 outbreak with another household as is permitted for cared-for people under the age of 18.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 16 November 2020]: The Government knows that social distancing restrictions are difficult for everyone, especially those with caring responsibilities. We have tried to reduce the impact of restrictions so that carers, including those with adult children with disabilities, continue to receive support during this time. From 2 December, if someone is the only adult in their household who does not need continuous care as a result of a disability, they can form a support bubble with another household of any size.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Bambos Charalambous:

[117341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been notified by the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app to self-isolate to date.

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.

■ **Contact Tracing: Data Protection**

Bill Esterson:

[106327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his policy is on the sharing of contact tracing data between (a) Serco and (b) other private sector contractors and local public health departments.

Helen Whately:

The Department and Public Health England (PHE) work in partnership with local authorities and with the support of contractors to provide contact tracing services. The Department is the data controller for the purposes of data protection legislation. Contact tracing data that is shared between the Department, PHE, contractors and local public health departments is handled in strict confidence and in line with data protection laws.

Ensuring the privacy of individuals and the security of their personal data is a priority for the Government and for NHS Test and Trace.

■ Coronavirus: Christmas

Daisy Cooper:

[\[116663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to publish separate covid-19 guidance for adults living on their own who wish to return to their family home for the Christmas holiday.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: Adults living alone are already able to form a 'support bubble' with one other household. This means that all members of the support bubble are treated as if they are one household including permitted overnight stays and no requirement to remain two metres apart. Usually the households concerned live in relatively close proximity to each other.

The Government is currently considering what arrangements should be put in place to permit social contact in as safe a way as possible after 2 December and keep the need for any additional guidance under continual review. By acting now through restrictions on social contact, we have the best chance of allowing more contact at Christmas. The need for any additional guidance will be kept under continual review.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Janet Daby:

[\[120132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to give (a) local authorities and (b) local public health teams the (i) funding and (ii) powers to lead on contract tracing for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

As of 2 December, we have in place 265 local contact tracing teams. Local authorities use their expertise and resources to increase the proportion of people reached as part of a joint national and local effort to reduce COVID-19 transmission.

The Government has committed to providing further financial support to upper tier local authorities in England facing tier 2 or 3 restrictions, which is potentially over £200 million per 28 days until the end of the financial year. This is in addition to the more than £780 million of financial support already committed to local authorities. This is comprised of over £480 million provided during the period of local COVID alert levels and national restriction measures and on top of the £300 million given in June 2020 for test, trace and contain activity.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Derek Twigg:

[\[102687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his oral contribution of 12 October 2020, Official Report, column 33, for what reason Halton local authority area is and (b) other local authority areas with (i) higher and (ii) similar rates of covid-19 infection are not subject to Tier 3 restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Decisions about the appropriate alert level in each area will be made by the Government based on the best available science using the existing Bronze, Silver and Gold process.

The Contain Framework and the Joint Biosecurity Centre closely monitor the data and the spread of the virus across local areas, providing advice and recommendations on areas of intervention to Ministers.

Mr Marcus Fysh:[\[110865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what methodology and data his Department uses to calculate the R reproduction rates of covid-19 transmission for local authority areas of England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Individual modelling groups use a range of data to estimate growth rates and 'R' values, including:

- epidemiological data such as testing data, hospital admissions, intensive care unit admissions and deaths;
- contact pattern surveys that gather information on behaviour; and
- household infection surveys where swabs are performed on individuals.

Different modelling groups use different data sources to estimate these values using mathematical models that simulate the spread of infections. Some may even use all these sources of information to adjust their models to better reflect the real-world situation. Estimates can vary between different models, so evidence from several models is considered, discussed, combined and the growth rate and 'R' is then presented as ranges.

Rounding and differences between the data streams used in these individual model outputs that are combined account for differences between estimates of 'R' and estimated growth rates. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies calculates 'R' at United Kingdom, devolved administration and at NHS England regional levels. It does not produce estimates for local authority areas.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[122610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the document entitled Analysis of the health, economic and social effects of COVID-19 and the approach to tiering, published by the Government on 30 November, what assessment the Government made in preparing that report of whether deaths recorded as with COVID might have been the consequence of other conditions or ailments.

Helen Whately:

Our report 'Analysis of the health, economic and social effects of COVID-19 and the approach to tiering' makes extensive use of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) deaths data. The ONS reports on registered deaths where COVID-19 is mentioned on the death certificate.

The ONS has reported that in 91.8% of cases in England where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, it was found to be the underlying cause of death.

Full details are available in the ONS publication linked below:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/monthlymortalityanalysisenglandandwales/october2020>

Charlotte Nichols:

[124331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social care, when his Department plans to publish equality impact assessments for the covid-19 tier measures.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is committed to publishing data that has informed its decision making, including the tiers framework and allocations.

We have also published a supporting document to accompany the most recent regulations on 30 November. This is available at the following link:

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

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

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

This document provides further information and context as to why areas are in particular tiers currently.

■ **Coronavirus: Food**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[126786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the effect of eating a substantial meal on covid-19 transmission rates.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[126789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the covid-19 transmission rates in working men's clubs and public houses.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Government is committed to publishing data that has informed its decision making, including the tiers framework and allocations. We have also published a supporting document to accompany the most recent regulations of 30 November which is available the following link:

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

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

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

This provides further information and context beyond the headline metrics as to why areas are in particular tiers currently.

■ **Coronavirus: Hull University**

Dame Diana Johnson: [102704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of tests for students at the University of Hull covid-19 testing site.

Helen Whately:

We are opening new test sites every week, particularly in and around university settings so that almost all universities are within one and a half miles of testing. The testing site at the Inglemire Lane Car Park in Hull has been operating since 22 September 2020.

Dame Diana Johnson: [102705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the value is of the contracts awarded to (a) Deloitte and (b) G4S to run the covid-19 testing site at the University of Hull.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not publish this data in the format requested. All the Departmental COVID-19 contracts are, or will be, published on the GOV.UK Contract Finder service.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Ian Paisley: [113093]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is offering to people who are required to self-isolate as a result of the Test and trace notification and who are only eligible for statutory sick pay.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment is available in all local authorities in England. The Department works closely with the devolved administrations which run similar schemes.

To be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment, an individual must be employed or self-employed, unable to work from home, and currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Where an individual is not in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits but meets the other eligibility criteria and may face financial hardship if they have to self-isolate, local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Rachel Reeves:

[\[110790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that medical expertise is available on covid-19 testing sites.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: All regional test sites have at least one first aider on site at all times. For regional test sites that operate assisted testing, these tests are conducted by a member of staff who is clinically trained to carry out this procedure. There is not a requirement for other staff to be medically trained, but all staff must complete health and safety training before starting to work on site.

Rachel Reeves:

[\[111486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much on average the companies that the Government has outsourced to carry out covid-19 testing are paying testing site workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: We are unable to provide this information as it is commercially confidential.

Gavin Robinson:

[\[115688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of missed and late cancelled covid-19 tests for each testing centre in the UK to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 November 2020]: We do not publish data in the format requested.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[119197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of labs testing for covid-19 are UKAS accredited for the covid-19 procedure.

Helen Whately:

Eighty three laboratories have applied for COVID-19 testing with the United Kingdom Accreditation Service, of which 27 are accredited. The remainder have either been assessed or are in the process of being assessed due to a very recent application. Those that have been assessed and not accredited will be working through any actions required to meet the International Organization for Standardization's accreditation standards.

Rosie Duffield:

[\[124285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason routine covid-19 testing is not being made available to asymptomatic private practitioner physiotherapists treating people in care homes.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the need to ensure professionals are able to visit care homes safely. Regular asymptomatic testing is currently being rolled out to all patient-facing National Health Service staff.

While this will cover the majority of professionals visiting care homes, we recognise the important role played by professionals who visit care homes who are not included in the NHS staff testing, such as private practitioner physiotherapists. We are using our learning from our previous 'Visiting Professionals' pilot to determine the best approach for asymptomatic testing professionals who are not NHS staff.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[125215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made assessment of the false-positive rates of PCR tests.

Helen Whately:

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

Julian Sturdy:

[\[94402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that covid-19 tests are available for patients who require a negative test in order to begin treatment for other conditions.

Helen Whately:

Patients currently awaiting treatment under the elective care pathway for non-urgent day case or overnight stay are able to undertake a COVID-19 test via the elective care COVID-19 home test service. Any suitable elective care patient can be submitted for a test and this service also covers parents who need to accompany their child to the hospital and partners who need to attend elective caesarean births with the mother.

The patient receives specific elective care test instructions to ensure they take the test three days before their procedure date, in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's clinical guidance.

A courier then picks up the test from the patient and delivers the sample to a laboratory where it is processed, ensuring a rapid turnaround time to result. When the sample is processed, the result is issued simultaneously to the patient and hospital via SMS and e-mail respectively.

■ Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[111440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the four covid-19 mobile testing units operating in the Humber, (a) how many people in total are employed to operate those units, (b) what the (i) age and (ii) gender is of those people and (c) who the employer is of those people.

Helen Whately:

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

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[111443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the four covid-19 mobile testing units operating in the Humber, how many members of staff working in those units have had to self-isolate since those units began operating in April 2020.

Helen Whately:

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

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Matt Western:

[\[128226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to Question 104155 on Hospitals: Birmingham, tabled by the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington on 15 October 2020.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question [104155](#) on 10 December 2020.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[122897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged by legislation on covid-19 restrictions.

Helen Whately:

From 2 December, a regionally differentiated approach was put in place where different tiers of COVID-19 restrictions apply in different parts of the country. We have taken several actions to support disabled people who may be impacted by these restrictions. A person caring for someone with a disability at home can now form a support bubble with another household, a 'linked household'. Carers in all three tiers are allowed to arrange for another family member or friend to provide respite care so they can take a break. We have also recognised the need for support groups, including day services, which are vitally important to many disabled people, to continue and as such formally organised groups of up to 15 can continue to meet. For

example, on 1 December we published accessible 'easy read' guidance regarding the local restriction tiers.

■ Health Education: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Coronavirus

John McDonnell:

[115466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase awareness of symptoms of (a) chronic fatigue syndrome and (b) long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No specific assessment has been made of increasing awareness of chronic fatigue syndrome.

On 15 November 2020, the National Health Service launched a new taskforce with patients, charities, researchers and clinicians to help manage the NHS approach to 'long COVID'. The taskforce will produce information and support materials for patients and healthcare professionals to develop a wider understanding of the condition. The full announcement is available via the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/11/nhs-launches-40-long-covid-clinics-to-tackle-persistent-symptoms/>

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Dr Rupa Huq:

[126082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the access to a simple blood test (BNP or NT-proBNP) for heart failure patients; and what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of people who having been given that test who are then referred to a specialist early for further investigation and diagnosis.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Long Term Plan work to ensure early and rapid access to heart failure diagnostic tests remains a priority for NHS England and NHS Improvement during the COVID-19 pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement are committed to working with regions and networks to increase access to the B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP) blood test and echocardiography, to improve the early detection and optimum management of heart failure.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are also working with voluntary sector partners, employers, local authorities, community pharmacists and general practitioner practices to provide opportunities for the public to check on their health, through readily accessible tests of high-risk conditions.

No information is held centrally regarding the number and proportion of people who having been given the BNP blood test and who are then referred to a specialist early for further investigation and diagnosis.

■ HIV Infection

Wes Streeting:

[R] [\[126925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) reporting arrangements and (b) publication schedule will be for monitoring the Government's progress towards (i) ending new HIV transmissions in England by 2030, (ii) reducing new HIV transmissions in England by 80 per cent by 2025 and (iii) implementing the recommendations of the independent HIV Commission as part of the Government's National HIV Action Plan.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Government remains committed to reaching zero new HIV transmissions in England by 2030. Careful consideration will be given to the recommendations made in the independent HIV Commission's recently published report on reaching the 2030 target, including the recommendations on the interim milestone of an 80% reduction in new HIV transmissions by 2025, as we develop the Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish in 2021.

■ Hotels: Coronavirus

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[122615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether staying in a hotel to facilitate visiting a terminally ill family member is permissible in an area that is subject to tier 3 local covid alert level restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: Comprehensive advice on these regulations is available at the following link:

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

People who live in a tier 3 area are advised to avoid travelling or making overnight stays outside their local area, unless necessary for activity such as work, education or training, to meet caring responsibilities. If an overnight stay is required, it is advised to avoid staying overnight outside that area other than where necessary.

People may make overnight stays in hotels or other accommodation within their local area within their own household/support bubble.

People who live outside a tier 3 area are advised to avoid entering or making overnight stays there, unless necessary for activity such as work, education or training, to meet caring responsibilities. Exceptionally, people may visit with a close friend or family who is terminally ill in any tiered area.

■ Joint Biosecurity Centre**Andy Slaughter:** [\[95023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many consultants have been deployed by Deloitte at the new Joint Biosecurity Centre; and what the average day rate is for each consultant.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 September 2020]: The Joint Biosecurity Centre does not currently employ any consultants from Deloitte.

■ McKinsey and Company**Caroline Lucas:** [\[R\] \[110109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's contract with McKinsey to work on an ongoing review of NHS technology leadership, how many of the consultancy's staff are working on that contract; and what daily rates are paid to those consultants.

Helen Whately:

The Contract Award Notices for contracts awarded to McKinsey for their services to the Department across the Test and Trace Programme have been or will be published on Contracts Finder. As part of our strategic workforce planning activities the number of consultants engaged is constantly under review and subject to change.

The pay rates of individual consultants engaged from each supplier is commercially sensitive information. However, the payment rates are as per the Crown Commercial Service Framework rate card with discounts attained depending on value and length of role.

■ Mental Health Services: Consultants**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[122833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on the target to increase the number of consultant doctors working in each of the expansion areas referred to on page 13 of the Health Education England plan entitled Stepping forward to 2020/21: The mental health workforce plan for England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: As of June 2020, the mental health workforce in National Health Service-delivered services has increased by over 13,800 whole time equivalents since March 2016. Within this figure there are over 150 more whole time equivalent consultant doctors.

It is not possible at this time to map the current or future consultant workforce plans to the specific expansion areas set out in 'Stepping forward to 2020/21: The mental health workforce plan for England'.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[121889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to measure the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the level of demand for mental health services by recording covid-19 as a reason for using NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working with NHS Digital, providers of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services and clinical experts to enable data related to the impact of COVID-19 for patients with common mental health disorders to be collected within the new iteration of the IAPT dataset.

This will allow us to collect data on the diagnosis of COVID-19 and whether there is evidence of long-COVID for the patient. This work is being finalised and is expected to be rolled out at the start of 2021.

■ NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[127547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications have been (a) made to and (b) accepted by the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: As of 9 December, 268 claims have been received in England. 228 claims have been accepted for payment and the remainder are going through the stages of being processed and assessed.

■ NHS Test and Trace

Munira Wilson:

[\[105559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the Memorandum of Understanding between his Department and the National Police Chiefs' Council on their data sharing arrangement for NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 October 2020]: We will be publishing the Memorandum of Understanding in due course.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Computer Software

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[109326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to improve software quality in the NHS Test and Trace system; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Test and Trace software quality is appropriate for its use as it is based on historically proven Public Health England and National Health Service software. The challenges have been around scaling as the volume of positive test results increased exponentially. The priority initiatives have therefore focused on improving data quality; making technology infrastructure improvements to allow faster test results and faster contact tracing; and moving away from legacy architecture that was not designed for this purpose.

■ Nurses: Recruitment and Training**Rosie Cooper:**[\[125965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department plans to allocate to (a) recruiting and (b) training more Clinical Nurse Specialists.

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 in 2021-22, including any related to clinical nurse specialists, will be subject to a detailed financial planning exercise and finalised in due course.

Health Education England is facilitating a number of initiatives to increase Clinical Nurse Specialist capacity including the development of cancer nurses through provision of 250 training grants of up to £5,000 each in 2020/21. The grants are aimed at existing and aspiring Cancer Nurse Specialists to enable them to undertake additional training to develop specialist clinical, leadership, education or research capabilities.

■ Patients: Digital Technology**Anne Marie Morris:**[\[99618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients are participating effectively in remote consultations with healthcare practitioners to make informed decisions about their care; and whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of digital exclusion on patient care.

Helen Whately:

In their letter of 31 July, NHS England and NHS Improvement provided guidance that included a clear expectation that digital services would be developed in an inclusive manner. This inclusive approach needs to take account of the needs of those for whom digital services may not be accessible or present accessibility issues, including for deaf and other disabled people.

Work is being developed with NHSX to specifically assess the needs of digitally excluded groups and how digital services can be adjusted to provide the widest

possible access, while acknowledging that a mixed approach is necessary and non-digital channels must also remain available.

The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/07/Phase-3-letter-July-31-2020.pdf>

■ Social Services: Coronavirus

Cat Smith:

[123626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the weekly covid-29 tests for care workers will be made available for adult social care staff providing (a) vision rehabilitation and (b) other in-person rehabilitation.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the need to ensure professionals are able to visit care homes safely. Regular asymptomatic testing is currently being rolled out to all patient-facing National Health Service staff.

While this will cover the majority of professionals visiting care homes, we recognise the important role played by professionals who visit care homes who are not included in the NHS staff testing, such as adult social care staff who provide different forms of rehabilitation. We are using our learning from our previous 'Visiting Professionals' pilot to determine the best approach for asymptomatic testing professionals who are not NHS staff.

■ Vaccination

Munira Wilson:

[123721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether temporary vaccination delivery sites will be established to enable large scale vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Health Service is in the process of establishing vaccination centres across the country that can manage the logistical challenge of needing to store the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine at an appropriate temperature. Our approach, with three delivery models - community teams, vaccination sites and hospital hubs - has been devised to be flexible and reach all parts of the country. The phased vaccination programme, which began on 8 December with hospital hubs, will be expanded over the coming weeks and months to include local vaccination services and large-scale vaccination centres across the country.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[128219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason an increasing number of asylum applicants are waiting longer for their claims to be processed; and what steps she is taking to reduce the waiting time for applicants.

Chris Philp:

We are fixing a broken asylum system and creating a new one which will be fairer and firmer and compassionate towards those who need our help.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the length of time to process and asylum claim but we are determined to clear the backlog to help speed up decisions and prevent people becoming stuck in the system for long periods of time.

We are working to streamline cases and have already made significant progress in prioritising cases with acute vulnerability, those in receipt of the greatest level of support including, UASCs, and those that require a reconsideration.

Asylum Operations has developed a recovery plan focused on returning interviews and decisions back to pre-COVID-19 levels as soon as possible. We are also seeking to secure temporary resources to assist from within the Home Office and other government departments, along with other potential options.

■ Asylum: Coronavirus**Stuart C McDonald:**[\[128187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that asylum seekers can access covid-19 (a) home tests, (b) testing centres and (c) mobile testing facilities; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

Like everyone else in the UK, asylum seekers are being asked to abide by the relevant Government guidance and adhere to national and local measures to help fight coronavirus.

Asylum seekers can access coronavirus testing services in the same way as the wider UK population. Our contracted accommodation and advice providers can offer support and signposting to local health and mobile testing services, and to the Government's official website where orders for home tests can be placed if appropriate.

We remain in continued dialogue with national and local health leads in relation to rapid testing.

■ Asylum: Folkestone and Penally

Liz Saville Roberts:

[128220]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applicants have been transferred out of (a) Penally training camp and (b) Napier barracks, since September 2020.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[128221]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the official categorisation is of the temporary accommodation sites for asylum seekers at (a) Penally training camp in Pembrokeshire and (b) Napier barracks in Kent.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide support including accommodation to destitute asylum seekers whilst their claims are being considered.

In recent months, the asylum system has faced significant pressures and it has become necessary to source, and use, additional temporary accommodation, such as hotels, to ensure the Home Office can continue to meet its statutory obligations towards destitute asylum seekers.

Following an urgent scoping exercise, we identified further suitable and available accommodation and put it to use quickly. This now includes the use of two MOD sites in Kent and Pembrokeshire. The sites are being run by Clearsprings Ready Homes, one of the Home Office's Accommodation Providers under our Asylum Accommodation and Support contracts.

The number of asylum applicants transferred out of Napier barracks and Penally training camp are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

However, the latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, which includes those in hotel and wider government facilities. These statistics can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>.

■ Asylum: Health Professions

Liz Saville Roberts:

[128217]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how medical practitioners with an outstanding asylum claim of 12 months or more have not been allowed to work in their profession in 2020.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[128218]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that medical practitioners seeking asylum whose claim is outstanding for 12 months or longer can work in their profession in the UK.

Chris Philp:

Medical practitioners with an asylum claim who have been waiting 12 months or more for a decision on that claim can already apply to work in the many important medical practitioner roles included on the Shortage Occupation List.

■ Asylum: Housing**Afzal Khan:**[\[126976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been moved out of children's services into Home Office National Asylum Support Service accommodation while they are in the process of having an age assessment completed.

Afzal Khan:[\[126977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has undertaken an impact assessment on the decision to move the responsibility for age assessments to her Department and away from children's services.

Chris Philp:

Where there is doubt about an individual's age and there is no clear and credible documentary evidence, a local authority will undertake a Merton compliant age assessment to establish their eligibility for children's services. It remains Home Office policy to give prominence to a Merton compliant assessment undertaken by a local authority, when making a decision on age for immigration purposes. Whilst the outcome of this assessment is pending, the local authority will continue to treat the individual as a child, and they will not be transferred to Home Office asylum support accommodation.

The Home Office has not taken away responsibility for Merton compliant age assessments from local authorities. However, the department has temporarily contracted a small team of qualified social workers to support the delivery of Kent Intake Unit's (KIU) functions in respect of children and those claiming to be under 18 years old. In addition to providing support on safeguarding activities, part of the work of these social workers is to conduct shortened initial assessments on age.

We are fixing our broken asylum system to make it firm and fair. We will seek to stop abuse of the system while ensuring it is compassionate towards those who need our help, welcoming people through safe and legal routes.

As part of this work we are exploring with local authorities how we can improve the age assessment process.

■ Asylum: Staff**Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[128332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum decision makers left their jobs within the first 12 months of employment in the Asylum Operations Regional Asylum Intake Unit in Cardiff.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is unable to state how many and what proportion of asylum decision makers left their jobs within the first 12 months of employment in the Asylum Operations Regional Intake Unit in Cardiff. The temporary regional intake unit in Cardiff has been in operation since April 2020, as part of the Home Office response to the COVID pandemic.

In line with Government restrictions on travel and to continue to meet commitments during the COVID 19 restrictions, the Home Office temporarily introduced additional locations to register asylum claims in Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Leeds, Solihull and Cardiff, which began taking appointments on 19 April 2020.

■ Corruption**Dan Carden:**[\[128236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to renew the UK Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-22 with a view to addressing issues around (a) cronyism, (b) conflicts of interest and (c) party funding.

James Brokenshire:

The government is focussed on implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy. Officials have begun to consider the question of renewal and at present no decision has been made. The content of any future strategy would be informed by an evidence-based review of threats, progress and priorities.

Dan Carden:[\[128237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of creating an independent Anti-Corruption Agency in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

James Brokenshire:

The UK recently received international recognition for the positive structures and systems in place to address corruption. This was evidenced in the UK's 2019 United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Peer Review which singled out as successes and good practice the UK's *"structures and governance for the coordination of anticorruption activity, including a national anti-corruption strategy, a Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption Champion, an Inter-Ministerial Group on Anti-Corruption and a cross-government Joint Anti-Corruption Unit."*

Dan Carden:[\[128238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of creating an Independent Commissioner for Corruption; and if she will make a statement.

James Brokenshire:

The UK recently received international recognition for the positive structures and systems in place to address corruption. This was evidenced in the UK's 2019 United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Peer Review which singled out as

successes and good practice the UK's "*structures and governance for the coordination of anticorruption activity, including a national anti-corruption strategy, a Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption Champion, an Inter-Ministerial Group on Anti-Corruption and a cross-government Joint Anti-Corruption Unit.*"

■ Cybercrime

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[127023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce cyber-crime in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England.

James Brokenshire:

Cyber security, including cyber crime, is a top priority threat to national security. This is why the National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021 is supported by £1.9 billion of transformational investment.

Through the National Cyber Security Programme, we have invested over £250 million since 2010 to bolster the law enforcement response to the cyber crime threat. We have boosted the capabilities of the National Crime Agency's National Cyber Crime Unit by increasing their ability to investigate the most serious cyber crime. And we are continuing to invest in the cyber teams in each of the Regional Organised Crime Units across England and Wales, to bolster the regional response.

In 2019 the Government launched specialist Cyber Crime Units in every local police force, in order to improve the local response, provide an effective investigative response and an improved victim experience. The Government also provides funding for the Cyber PROTECT police officers and staff in all policing regions and local forces, and Cyber Resilience Centres, which are now live in each region, providing cyber security advice and support to micro and small SMEs.

■ Deportation: Jamaica

Daisy Cooper:

[\[122890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) cancel the deportation flight to Jamaica scheduled for 2 December 2020 and (b) halt any further such flights from the UK.

Priti Patel:

a) No

b) No

■ Drugs: Misuse

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[127020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce drug usage in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England.

Kit Malthouse:

Drugs devastate lives, ruin families and damage communities. Our approach is to prevent drug misuse in our communities and support people through treatment and recovery

The Home Office commissioned Dame Carol Black to lead a major independent Review of Drugs. The Review's findings were published in February. The Review, building on existing Government strategies to combat drugs, serious violence and serious and organised crime, examined the harms that drugs cause and the best ways to prevent drug-taking. The Health and Social Care Secretary commissioned Dame Carol Black to lead a further review, focused on prevention, treatment and recovery in order to focus our efforts in those areas most effectively

Law enforcement partners are already cracking down on criminals who supply drugs, causing misery to families and communities. The National Crime Agency works with partners around the world to target crime groups that traffic drugs into the UK. A total of 183,068 drug seizures were made in England and Wales in 2019/20, a 20% increase compared with the previous year (153,136).

Individual local authorities are responsible for the design, commissioning and monitoring of locally tailored treatment and prevention systems in West Yorkshire. These systems do not operate in isolation and are coordinated in partnership with local stakeholders that include social care, probation, prisons, education and the police in line with the Government's overall approach to this complex issue.

■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority**Karen Bradley:****[R] [128158]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources she will provide to the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority for inspection and enforcement activities from 1 January 2021 to help tackle abuses of the new points-based immigration system.

Victoria Atkins:

As we replace freedom of movement with the Points-Based System, we remain committed to preventing any abuse of the system, including by protecting individuals from modern slavery and exploitation by criminal traffickers and unscrupulous employers.

The Government spends £33m a year on state enforcement of employment rights to support the work of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), HMRC's National Minimum Wage Team and the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate. GLAA resources for 2021/2022 have not yet been agreed.

■ Immigration: Windrush Generation**Neil Coyle:****[127571]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to The Response to the Windrush Lessons Learned Review: A Comprehensive Improvement Plan, what

the estimated completion date is for the initial analysis of data and evidence on the compliant environment.

Priti Patel:

As set out in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan, the initial analysis of data and evidence on the compliant environment will be completed by Autumn 2021.

■ **Independent Office for Police Conduct: Pay**

John Spellar:

[\[125940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timeframe is for signing off on the pay settlement for staff of the Independent Office for Police Conduct

Kit Malthouse:

The pay remit process is set out in the Civil Service pay remit guidance 2020/21 published 18 May 2020. Under this guidance Pay Awards for Arms Length Bodies (ALBs), such as the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC), must be approved by the relevant Minister, and then the Home Secretary. There is no laid down timeframe for this approval process.

The IOPC pay award proposals are currently under consideration by the relevant Minister and will be with the Home Secretary shortly.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[126107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 117315 on Members: Correspondence, how her Department monitors its adherence to its 95 per cent target.

James Brokenshire:

The Department uses a workflow tool which all Operational MPs correspondence is registered on. We are able to run reports each day which summarises the daily situation in relation to intake and output and the age of each piece of MPs correspondence. The report also monitors the daily progress of output towards the weekly 95% target.

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard is held at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-august-2020> and this includes data up to and including the end of quarter 2-2020/21. We are proposing the release of data for quarter 3, in due course.

Mr John Baron:

[\[128085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 9 September 2020, 3 November 2020 and 25 November 2020 on his constituent.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Hon. Member's correspondence. An official response was sent on 11 December 2020.

Background:

The Hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay wrote to UKVI on 9 September 2020 requesting an update on the issue of a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) for his constituent Ms Ruby Glifonea. The Hon. Member sent chasers on 3 November 2020 and 25 November 2020.

A decision was taken to issue Ms Glifonea with a non-European Economic Area (EEA) residence card on 14 July 2020 and her BRP was produced on 15 July 2020. The BRP was sent to her legal representatives, NR Legal Solicitors Ltd but delivery on 18 August 2020 was unsuccessful and the BRP was returned undelivered.

Following further contact with Ms Glifonea, her BRP was re-issued on 6 November 2020 to her home address.

Ms Glifonea subsequently applied for settlement in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) on 20 November 2020 and she was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK on 9 December 2020.

An official response was sent on 11 December 2020

■ Police: Equality**Stuart Anderson:**[\[126134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what incentives her Department has put in place to increase the diversity of local police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

Policing remains an attractive and well-paid career, with a pension that is among the best available.

Every force should be striving to become representative of the communities it serves. We have been clear that the uplift in officers is a once in generation opportunity to improve diversity. We are supporting forces with a variety of attraction and recruitment strategies, whilst delivering a campaign that's been designed to reach the widest and most diverse audience possible.

Some forces have made significant improvements in the rate of black, Asian and minority ethnic joiners through successful positive action measures. Information is available on [police.uk](https://www.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.

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.

■ Security Industry Authority: Licensing**John Spellar:****[125939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for a Security Industry Authority licence have been outstanding for more than (a) one month and (b)(i) three and (ii) six months.

Victoria Atkins:

As at 8 December 2020, the SIA had 8,034 applications awaiting a decision. Of these, 4,021 had been outstanding for 29 days or less and 2,039 outstanding for between 30 days and 3 months. 946 had been outstanding for 3 months and 1 day to 6 months. The remaining 1,028 had been outstanding for over 6 months and 1 day.

The SIA receives an average of 140,000 individual licence applications per year. The reasons applications are held open over 25 days are mainly due to action required by third parties or information from the applicant, for example, awaiting medical consents and/or reports, overseas criminality certificate exceptions (requiring sworn oaths and acceptable character references) or the results from criminality disclosure agencies and/or overseas embassies in the case of overseas checks.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**Rehman Chishti:****[128120]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing regulation of the registration of small vessels to help counter illegal Channel crossings.

Chris Philp:

Small boats used by migrants to cross the Channel are varied in type, origin and seaworthiness. While there is attraction in any enterprise which offers to reduce the supply of craft for these dangerous, illegally-facilitated and unnecessary crossings, we are not of the view that these proposals would materially affect the threat. This is because many of these vessels are insubstantial; a good number are stolen or otherwise misappropriated from legitimate owners; and the origin of these vessels is not confined to France. Therefore, any adoption of such an increased regulatory posture is viewed as a disproportionate and less effective approach to reducing supply of boats and opportunity for crossings.

We are engaged with the French in minimising supply - and are seeing results, with crossings per calm weather day down by 60% since September 2020, thanks to law enforcement work on both sides of the Channel. We have not discussed the proposal with the French and have no plans to do so at this time but will keep it under review.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Community Infrastructure Levy****Dr Matthew Offord:****[125996]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether local authorities have an obligation to seek all relevant information before imposing a Community Infrastructure Levy.

Christopher Pincher:

Local authorities must, when proposing to charge a Community Infrastructure Levy and when setting rates, strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of funding from the Levy, the estimated cost of infrastructure required to support the development of its area and the potential effects of the imposition of the Levy on the economic viability of development across its area. The local authority must consult on a draft charging schedule and demonstrate to an independent inspector that they have sufficiently considered the available evidence to support their proposals.

■ Community Infrastructure Levy: Exemptions**Dr Matthew Offord:****[125995]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities in the event that a planning applicant indicates they have an exemption from the Community Infrastructure Levy but do not supply evidence.

Dr Matthew Offord:**[125997]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether a local authority must rescind a liability notice for a Community Infrastructure Levy when the planning applicant having started construction subsequently provides evidence of exemption.

Dr Matthew Offord:**[125998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will introduce an independent arbitrator for disputes between local authorities and planning applicants over exemption from a Community Infrastructure Levy.

Christopher Pincher:

Guidance on the application of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has been published by the Government and is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>. This explains the eligibility to claim an exemption from the Levy and the regulatory processes that must be followed by the applicant in applying for, obtaining and maintaining an exemption. It also explains the steps the local authority must follow. Legislation requires that any exemption from a levy charge must be obtained prior to the commencement of the development.

The CIL liability notice must include the chargeable amount and state the amount of any exemption. The local authority must issue a revised liability notice if the chargeable amount changes, including if there is a change to the exemption. Where an authority issues a liability notice any earlier liability notices cease to have effect.

The CIL regulations set out an appeal process, under which an applicant has 60 days from the issuance of their CIL liability notice, and prior to the commencement of development, to appeal the chargeable amount. We are not currently seeking to introduce an additional arbitration process to CIL. However, in developing the new Infrastructure Levy, we will carefully consider how best to address any disputes over liabilities.

■ **Constituencies: Lancaster**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[128098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the traditional boundary of the County Palatine of Lancaster is extant; and what effect the Local Government Acts (a) 1888, (b) 1929 and (c) 1972 have on that County Palatine in relation to (i) Audenshaw, (ii) Denton, (iii) Reddish, (iv) Heaton Chapel and (v) Heaton Norris.

Luke Hall:

The County Palatine of Lancaster is often seen as the historic county of Lancashire. The historic counties are an important element of our traditions which support the identity and cultures of many of our local communities. The government has been active in promoting the historic counties of our nation as a key element of our heritage and will continue to do so.

No legislation has specifically abolished historic counties, but they do not exist for the purposes of the administration of local government or ceremonial purposes, though historic, administrative and ceremonial boundaries may in some cases be coterminous. All of the areas mentioned in the question are historically within the County Palatine of Lancaster, and are now in the ceremonial county of Greater Manchester and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Stockport and Tameside, and within the area of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, for the delivery of their modern local services.

■ **Council Tax Reduction Schemes: Greater Manchester**

Afzal Khan:

[\[126192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the value was of unclaimed council tax support in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

Luke Hall:

Local council tax support schemes are the responsibility of individual local authorities. The Government does not collect data on the value of unclaimed council tax support.

■ Homelessness

Taiwo Owatemi:

[127008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that homeless people have access to (a) shelter, (b) financial support and (c) mental health services during winter 2020-21.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We have taken unprecedented action this year to protect vulnerable people. The ongoing 'Everyone In' campaign has helped to protect thousands of lives during the pandemic - by September it had supported over 29,000 vulnerable people, with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 provided with settled accommodation or move on support. We recognise the challenges that cold weather poses for local authorities in terms of rough sleeping. That is why we have launched a third year of the Cold Weather Fund. This £10 million fund is available to all local authorities to provide a robust, local response to support rough sleepers off the streets over the winter period, including providing self-contained and Covid-secure accommodation and support. We have also provided a £2 million Homelessness Winter Transformation Fund (HWF) for faith and community groups to provide alternative provision this winter. This is on top of our 'Protect Programme' launched in November which is the next step in the ongoing targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from Covid-19. A further £15 million will be provided to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This programme will help areas that need additional support most throughout winter. We recognise that rough sleeping is not just a housing issue and that many people need additional support. £23 million this year will be used to provide substance misuse treatment services for rough sleepers. This funding will provide the necessary support needed to many vulnerable individuals experiencing rough sleeping, including those accommodated under the Government's response to Covid-19. This will enable them to rebuild their lives and move towards sustaining long-term accommodation. Public Health England (PHE) has published guidance to assist commissioners, managers and staff in addressing Covid-19 in drug and alcohol services. The Department of Health and Social Care has secured £30 million to meet the mental health needs of people sleeping rough, as part of the NHS England Long Term Plan - until 2023/24. This will ensure better access to specialist homelessness NHS mental health provision, integrated with existing outreach services, for the parts of England with the highest levels of need. Taken together, the overall amount we are spending on rough sleeping and homelessness this year is over £700 million.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[128199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of homeless people who are clinically extremely vulnerable in England.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise that many people sleeping rough have health and care support needs that make them clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable.

That is why the Government is working with councils to prioritise support for clinically vulnerable people sleeping rough as part of the £15 million Protect Programme. Areas with high numbers of rough sleepers will receive extra targeted support to provide accommodation for those currently sleeping rough, working with councils to prioritise those who are clinically vulnerable – this will continue throughout the winter. All local authorities have been asked to update their delivery plans for supporting rough sleepers to set out how they will ensure rough sleepers are supported across the winter period. We have also worked closely with Public Health England and NHS England to ensure people who have been brought in from the streets in response to the Covid-19 pandemic have their health needs and care needs met. Local authorities continue to have statutory duties to help people identified as homeless, or threatened with homelessness in their area, including rough sleepers.

Our ongoing support to rough sleepers has been shown to have protected many extremely vulnerable people from the risk of Covid-19 and ultimately will have saved lives. According to research by UCL, published in the Lancet, preventative measures taken by the Government may have avoided 21,092 infections, 266 deaths, 1,164 hospital admissions and 338 intensive care (ICU) admissions of homeless people.

We know that the reasons people sleep rough are complex and that they require support as well as accommodation. On Monday we also announced allocations of £23 million for substance misuse treatment and recovery services for people rough sleeping or at risk, backed by an additional investment of £52 million next year. This will enable us to support more vulnerable people with substance misuse needs, to enable individuals to access the support they need to rebuild their lives off the streets and move towards longer-term accommodation.

■ Housing: Construction**Caroline Nokes:**[\[126011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of suspending the five year Housing Land Supply for Councils requirement in the Solent Region in response to the need to establish a suitable nitrate mitigation regime.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government recognises the challenges local authorities in the Solent are facing, and officials from across Government and its agencies are working closely together to identify practical ways forward. However, it is important to keep the planning system moving so it can play its full part in the economic recovery to come. We will keep this matter under review.

In the absence of the 5 year land supply, the presumption in favour of housing development will not be at the expense of important protected areas, such as Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and irreplaceable habitats.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[126172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many dwellings have been (a) approved and (b) completed in (i) Wakefield, (ii) West Yorkshire and (iii) England in 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The number of housing units granted planning permission in England in the year ending 30 June 2020 is available in Planning Applications in England: January to June 2020, available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-applications-in-england-january-to-june-2020> (page 10). Separate figures for Wakefield or West Yorkshire are not available.

Estimates of building control reported new build dwelling completions for Wakefield, each local authority in West Yorkshire, and England, in each quarter to June 2020, are shown in Live Table 253a at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>.

These cover new build dwellings only and should be regarded as a leading indicator of overall housing supply. The department also publishes an annual release entitled 'Housing supply: net additional dwellings, England', which is the primary and most comprehensive measure of housing supply.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Matthew Pennycook:

[126087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich of 12 October 2020 on the approach of property insurers to mature trees in close proximity to homes that require underpinning to prevent or correct subsidence.

Christopher Pincher:

This correspondence has been transferred, as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is best placed to respond.

■ **Planning Permission**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[126171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many planning applications have been considered for calling in by his Department since the beginning of 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

As of early December, 404 cases have been or are currently under consideration for call in in 2020.

■ Private Rented Housing: Evictions

Seema Malhotra:

[128173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) section 8 and (b) section 21 notices issued by landlords to tenants subject to the benefits cap who have fallen into arrears in the last two years.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not routinely collect data on the number of Section 21 or Section 8 notices served by landlords. However, the Ministry of Justice publishes national statistics on possession actions in county courts by private and social landlords at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-july-to-september-2020>.

To protect tenants over the winter, we have changed the law so that landlords must provide tenants with six months' notice before they can bring a claim to the county court for possession in all but the most serious cases. This means that tenants served notice today do not need to leave their homes until June 2021 providing more time to seek advice to find alternative accommodation or support.

■ Sleeping Rough: Temporary Accommodation

Thangam Debbonaire:

[128198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the announcement of 18 December 2018 of £5 million for a new network of rough sleeping hubs, how many of those rough sleeping hubs are operational; where they are located; and how many bed spaces they will provide in winter 2020-21.

Kelly Tolhurst:

In our Rough Sleeping Strategy, MHCLG committed to piloting at least 15 Somewhere Safe to Stay (SSStS) hubs. We announced the first 11 of these hubs on 18 December 2018 located in: Brighton & Hove; Bristol; Cheshire; Derby; Gloucestershire; Lincoln; Liverpool; Medway; Nottingham; Preston; and West London

On 3 May 2020, we announced funding for a further 20 SSStS hubs across the country, bringing the total number of hubs to 31 – exceeding the commitment made in the Rough Sleeping Strategy.

These additional hubs were located in: Bedford; East Suffolk; Milton Keynes; Norwich; Cornwall; Hull; Luton; Durham; Plymouth; South Norfolk; Southampton; Warrington; Oxford; Worcester; Haringey; Leeds; Croydon; Southwark; Thanet District Council; and the Greater London Authority.

SSStS hubs are subject to similar considerations as night shelters and decisions to open must be balanced on a detailed Covid-19 risk assessment.

MHCLG are working closely with local authorities to monitor the plans of providers across the country and ensuring that they offer Covid-secure services, should their local authority make the decision for them to open.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Stephen Farry:

[\[126180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how the Shared Prosperity Fund will be allocated across the UK.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

Funding for the UKSPF will ramp up so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match receipts from EU structural funds, on average reaching around £1.5 billion per year. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in 2021 and will confirm its funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

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

Stephen Farry:

[\[126182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the devolved Administrations will receive at least the same amount of funding under the Shared Prosperity Fund as they received under the EU Structural Fund.

Luke Hall:

I refer the hon Member to the answer I gave to PQ UIN 126180 on 15 December 2020.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Agricultural Products: Japan

Gareth Thomas:

[\[122551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps producers of British agricultural goods seeking geographical indication status in Japan have to take to secure UK ministerial support; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) includes a new provision allowing more world-famous British products to receive protected recognition in Japan.

Under CEPA, it has been agreed that all Geographical Indicators (GIs) put forward by the UK will undergo Japan's GI examination processes.

UK businesses will not need to navigate the Japanese administrative system on their own to get their iconic UK goods protected under the CEPA. The UK government will

put forward all additional GIs (excluding Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSGs) and the seven GIs that will already be protected under the agreement), for protection in Japan on behalf of UK producers, saving time and money for UK businesses.

There are no additional steps that agricultural producers need to take to ensure they have ministerial support. The Department for International Trade and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are in regular contact with GI producers and Devolved Administrations and will continue to be throughout the process.

■ Data Protection: Japan

Bill Esterson:

[\[128148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what protections are in the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to ensure that citizens' data is protected in the event that companies decide to transfer that data abroad; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) ensures that data can flow between the countries while maintaining high data protection standards. The deal does not mandate that data must flow, but rather the provisions clear the way for the flow of data between both countries for business purposes; when data needs to flow across a border it can do so without coming up against unjustified barriers. CEPA does not interfere with the high level of protection afforded to personal data when it is transferred out of the UK under the UK's data protections laws.

■ Data Protection: World Trade Organisation

Bill Esterson:

[\[128150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that existing safeguards on people's (a) privacy and (b) data protection will be replicated as part of a future WTO agreement on cross-border data flows; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The UK government is seeking provisions in trade agreements that remove barriers to the free flow of data, while not lowering the standard of protection afforded to the personal data of UK individuals. The UK is, and will remain, committed to maintaining high standards of protection for personal data, including when it is transferred across borders. The UK recognises the importance of data protection to enable trading partners to build trust through transparent treatment of personal data and to ensure that data is able to flow in an uninterrupted manner.

■ Trade Agreements

Emily Thornberry:

[\[128105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to lay before Parliament the texts of the Continuity Trade Agreements signed with (a) North Macedonia on 3 December 2020, (b) Egypt on 5 December 2020, (c) Kenya, Norway and Iceland on 8 December 2020, (d) Canada on 9 December 2020, (e) Singapore on 10 December 2020 and (f) Vietnam on 11 December 2020; and what the reason is for the time period between signing each of those agreements and publication to Parliament.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Rt Hon. Lady is right to draw the attention of the House to the number of trade agreements that HM Government has concluded. As of 15th December, we have reached agreements with 58 countries, covering trade worth £198 billion.

Agreements with Canada and North Macedonia were laid in Parliament on Thursday 10th November. We will lay all remaining continuity agreements in Parliament shortly.

■ Trade Agreements: Algeria

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[127686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she has made on securing a free trade agreement with Algeria.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[127687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she has made on securing a free trade agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[127688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress she has made on securing a free trade agreement with Serbia.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

In under two years, and as of 15th December, we have agreed trade deals with 58 countries that accounted for £198 billion of bilateral trade in 2019. We have always been clear that we will not do a deal that is not in the British national interest, whatever the deadline.

Whilst we have had some robust discussions in that spirit, leading to a mutually beneficial agreement in most cases, this has not been the case for all countries. Further, it has not always been possible to engage with partners due to their elections and delays in forming their governments. As a result, we have announced that agreements with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Algeria – as well as, seeking to be open with my Hon. Friend, Montenegro – will not be in force on 1st January 2021.

However, they are all valued partners on a range of economic and security issues and we remain willing and committed to concluding agreements with them as soon as possible.

■ Trade Agreements: Amazonia

Tulip Siddiq: [126085]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to prevent the import of goods sourced from illegal deforestation in the Amazon in future trade deals.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Britain is committed to upholding her high environmental standards, including through environmental provisions within Free Trade Agreements.

HM Government continues to raise its concerns regarding deforestation regularly with international partners, and the importance of sustainable and resilient economies, most recently at the United Kingdom-Brazil Joint Economic and Trade Committee on 11th November.

We have committed over £250m through International Climate Finance programmes aimed at tackling deforestation in Brazil – including through our Partnerships for Forests programme, which supports environmentally-friendly farming and replanting projects in the Amazon – and we are introducing new legislation that requires large British companies to make sure forest risk commodities in their supply chains are sourced legally in producer countries.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Jonathan Edwards: [128116]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish an impact assessment of the effect of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement on Wales.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to an inclusive and transparent trade policy. We have published an impact assessment for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Japan, setting out the potential economic impacts on all nations and regions of the UK, including Wales.

Further details on this analysis are set out in our published impact assessment and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-japan-cepa-final-impact-assessment>.

■ Trade Agreements: Singapore

Jonathan Edwards: [128117]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish an impact assessment of the effect of the UK-Singapore trade agreement on Wales.

Greg Hands:

Consistent with other transitioned agreements, the Department will lay a Parliamentary Report, with Explanatory Memorandum, alongside the UK–Singapore

text in Parliament. These reports are intended to aid businesses, consumers and parliamentarians in understanding any significant differences made to our trade relationship with partner countries and the reasons for any changes, and their impact.

Our Parliamentary Reports contain detailed information about the volume of trade, composition of imports and exports, and wider economic impact of these agreements. However, they do not assess the impact on specific regions or nations of the UK.

JUSTICE

■ Domestic Abuse: Legal Aid Scheme

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[128135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of victims of domestic abuse who have been denied legal aid as a result of trapped capital in the form of property which cannot be sold or borrowed against.

Alex Chalk:

The government is absolutely clear that victims of domestic abuse must have access to the help that they need, including access to legal aid. For victims of domestic abuse seeking a protective injunction, the upper income and capital thresholds are waived. This means that anyone can financially qualify for this type of legal aid, subject to potentially making a contribution to the costs of the case depending on their means. Applications for legal aid are assessed against statutory eligibility criteria, and any capital held is taken into account or disregarded to the extent the Regulations either require or permit.

In February 2019 we announced a review of the means test. The review is assessing the effectiveness with which the test protects access to justice, and we are specifically considering the experiences of victims of domestic abuse. 95% of applications for legal aid in the 'Domestic Violence' category of law were granted in the most recent completed financial year.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[128134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many firms of solicitors held (a) a civil and (b) a criminal legal aid contract as of 1 December 2020.

Alex Chalk:

Please note for the figures provided that some firms may have more than one office. There are currently 1,122 firms who hold a Criminal Legal Aid Contract. There are currently 1,460 firms who hold a Civil Legal Aid Contract. This data is correct as at 14 December 2020.

The Legal Aid Agency frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision around the country and moves quickly to ensure provision where gaps may appear.

■ Prison and Probation Service: Ethnic Groups**Ms Lyn Brown:****[125974]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2020 to Question 121217 on Prison and Probation Service: Labour Turnover, what assessment he has made of which factors contribute towards the (a) lower promotion rate among Black staff and (b) higher leaving rates among Asian and other ethnic minority staff.

Lucy Frazer:

We are working on building a broad talent base within HMPPS, where we attract and retain high-quality, passionate people from diverse backgrounds.

While the data from Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) annual staff equalities report 2019/2020 shows that the leaving rate for BAME staff is higher than that of White staff, the gap has closed for promotion rates for the same groups. This is in part due to initiatives such as diverse interview panels and mentoring.

HMPPS recognises that further work is needed to improve the data and understand the contributing factors to staff leaving the agency or not progressing. The Race Action Programme will utilise data to identify areas for improvement and where data meets the statistical thresholds, staff previously grouped as Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) to aid consistency with other government departments, will be disaggregated to provide greater insight.

HM Prison and Probation Service annual staff equalities report 2019/2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-annual-staff-equalities-report-2019-to-2020>

■ Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave**Ms Lyn Brown:****[125973]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2020 to Question 121220 on Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave, what assessment she has made of the reasons for sickness absences having increased in the majority of sickness categories.

Lucy Frazer:

We cannot conclusively determine why there has been an increase in sickness absences across the majority of sickness categories. Ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of HMPPS staff in England and Wales is a continuing priority, and all staff are supported with access to a comprehensive occupational health service and employee assistance programme.

The COVID pandemic has subsequently impacted public health, both physically and mentally, but is likely only to be a small factor given the data provided in PQ 121220 is up to the end of March 2020.

■ Prison Sentences

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2020 to Question 121209, what estimate his Department has made of the number of prisoners who will be serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection in (a) custody and (b) the recall population in (i) September 2021, (ii) September 2022, (iii) September 2023, (iv) September 2024, (v) September 2025 and (vi) September 2026.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government published the '*Prison Population Projections: 2020 to 2026*' in November 2020. The projections of unreleased and recalled prisoners serving Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences are as follows:

	SEP-21	SEP-22	SEP-23	SEP-24	SEP-25	SEP-26
Unreleased IPP	1,700	1,500	1,300	1,100	900	800
Recalled IPP	1,700	2,000	2,200	2,300	2,500	2,600

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[126796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the merits of transferring people who remain on Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences despite their abolition in 2012; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

There are no plans to transfer those still serving IPP sentences on to other types of sentence. Where prisoners serving an IPP sentence have completed their minimum term and not yet been released, it is because the independent Parole Board has determined that their risk remains too high for them to be safely managed in the community. It would, therefore, be irresponsible to change their IPP sentence into one which guarantees their automatic (and, in many cases, immediate) release, when we know that the Parole Board has concluded that they are not safe to be released.

All IPP prisoners who have passed their tariff date have their cases regularly reviewed by the independent Parole Board. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) have been and continue to review the cases of post tariff IPP prisoners who have failed to achieve release or progression to open prison conditions, despite two or more parole reviews, as well as those who received a tariff of 2 years or under. These reviews enable HMPPS Psychology Services to consult with those managing prisoners in order to shape pathways towards progression. As of October 2020, over 1,500 reviews have taken place, with 339 IPP prisoners from this cohort having achieved release, and a further 422 a progressive move to open conditions.

We will continue to ensure that IPP prisoners are given every opportunity to progress towards the point where the Parole Board judges that their risk may now be effectively managed in the community. Our primary responsibility is to protect the public.

■ **Prisoners' Release: Mobile Phones**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[125972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many mobile phones his Department has provided to prison leavers who do not have access to a phone of their own; and whether his Department has procured sufficient mobile phones to ensure that all such prison leavers are able to have access to one.

Lucy Frazer:

As of 1 December, the total number of phones allocated to those in the community and on release from prison was 7,936. Any demand from prison leavers who need a phone will be met.

The phones, which are basic and restricted to calls and text messages only, are provided to offenders who do not have a phone of their own so that their probation officer can contact them during the coronavirus pandemic. It also enables the offenders to stay in touch with other support services, such as accommodation providers, the local council and health services.

■ **Prisons: Disciplinary Proceedings**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[125979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will update the reference to PSI 47/2011 in the publication entitled DIS2 Prisoner adjudication information sheet and prisoners statement.

Lucy Frazer:

The prisoner discipline system upholds justice in prisons and ensures incidents of prisoner rule-breaking have consequences.

Prison Service Instruction 05/2018 covers the overarching policy of the prisoner discipline system and has replaced version 47/2011. The adjudication process is not invalidated by the incorrect reference on the forms, as the charging guidance remains unchanged from the previous Prison Service Instruction.

New forms with the correct corresponding reference will be issued in the New Year, including an Easy Read version of the DIS2 prisoner information sheet which will support prisoners to better understand the adjudications system. The new forms will also reflect the introduction of virtual hearings.

■ Youth Custody

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report of a visit to Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, published on 7 December 2020, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of existing guidance for the implementation of reverse cohorting measures in youth custody.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report of a visit to Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, published on 7 December 2020, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing an updated Covid recovery strategy for youth custody

Lucy Frazer:

Whilst we are committed to restrict the potential spread of Covid-19 within secure establishments in order to protect children and staff, it is important that children 'reverse cohorting' have sufficient opportunities for meaningful social interaction with staff, and where possible, with peers to support their mental and emotional wellbeing. It is our view that the current guidance, drafted with close engagement from NHS England and Public Health England, while fit for purpose, was not being implemented suitably at the centre with regard to children reverse cohorting.

Following the recent assurance visit by Ofsted, the Youth Custody Service (YCS) took immediate steps to ensure the provider expanded opportunities for such interaction for the children in Rainsbrook's "Reverse Cohorting Unit". These measures taken took effect from the weekend after the assurance visit.

We continue to monitor the youth estate closely with regard to Covid-19 recovery, to ensure distinct needs of children are taken into account during this challenging time. This has included the creation of 'YCS-specific' Exceptional Delivery Models, with the delivery of social visits and education remaining a particular priority as we seek to mirror the position taken for vulnerable children in the community where it is possible to do so.

Every Young Offender Institution (YOI) and Secure Training Centres (STC) – including Rainsbrook STC - has staff testing in place, and reception/transfer testing is being rolled out across the secure estate at pace with the intention for all YOIs and STCs to be testing by the end of January 2021. Whilst this will be dependent on wider health guidance and advice, this level of testing could help reduce the amount of time children are required to 'reverse cohort' upon arrival at a secure setting.

To ensure that lessons learned from the Covid-19 period are taken into account going forwards, the YCS have commissioned a programme of research, in collaboration with academics, to evaluate and learn lessons from the impact and response to Covid-19 and the results will inform their recovery planning.

■ Youth Custody: Coronavirus

Peter Kyle:

[\[128209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many calls have been made using the Purple Visits app in youth custodial settings since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

As of 14 December the information available shows that there have been 657 video calls made using the Purple Visits app at Cookham Wood, Werrington and Wetherby Young Offender Institutions and Oakhill and Rainsbrook Secure Training Centres since the start of May. There have also been 491 calls for the entirety of HMYOI Feltham (A and B sites, for children and young adults respectively). 241 calls were also made at HMYOI Parc (which includes a specific young people's unit), however, it is not currently practical to break down how many of these were made by children and young people.

This has supplemented access to regular phone calls (with young people having been allocated additional free phone credits) as well as 'face to face' social visits, which re-commenced across public sector under 18 Young Offender Institutions from mid-July. Furthermore, 'SECURE STAIRS - the integrated framework of care jointly led by NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Youth Custody Service (YCS) and which provides the foundations as to how the YCS works with children - has adapted its approach during this period to underline the importance of connectivity, whilst adhering to the guidance on physical distancing.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Advertising

Mhairi Black:

[\[126903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much (a) his Department, (b) the Union Unit, and (c) the Union Taskforce spent on advertising in each financial year since 2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office keeps financial information for seven financial years, so available information only extends to 2013-14.

The Office's annual expenditure on all advertising, including paid-for promotion on digital platforms including social media promotion, and paid-for listings in search results was as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION	PAID-FOR LISTINGS IN SEARCH RESULTS	TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON ADVERTISING
2013-2014	Nil	Nil	Nil
2014-2015	Nil	Nil	Nil

FINANCIAL YEAR	SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION	PAID-FOR LISTINGS IN SEARCH RESULTS	TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON ADVERTISING
2015-2016	£371	Nil	£371
2016-2017	£15,956	Nil	£15,956
2017-2018	£22,829	£1,647	£24,476
2018-2019	£46,217	£11,829	£58,046
2019-2020	£36,704	Nil	£36,704

The Office does not hold information on budget allocations for 2021/22 at this time.

The Office does not hold figures for the Union Unit or Union Taskforce.

Mhairi Black:

[126908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will publish copies of audience targeting information used by his Department for (a) advertising, (b) campaign and (c) promotional purposes in the last 12 months.

Mr Alister Jack:

The audience targeting information used by the Office over the last 12 months is as follows:

- All people in Scotland;
- All people living in Scotland aged 18+;
- All people in Scotland matching Interest: Small business, Entrepreneurship or Business, Behaviours : Small Business Owners, Industry : Business and Finance;
- All people in Scotland matching Interest: Small Business, Small Business Owners, Small Business Administration, Small Business Saturday, business owner or Federation of Small Businesses. Behaviours: Small Business Owners. Employers: Small Business Owner, Industry: Business and Finance.

■ Scotland Office: Communication

Mhairi Black:

[126902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much (a) his Department, (b) the Union Unit, and (c) the Union Taskforce spent on communications including staffing costs in each financial year since 2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office's annual expenditure is recorded under the 'Statement of Operating Costs by Operating Segment' in the Annual Report and Accounts which are publically available online at www.gov.uk/scotland.

The Office does not hold information on budget allocations for 2021/22 at this time.

The Office does not hold figures for the cost of the Union Unit or Union Taskforce.

Mhairi Black:

[126906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many and what proportion of people employed in his Department in each financial year since 2008-09 were press and communications employees.

Mr Alister Jack:

The total number of staff working at the Office is recorded in the Annual Report and Accounts, which are available online at www.gov.uk/scotland.

The Office is resourced to deliver all of the communications functions and activities expected and required of a government department in its own right and on behalf of the UK Government in Scotland.

Along with media handling, the operating model requires communications divisions to deliver the following functions: campaigns and marketing, digital communications, internal communications, strategic communications, stakeholder engagement and external affairs - including ministerial visits, events, committee meetings, and activities.

The Office does not hold staff records for team-level staffing prior to 2009/10.

The number of staff working at the Office to deliver communications functions, including visits and events, on 31 March in each financial year since 2009/10 is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS STAFF
2009-2010	6
2010-2011	8
2011-2012	6
2012-2013	8
2013-2014	8
2014-2015	9
2015-2016	11
2016-2017	15
2017-2018	14
2018-2019	15
2019-2020	17

Mhairi Black:

[\[126907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many and what proportion of people employed in the Union Unit or Union Taskforce in each financial year since 2018-19 were press and communications employees.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office does not hold figures for the Union Unit or Union Taskforce.

■ **Scotland Office: Internet**

Mhairi Black:

[\[126905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much (a) his Department, (b) the Union Unit, and (c) the Union Taskforce spent on paid-for listing in search results in each financial year since 2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office keeps financial information for seven financial years, so available information only extends to 2013-14.

The Office's annual expenditure on all advertising, including paid-for promotion on digital platforms including social media promotion, and paid-for listings in search results was as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION	PAID-FOR LISTINGS IN SEARCH RESULTS	TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON ADVERTISING
2013-2014	Nil	Nil	Nil
2014-2015	Nil	Nil	Nil
2015-2016	£371	Nil	£371
2016-2017	£15,956	Nil	£15,956
2017-2018	£22,829	£1,647	£24,476
2018-2019	£46,217	£11,829	£58,046
2019-2020	£36,704	Nil	£36,704

The Office does not hold information on budget allocations for 2021/22 at this time.

The Office does not hold figures for the Union Unit or Union Taskforce.

■ **Scotland Office: Social Media**

Mhairi Black:

[\[126904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much (a) his Department, (b) the Union Unit, and (c) the Union Taskforce spent on paid-for social media advertising and

promotion in each financial year since 2010-11; and how much is budgeted for that purpose for each of those groups for 2021-22.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office keeps financial information for seven financial years, so available information only extends to 2013-14.

The Office's annual expenditure on all advertising, including paid-for promotion on digital platforms including social media promotion, and paid-for listings in search results was as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION	PAID-FOR LISTINGS IN SEARCH RESULTS	TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON ADVERTISING
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2018-2019	£46,217	£11,829	£58,046
2019-2020	£36,704	Nil	£36,704

The Office does not hold information on budget allocations for 2021/22 at this time.

The Office does not hold figures for the Union Unit or Union Taskforce.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY

■ Members: Staff

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[128234\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, what estimate the Authority has made of the (a) amount and (b) cost to the public purse of Member's staff time spent on IPSA-related work; and what steps the Authority is taking to reduce that cost to the public purse.

Sir Charles Walker:

I am grateful to the hon. Member for his question. The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority has listened to feedback from all of its stakeholders and acknowledges the significant amount of time that MPs and their staff currently spend administering business and staffing costs and the increase in volume and complexity of workloads as a result of the pandemic. Whilst IPSA has not estimated the amount

of time or cost of this activity specifically as this varies by MP Office and constituency, with the backing of the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, IPSA is embarking on a transformation programme that will simplify the Scheme, improve service, deliver better value for money for the taxpayer and enable MPs and their staff to focus on their constituents and Parliamentary duties. In the short term, IPSA has also increased spending allowances to ensure office staffing and home working are resourced effectively.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Neale Hanvey:

[\[128292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the covid-19 recovery plan for the aviation sector..

Robert Courts:

The impact of a second wave of COVID and the need for the Government to respond has impacted on the aviation sector.

The government has therefore announced through the Global Travel Taskforce, a number of measures to assist the sector to restart over the winter period. This includes the 'Test to release for international travel' (TTR) which will boost consumer confidence in air travel.

Following the successful implementation of these measures, the government will then put forward its strategic framework for the medium and long-term recovery of the aviation sector.

■ B4044: Accidents

Layla Moran:

[\[128251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) deaths and (b) injuries on the B4044 in the last (i) six months, (ii) 12 months and (iii) five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of deaths and injuries in reported road accidents on the B4044 for the last 12 months and last 5 years for which data is available can be found in the tables below.

CASUALTIES IN REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS BY MONTH AND SEVERITY, ON THE B4044, 2019

Month	Fatalities	Injured casualties
January	0	0

CASUALTIES IN REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS BY MONTH AND SEVERITY, ON THE B4044, 2019

February	0	0
March	0	3
April	0	0
May	0	0
June	0	1
July	0	2
August	0	1
September	0	1
October	1	0
November	0	0
December	0	0
Total	1	8

Source: DfT, STATS19

CASUALTIES IN REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS BY SEVERITY, ON THE B4044, 2015-2019

Year	Fatalities	Injured casualties
2015	0	14
2016	1	11
2017	0	5
2018	0	17
2019	1	8

Source: DfT, STATS19

■ Bicycles: Lighting

Owen Thompson:

[\[128208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that bicycle lights fitted to bicycles at the manufacturing stage which are integral to the bicycle itself comply with the standards in the Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Pedal Bicycles (Safety) Regulations 2010 protects consumers by regulating the supply of bicycles. It requires a retro reflector or lamp to be fitted to the front, and a retro reflector to the rear.

All lamps fitted to bicycles are also covered by the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989, and the Road Traffic Act 1988 makes it an offence to fit a part which would contravene those regulations.

Enforcement of consumer protection requirements for products being placed on the market is generally the responsibility of local authority trading standards officers and enforcement of road traffic law for cyclists is a matter for the Police.

■ Bus Services: Concessions

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[127013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to extend eligibility for the older person's bus pass to women who have not yet reached state pension age but were born before 1960.

Rachel Maclean:

Lowering the age of eligibility for concessionary bus travel to sixty would see a return to the anomalous position of non-disabled people of working-age receiving free bus passes. Re-establishing the link between concessionary bus pass eligibility and the state pension age addresses that issue and will help the financial sustainability of the scheme.

Under Concessionary Travel legislation, local authorities have the power to offer additional discretionary concessions, including the extension of concessionary travel to those who are yet to reach the qualifying age, such as have been introduced in London, Liverpool and Greater Manchester.

■ Bus Services: Coronavirus

Andrew Percy:

[\[126819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what additional support the Chancellor is providing to coach businesses unable to operate as a result of covid-19 restrictions in Tier 3 alert level areas.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has announced several measures available to UK businesses, including the coach sector, to support them through this challenging time, and

launched a [‘support finder’](#) tool to help businesses quickly and easily determine what financial support is available to them during the coronavirus pandemic.

As of 2 December, councils in Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas of England are receiving funding to provide grants to closed businesses and run local discretionary grant schemes to support affected businesses. These grants could be available to businesses that supply the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, including coaches. These allocations will be published shortly and are in addition to the £2.3 billion already provided to local councils since the start of the pandemic. Local Authorities will administer this scheme and determine on a case-by-case basis where to allocate funding.

Justin Madders: [\[127584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the tier system of covid-19 restrictions on the coach industry.

Rachel Maclean:

The transition from national to local tier restrictions has opened up business in tier 1 and 2 areas. Coach journeys within, into and out of these areas are now permitted. Only essential journeys are advised in tier 3 and coach tours should not stop in the tier 3 area unless there is an emergency.

The re-introduction of the tiering system has seen an increase in demand for coach services. Department for Transport officials continue to regularly discuss the impacts of national restrictions being eased and of the tiering system being re-introduced with coach operators and the Confederation of Passenger Transport.

Justin Madders: [\[127585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with the Confederation of Passenger Transport on covid-19 and the coach industry since July 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

Department for Transport Ministers and officials continue to meet regularly with the Confederation of Passenger Transport to discuss the issues facing the coach industry and how these can be addressed.

■ Dangerous Driving

Scott Mann: [\[126924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what representations his Department has received on the potential merits of bringing forward proposals to reform the law and sentencing relating to the offence of leaving the scene of a hit and run that resulted in death; and if he will meet with the hon Member for North Cornwall to discuss (a) that matter and (b) the effect of those accidents on the families of victims.

Rachel Maclean:

Over the past four years, the Department for Transport has received three pieces of correspondence from Members of Parliament, and one from a member of the public,

on the potential merits of bringing forward proposals to reform the law and sentencing relating to the offence of leaving the scene of a hit and run that resulted in death. The Department has also responded to one petition and Ministers have held one meeting with the family of a victim and their Member of Parliament.

If you write to Baroness Vere, the Minister responsible for this policy area, she would be happy to consider meeting with you to discuss this issue.

■ **Electric Vehicles: West Yorkshire**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[126168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage electric vehicle uptake in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

Rachel Maclean:

We are investing over £1.8bn to help people buy zero emission vehicles and accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure across the whole of the UK.

Through our Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS), businesses, charities and the wider public sector can get grants of up to £350 per socket for installing up to 40 charging sockets for their employees and fleets. Under the WCS Wakefield has received funding of £37,815 for 77 sockets and West Yorkshire has received a total of £227,792 funding for 495 sockets. Local authorities across the country are also able to take advantage of the On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), which assists them with the cost of installing chargepoints on residential streets. Calderdale Council have received funding through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme for 13 chargepoints across the district, while Leeds City Council have also received funding for 15 chargepoints through the Scheme. Over 13,000 ultra-low and zero emission vehicles are on the road in west Yorkshire (including over 700 in Wakefield), many of which will have received funding from the Government's Plug-in Grant Schemes.

In addition, through the Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme the Government has provided £1,770,472.50 to First West Yorkshire and £617,000 to West Yorkshire Combined Authority to deliver 14 electric buses and associated recharging infrastructure. West Yorkshire Combined Authority has been awarded £1,980,000 through the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Taxi Infrastructure scheme to deliver 66 rapid and 22 fast chargepoints for taxis and private hire vehicles.

More generally, the roll out of rapid charging is an opportunity to remove range anxiety for electric vehicle drivers across the roads network which the Government will do by:

- Ensuring the private sector can continue to expand the charging network by investing £950 million to future proof grid capacity along the Strategic Road Network in preparation for 100% uptake of zero emission cars and vans ahead of need.

- The publication in May 2020 of our ambitious vision for rapid charging infrastructure along strategic roads in England over the next decade. This vision sets out the number of rapid chargepoints that will be located across motorways and major A roads to meet the future demand for electric vehicles.
- Working with industry to make chargepoint data available, helping drivers easily locate and access available chargepoints. Government will consult on using its powers under the Automated Electric Vehicles Act to improve the consumer experience of charging.

■ Ferries: Freight

Karl Turner:

[\[128133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the contracts that his Department has signed with four ferry companies under the Freight Capacity Framework Agreement for additional roll-on roll-off freight capacity for a six-month period from 1 January 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

Following a robust procurement process, contracts were awarded to Brittany Ferries, DFDS, P&O Ferries and Stena Line on 13 October 2020. The contracts have already been published and are available via the Contracts Finder tool on gov.uk using the following references:

- TMAR3048A DFDS Newhaven-Dieppe
- TMAR3048B P&O Ferries Tilbury-Zeebrugge
- TMAR3048C P&O Ferries Hull-Europort
- TMAR3048D Brittany Ferries Poole-Cherbourg
- TMAR3048E Stena Line Harwich – Hook of Holland
- TMAR3049A P&O Ferries Tilbury - Zeebrugge
- TMAR3049B DFDS Felixstowe - Vlaardingen
- TMAR3049C Stena Line Harwich - Rotterdam
- TMAR3049D P&O Ferries Teesport-Zeebrugge
- TMAR3049E Brittany Ferries Portsmouth-Le Havre

■ Freight: Port of Hull

Karl Turner:

[\[128131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will estimate the (a) maximum and (b) minimum value of his Department's contract with P&O Ferries under the Freight Capacity Framework Agreement for additional roll-on roll-off freight capacity through the Port of Hull for a six-month period from 1 January 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

Following a robust procurement process, contracts were awarded to Brittany Ferries, DFDS, P&O Ferries and Stena Line on 13 October 2020. There is one route involving the Port of Hull, through which P&O ferries will provide freight capacity between Hull and Europort Rotterdam. This contract has a minimum value of £1, and a maximum value of £6,052,086.

Karl Turner:[\[128132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the routes involving the Port of Hull in his Department's Freight Capacity Framework Agreement contract with P&O Ferries for additional roll-on roll-off freight capacity for a six-month period from 1 January 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

Following a robust procurement process, contracts were awarded to Brittany Ferries, DFDS, P&O Ferries and Stena Line on 13 October 2020. There is one route involving the Port of Hull, through which P&O ferries will provide freight capacity between Hull and Europort Rotterdam.

■ M60: Graffiti**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[127505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will ask Highways England to set out a timetable for the removal of graffiti from gantries and road signs on the M60 motorway through Stockport.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England aims to remove from sight the graffiti currently on its structures in Stockport within the next three months.

Highways England is working closely with the Department to tackle the issue of graffiti on structures along the strategic road network in England. Graffiti on these structures is removed from sight within twenty-four hours of being reported if it is offensive, obscene, blasphemous or racist. Non-offensive graffiti, as appears along the M60 through Stockport, would normally be removed from sight at a later date, when Highways England is undertaking other works in the area in order to minimise disruption to road users, or as part of Highways England's regular cycle of clean and sweep activity.

■ Railways: Carbon Emissions**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[126081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has for (a) further electrification of the rail network and (b) other rail decarbonisation projects.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government supports both further electrification and the use of new, innovative technologies to decarbonise the rail network by 2050. The Department's forthcoming

Transport Decarbonisation Plan will set the strategic direction for rail decarbonisation and we will continue to develop individual decarbonisation schemes across the network, ensuring that they are both deliverable and affordable.

■ **Taxis: Coronavirus**

Peter Gibson:

[127662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support taxi drivers in covid-19 tier 3 areas.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has announced several measures available to UK businesses, including the taxi and private hire sector, to support them through this challenging time, and launched a 'support finder' tool to help businesses and self-employed workers quickly and easily determine what financial support is available to them during the coronavirus pandemic.

From 2 December, councils in England in Tier 2 and Tier 3 will receive funding to provide grants to closed businesses and to be able to run local discretionary grant schemes to provide support to affected businesses. These allocations will be published shortly and are in addition to the £2.3bn already provided to local councils since the start of the pandemic. The Local Authority administers the scheme and determines on a case-by-case basis where to allocate this funding.

TREASURY

■ **Business: Wales**

Jonathan Edwards:

[128114]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what modelling has been undertaken of the effect on businesses in Wales of changes to customs processes and procedures required as a consequence of (a) a trade agreement and (b) no trade agreement with the EU.

Jesse Norman:

In October 2019, HMRC published their updated impact assessment for the movement of goods for if the UK leaves the EU without a deal

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-impact-assessment-for-the-movement-of-goods-if-the-uk-leaves-the-eu-without-a-deal/hmrc-impact-assessment-for-the-movement-of-goods-if-the-uk-leaves-the-eu-without-a-deal-third-edition>).

Should a deal be agreed with the EU, the Government will publish an impact assessment alongside introducing legislation to give effect to that deal.

The UK is leaving the EU's customs union and single market at the end of this year, which will inevitably mean extra processes required for UK-EU trade. Most customs processes are electronic and done away from the border, including getting an EORI number and making plans for completing customs declarations, where traders will need a customs agent or their own software. Many businesses have already begun

factoring in these new processes as part of their preparations for life outside the customs union and the Government urges others to do the same.

■ Carbon Emissions

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[128273\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of implementing carbon border adjustment tariffs.

Jesse Norman:

As a global leader on decarbonisation, the UK recognises the importance of ensuring that policy interventions to cut domestic emissions do not lead to increased emissions elsewhere. A range of approaches could potentially help to address this, of which carbon border adjustments are one, and the Treasury continues to engage on the issue.

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[\[128171\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance he has provided to banks on the opening of new (a) personal, (b) business, and (c) charity accounts in (i) Tier 1, (ii) Tier 2, and (c) Tier 3 covid-19 restriction areas.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that bank and building society branches continue to play an important role in providing access to banking for individuals, businesses and charities, including for those who either do not have access to digital services or require specialist support. The Government has worked with the financial regulators and the industry to ensure that personal, business and charity customers can continue to access bank branches for essential services, including opening accounts, in all Covid-19 restriction tiers. The vast majority of branches have remained open throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

For personal account customers, the 9 largest personal current account providers in the UK are legally required to offer fee-free basic bank accounts to customers who do not have a bank account in the UK or who are ineligible for a bank's standard current account. Throughout Covid-19, designated providers have continued to offer basic bank accounts.

Unprecedented demand for services has meant banks have faced significant capacity pressures which has limited their ability to meet demand, for business bank accounts in particular. Banks are doing all they can to meet this demand in these difficult circumstances.

■ Child Benefit: Greater Manchester

Afzal Khan: [\[126191\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value was of unclaimed child benefit in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

Afzal Khan: [\[126200\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value was of unclaimed child tax credit in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

Afzal Khan: [\[126201\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value was of unclaimed working tax credit in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Manchester Gorton constituency in the last 12 months for which data are available.

Jesse Norman:

Estimates of unclaimed HMRC administered benefits for the requested geographical levels are not available.

HMRC are unable to provide the information due to small sample sizes at the geographical levels requested. HMRC do produce statistics on the take-up of these benefits at a UK regional level in their Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Working Tax Credit (WTC) take-up rates publication available on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Carla Lockhart: [\[128328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of funds paid through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme have been voluntarily paid back to his Department by companies that were entitled to the payment; how many companies in Northern Ireland have made such payments; and what the amount was of each such payment.

Jesse Norman:

As of 3 November 2020, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) grants to the value of £382 million have been recorded as returned. This figure consists of £198 million in payments being repaid and £184 million in adjustments to existing claims.

HMRC do not hold information by the geographic breakdown requested.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Directors

John McDonnell: [\[125938\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allow directors of small companies who file their PAYE RTI returns annually between 20 March and 19 April 2020 who were ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to claim backdated payment.

Jesse Norman:

For claims from 1 November, employers must have made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020 notifying a payment of earnings for that employee to be able to claim under the CJRS. This does mean that some annually paid employees such as directors, who were not paid between these dates will not be eligible for CJRS.

The Government has balanced a number of risks by aligning the start of the eligibility period for the CJRS extension with the cut-off date for the original scheme, meaning anyone who has been furloughed previously and paid in line with the rules of the scheme can be furloughed again.

This ensures that individuals paid annually towards and following the end of the previous tax year who were not eligible for the original scheme can now benefit from the extension. Those paid annually are eligible to claim, as long as they meet the relevant conditions.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[125994\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department plans to publish its estimate of the economic effect of the covid-19 November 2020 lockdown.

John Glen:

On 30 November, the Government published an *Analysis of the health, economic and social effects of Covid-19 and the approach to tiering*. For the economy, this document set out the impact Covid-19 has had on the economy to date and the main conclusions from most recent OBR forecast, which included a central forecast, and upside and downside scenarios which reflect, alongside other factors, assumptions on restrictions.

■ Customs Intermediaries**Rachel Reeves:**[\[128136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office's oral contribution of 9 December 2020, Official Report, column 852, and the letter of the hon. Member for Leeds West of 3 December 2020, how many of the 50,000 customs agents needed for the end of the transition period are ready to begin their duties on 1 January 2021.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC's focus has been on capacity to make declarations, rather than the number of staff employed. This is because the sector is varied and made up of a number of different business models including specific customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators. All of these require varied numbers of staff to complete declarations and to provide their services.

Many in the sector have innovated and brought in IT solutions to reduce the numbers of staff they require. The Government has helped them to do this by making over £80

million of support available, including flexible grants that can be used for IT and training, as well as recruitment; depending on the needs of their business.

The findings from recently published Ipsos MORI research set out that the sector expects to be able to complete 76-119 million additional declarations by the end of the transition period. This aligns with HMRC's estimate that intermediaries will need to facilitate c.94m EU declarations per year at that point.

■ Debts: Developing Countries

Sarah Champion:

[\[126048\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of debt owed by countries eligible for G20 Common Framework on Debt Treatments applies to (a) non-official creditors owed to entities resident in the UK and (b) private creditors governed by English law as at 7 December 2020.

John Glen:

The UK strongly supports the Common Framework for future debt treatments which will facilitate quicker and simpler restructurings where required. A total of 77 of the least developed countries are eligible for treatment under the Common Framework.

Under the Common Framework, private sector creditors will be required to implement debt restructurings that are at least equivalent to those agreed by official creditors.

We do not hold a breakdown of the proportion of these countries' debt that is owed to private creditors governed by English law or entities resident in the UK. However, in 2019 the IMF assessed that 45% of the total outstanding stock of international sovereign bonds by nominal principal amount are governed under English law.

■ Employee Ownership

Neil Gray:

[\[128176\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will include tax exemptions relating to employee share schemes in the consultation on the Finance Bill 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The Government offers four tax-advantaged employee share schemes: Share Incentive Plans (SIPs), the Save As You Earn (SAYE) scheme, Enterprise Management Incentives (EMI), and the Company Share Option Plan (CSOP).

The schemes enable employers to share financial rewards with staff, with both receiving tax benefits. This is ultimately intended to support recruitment and retention and help encourage employee productivity.

There are no current plans to change these schemes at the 2021 Finance Bill. The Government keeps all of the employee share schemes under review.

Neil Gray:

[\[128178\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to introduce legislative proposals to improve the regulation of the actions of trustees of employee share schemes.

Neil Gray:

[\[128179\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to introduce legislative proposals to protect potential beneficiaries of employee share schemes from that scheme being plundered by trustees.

Neil Gray:

[\[128180\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will establish an inquiry into the HMRC's administration of tax exemptions relating to employee share schemes.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all tax legislation under regular review and any changes are considered in line with its priorities. The Government does not plan to introduce legislation at this time to regulate the actions of trustees of employee share schemes.

■ Exports: VAT

Navendu Mishra:

[\[127682\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of ending VAT-free shopping on (a) visitor numbers and (b) jobs at Manchester Airport's duty-free retailers.

Kemi Badenoch:

Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.
- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government is

also continuing to meet and discuss the changes with stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales currently affects airports that fly to non-EU destinations. The extension of duty-free sales to EU bound passengers will be a significant boost to all airports in England, Scotland and Wales, including smaller regional airports like Manchester which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

On 25 November the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) set out their assessment of the fiscal impact of the withdrawal of the tax-free airside sales. The OBR estimate that the withdrawal will raise approximately £170 million per year for the Exchequer, after behavioural responses are taken into account and passenger numbers recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

The Government also recognises the challenges the aviation sector is facing as it recovers from the impacts of Covid-19 and has supported the sector throughout the pandemic, and continues to do so, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees.

■ Financial Services: Disadvantaged

Seema Malhotra:

[128170]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the financial services sector on tackling financial exclusion.

John Glen:

Tackling financial exclusion remains a key priority for the Government and HM Treasury engages on a regular basis with a wide range of stakeholders, the financial services sector and the regulators to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background or income, have access to useful and affordable financial products and services.

The Government established the Financial Inclusion Policy Forum in November 2017 with a membership of leaders from across the financial services sector, charities and consumer groups. The Forum is co-chaired by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion and meets twice a year. It provides leadership and ensures collaboration across government and with the sector in tackling financial exclusion. The Forum's last meeting was in November 2020.

In recent months, the Government has worked closely together with the financial services industry, charities and the regulators to provide unprecedented support to those at risk of financial exclusion as a result of COVID-19. This work is detailed in the Government's Financial Inclusion Report 2019-20, which was published on 19 November 2020 and can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-inclusion-report-2019-2020>.

■ **Local Government: Coronavirus**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[128628]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when Government grants to support local areas will be made to those local authorities that went into Tier 3 prior to the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Kemi Badenoch:

Backdated payments for those areas which entered Tier 3 prior to 5th November will be made in the week commencing 14th December. A total of £6.5m will be paid to relevant Local Authorities. This funding will enable those Local Authorities to make payments of up to £1,500 per two weeks that businesses were closed under the previous Tier 3 restrictions.

■ **London Capital and Finance Investigation**

John Spellar:

[126777]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the report by Dame Elizabeth Gloster on London Capital and Finance.

John Glen:

As set out in a Written Ministerial Statement on 24 November the Treasury is working with the FCA so that the government can lay before Parliament (and publish online) Dame Elizabeth's report and the FCA's response before the December recess. This remains the government's intention.

■ **Minimum Wage: Fines**

Claudia Webbe:

[126178]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses have been fined for paying below the national minimum wage in (a) Leicester East constituency and (b) the UK in each of the last three years.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is determined that everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) should receive it. HMRC enforce the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) in line with the law and policy set out by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff. The consequences of not complying with

payment of NMW can include fines of 200% of the arrears, public naming and, for the worst offences, criminal prosecution.

HMRC take seriously and review all complaints from workers referred by the Acas helpline, or received via the online complaints form, and investigate as appropriate. If anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact Acas, in confidence, on 0300 123 1100 or submit a query online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-and-work-rights-complaints>.

The total numbers of businesses which have failed to pay the correct rates of national minimum wage and have received penalties as a result in the last three years are provided in the table below:

YEAR	LEICESTER EAST CONSTITUENCY*	UK
2017-18	>5	810
2018-19	>5	1008
2019-20	>5	992

** Businesses with a registered address within the Leicester East postcode.*

■ National Infrastructure Bank: Location

Stephen Farry: [\[126181\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has for the UK Infrastructure Bank to open regional offices as part of the levelling up policy.

Jesse Norman:

The new infrastructure bank for the UK will be headquartered in the north of England. Further details on the bank, including location, will be set out at the Spring Budget.

The bank will help to support infrastructure projects across the whole of the UK in order to unleash the power of the Union and promote economic growth.

■ National Savings and Investments: Correspondence

Anneliese Dodds: [\[128253\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library the NS&I policy on sending paper prize warrants to its customers.

John Glen:

Since 2011, Premium Bonds holders have been able to have their prizes paid directly into a UK bank account in their name. Since March 2020, nearly half a million customers have switched from receiving paper warrants (cheques) to having their prizes paid directly into their bank account or automatically reinvested. As of December 2020, 82.5% of Premium Bonds prizes were either paid directly into a UK bank account or reinvested back into Premium Bonds.

The decision by NS&I announced on 17 September 2020 to pay all Premium Bonds prizes direct to customers' bank accounts was informed by changing customer behaviours. It will make managing Premium Bonds prize distribution quicker, more cost-effective and have a much lower environmental impact.

Paying prizes directly to the customers bank account also reduces the proportion of Premium Bonds prizes from going unclaimed.

■ Premium Bonds

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[128140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the age breakdown is of people holding one or more Premium Bonds with National Savings and Investments.

John Glen:

Table: age breakdown of Premium Bond holders as of 14 December 2020

CURRENT AGE	HOLDING VALUE	NUMBER OF HOLDINGS
0-19	2,339,232,544	1,186,323
20-49	15,655,632,812	4,373,746
50-79	67,168,657,879	6,275,677
80-90+	14,188,424,938	820,332
Unknown	2,620,257,254	11,049,139
Total	101,972,205,427	23,705,217

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[128141\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the age breakdown is of all Premium Bonds prize winners in (a) the most recent year for which figures are available and (b) the four years previous to that.

John Glen:

Number of customers winning prizes by year and age at time of draw

	AGE AT TIME OF DRAW					PRIZE WINNING YEAR
	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	
2020						
0 - 7	58,418	51,264	47,974	44,541	48,268	54,341
8-15	127,884	121,865	118,232	105,275	108,811	114,131
16 - 19	76,245	71,707	68,674	61,989	62,695	65,048

	AGE AT TIME OF DRAW	PRIZE WINNING YEAR				
20 - 29	238,694	211,369	197,538	171,500	164,426	164,758
30 - 39	274,319	233,201	215,303	188,873	177,352	178,391
40 - 49	357,591	323,493	315,785	299,621	301,463	315,043
50 - 59	688,877	636,967	615,902	580,711	564,163	565,019
60 - 69	918,911	866,450	852,753	825,120	832,777	848,568
70 - 79	933,362	874,944	830,634	762,068	701,447	661,476
80 - 89	461,488	438,250	415,650	382,568	359,765	339,288
90+	116,799	105,336	95,667	84,347	89,222	162,529
Unknown	329,309	348,243	364,683	348,121	378,254	422,131
Total	4,581,897	4,283,089	4,138,795	3,854,734	3,788,643	3,890,723

*Age at time for winning is based on the current age. For example, -1 for 2019, -2 for 2018 etc.

*Based on current age between 0-107, any age over 107 or null is classified as unknown

* Based on number of customers winning, not number of prizes. A customer may win multiple prizes within any year.

■ Premium Bonds: Correspondence

Bridget Phillipson:

[128137]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason NS&I decided to discontinue sending paper prize warrants to winners of Premium Bonds prizes.

John Glen:

Since 2011, Premium Bonds holders have been able to have their prizes paid directly into a UK bank account in their name. Since March 2020, more than 750,000 customers have switched from receiving paper warrants (cheques) to having their prizes paid directly into their bank account or automatically reinvested. As of December 2020, 82.5% of Premium Bonds prizes were either paid directly into a UK bank account or reinvested back into Premium Bonds.

The decision by NS&I, announced on 17 September 2020, to pay all Premium Bonds prizes direct to customers' bank accounts was informed by a number of factors. These included changing customer behaviors, the ability to manage Premium Bonds

prize distribution more quickly, more cost-effectively and have a much lower environmental impact.

In addition, paying prizes directly to the customers bank account has significantly reduced the proportion of Premium Bonds prizes from going unclaimed. Between 2011 and end of June 2018, NS&I paid out 110,300,054 prizes by warrant. Of these 569,461 (0.5%) have not yet been cashed and are therefore deemed unclaimed. In comparison between 2011 and December 2020, NS&I have paid out 72,385,607 directly to customers' bank account. As of September 2020, of these 8,610 (0.01%) of the prizes have not been claimed.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[128138\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what equality impact assessment was undertaken prior to NS&I's decision to discontinue sending paper prize warrants to winners of Premium Bonds prizes; and if he will place a copy of that assessment in the Library.

John Glen:

NS&I has not carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment for the operational decision to mandate Premium Bonds prizes direct to customers' bank accounts, with notification by email or text message

The department is, and will remain, committed to having a robust exceptions policy – allowing those vulnerable customers who are excluded from doing business through digital channels to opt for paper and phone channels.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[128139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many paper prize warrants were sent out to winners of Premium Bond prizes in each of the last ten years; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

Table: Prizes won each year between 2010-2020 by prize payment type

PRIZE WINNING YEAR	AUTO PRIZE INVESTMENT	PRIZE BY WARRANT	PRIZE BY BACS	OTHER	TOTAL	% OF PRIZES THAT WERE WARRANTS
2010	4,155,504	16,406,467	6	48,992	20,561,977	80%
2011	4,323,678	16,610,306	284,312	47,026	21,218,296	78%
2012	4,484,871	16,170,837	1,143,668	55,670	21,799,376	74%
2013	4,520,633	15,612,451	1,856,448	56,874	21,989,532	71%
2014	5,518,122	13,971,588	2,998,525	63,893	22,488,235	62%
2015	6,974,548	14,074,705	4,279,531	78,658	25,328,784	56%

PRIZE WINNING YEAR	AUTO PRIZE INVESTMENT	PRIZE BY WARRANT	PRIZE BY BACS	OTHER	TOTAL	% OF PRIZES THAT WERE WARRANTS
2016	7,104,185	13,457,970	5,571,947	87,799	26,134,102	51%
2017	7,314,839	12,900,783	7,858,434	111,635	28,074,056	46%
2018	9,322,849	14,802,366	12,540,401	174,215	36,665,616	40%
2019	10,021,102	14,133,249	15,492,951	200,340	39,647,302	36%
2020	10,917,668	11,680,178	20,359,390	356,003	42,957,236	27%

**Other prize payment type includes, death claim forms, high value prize claim forms, prize queries etc.*

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[128252\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the effect of the decision to discontinue sending paper prize warrants to winners of Premium Bonds prizes on the proportion of Premium Bond prize entitlements which are not paid out.

John Glen:

The statistics show that paying prizes directly to the customers bank account has reduced the proportion of Premium Bonds prizes that go unclaimed compared to issuing warrants (cheques).

Since 2011, Premium Bonds holders have been able to have their prizes paid directly into a UK bank account in their name. Between 2011 and end of June 2018, NS&I paid out 110,300,054 prizes by warrant. Of these 569,461 (0.5%) have not yet been cashed and are therefore deemed unclaimed. In comparison between 2011 and December 2020, NS&I have paid out 72,385,607 directly to customers' bank account. As of September 2020, of these 8,610 (0.01%) of the prizes have not been claimed.

■ Public Expenditure

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[128255\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the total combined lifetime budget of the 2021-22 Local Growth Funding, the Future High Streets Fund, the Towns Fund, the Levelling-Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Spending Review prioritised investment to support growth across the country, including through the National Infrastructure Strategy and by setting out our priority areas to receive multi-year funding settlements. It also set out how we will make decisions differently to support levelling up, for example our changes to the Green Book will better link projects and programmes to government objectives. The specific programmes that you mention are one part of this wider strategy to support growth

across the country, with budgets in 21/22 as follows: £621m for the Towns Fund, £600m for the Levelling Up Fund, and £220m to help local areas prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. We will set out further funding allocations for later years at future SRs.

■ **Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**

Alison Thewliss:

[\[128197\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the announcement of 10 December 2020 of a £400m funding package to Northern Ireland, what the Barnett consequential from that package will be for (a) Scotland and (b) Wales.

Steve Barclay:

The 'New Deal for Northern Ireland' addresses the unique circumstances resulting from the Northern Ireland Protocol. The funding provided by the UK government either supports the whole of the UK, notably in relation to trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, or relates to issues specific to Northern Ireland that do not exist in Scotland and Wales.

Providing additional funding to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland for nation-specific issues on top of Barnett-based funding is fully consistent with the Statement of Funding Policy.

Scotland and Wales will similarly continue to receive direct investment from the UK Government on top of their Barnett-based funding to support growth and address nation-specific issues, including through the City and Regional Growth deals.

■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus**

Karen Bradley:

[\[128159\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the VAT reduction for hospitality and tourism to alcohol to help support pubs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT was introduced on 15 July to support the cash flow and viability of over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs in the hospitality and tourism sectors, and will run until 31 March 2021.

While the Government keeps all taxes under review, this relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are currently no plans to extend the scope of the reduced rate. Pubs that sell food will be able to apply the reduced rate to meals and non-alcoholic beverages consumed on the premises. They are also able to sell hot food and non-alcoholic drinks for take away at the reduced rate.

Alcohol duty was frozen at Budget 2020 in order to help pubs and the alcoholic drinks sector.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[127486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he plans to take to help protect high streets from online competition during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's retail sector, and recognises that high street retailers have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The safe re-opening of our high street retailers is the most effective way we can support businesses. England has now moved back into a regional, tiered approach, and essential and non-essential retail, including indoor and outdoor markets and car boot sales are open in all three tiers. The Government has also extended opening hours in the run up to Christmas and during January - helping to make socially distanced shopping easier and safer.

The Government has also established the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund. The £50 million fund is for councils across England to support their local high streets get safely back to business. This fund builds on longer-term funds already in place to support their revival and boost their economic fortunes including the Future High Streets and Towns Funds.

This is in addition to the wide-ranging support the Government has already delivered: protecting high street jobs through the CJRS which has been extended until March; and protecting businesses with cash grants, Government backed finance through loan schemes, 'Pay as You Grow' long-term repayments options, a VAT deferral for up to 12 months, a 12-month business rates holiday; and a moratorium on evictions to protect commercial tenants.

■ Revenue and Customs: Cheques

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[128254\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library a copy of the HMRC policy on sending paper cheques to taxpayers.

Jesse Norman:

The particular circumstances of the payment being made determines the payment method used (BACS, cheques, bank transfer or other methods). Wherever possible, HMRC try to give customers the choice to be paid directly into their bank account or by cheque.

■ Roadchef: Employee Benefit Trusts

Neil Gray:

[\[128177\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received on the potential merits of introducing legislation to resolve the dispute between HMRC and the trustee and beneficiaries of the Roadchef Employee Benefits Trust.

Jesse Norman:

The administration of the tax system is a matter for HM Revenue and Customs and it would not be appropriate for Treasury ministers to become involved in the administration of the tax system in specific cases.

The Chancellor has received representations from some Members of Parliament on introducing legislation to resolve the Roadchef dispute.

The Government keeps all tax legislation under regular review and any changes are considered in line with Government priorities.

Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus**Matthew Pennycook:**[\[126091\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's policy of reduced rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax for residential properties purchased from 8 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the deadline for completing transactions beyond 31 March 2021 for people whose property transactions may be delayed as a result of the External Wall Fire Review Process.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This momentum in the property market will also support the jobs of people whose employment relies on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

The Government will continue to monitor the market. However, as the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief.

WORK AND PENSIONS**Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services****Stephen Timms:**[\[128050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of calls to her Department's Debt Management team were answered in (a) August (b) September (c) October and (d) November 2020.

Will Quince:

It is important to note, since March the caseload on UC has increased from around 3 million people on UC to 5.8 million.

The proportion of calls presented to agents answered by Debt Management for the months requested are shown in the table below:

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
Proportion of calls presented to agents that are answered	77%	71%	80%	78%

The Debt Management queueing system allows only so many calls into the telephony system, matching volumes to the number of telephony agents available. The Percentage of Calls Answered therefore underestimates the number of attempted calls.

There were, however, large numbers of callers who could not make it into the system and are therefore not included in the proportion of calls answered.

November saw a large increase in the volume of notifications issued, largely due to the automated nature of the system used by Debt Management to manage customer accounts. This caused a significant increase in the number of customers attempting to contact the service as a result, starting on 20th November.

Debt Management have put steps in place to address this issue. A limit to the number of notifications issued has been set to ensure the resulting contact is manageable. Improvements have been made to the messages customers hear when they call; this will ensure they are made aware of any high call volumes and are also directed to the right place, to help reduce the time spent waiting. This includes directing customers to GOV.UK if they want to make a payment by bank transfer. Debt Management are also recruiting more telephony agents - 90 additional agents have now joined Debt Management and are being trained, and a further 100 will join early in the New Year.

Debt Management continues to monitor the number of notifications issued and their call handling data. At the height of this issue, an average of over 51,000 calls were blocked each day. For the last 5 days for which we have data, from 7th – 11th December, this had fallen to less than 6,000 each day.

■ Discretionary Housing Payments

Seema Malhotra:

[128172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of applications to local authorities for discretionary housing payments from households subject to the benefits cap in the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

Our Discretionary Housing Payment statistics* give details of the amount of DHP expenditure related to welfare reforms, including the Benefit Cap. We do not specifically hold data on the number of DHP applications from Benefit Cap claimants.

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/discretionary-housing-payments-statistics>

■ Employment Schemes: Contracts

Caroline Ansell:

[126084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that smaller organisations can bid for contracts to collaborate with her Department's employment programmes; and if she will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

The Employment Category has a number of commercial approaches that mean there is a place for all organisations to compete for tendering opportunities and believe that successful employment can only be delivered through a rich tapestry of organisations.

For the smaller scale and localised opportunities, we have a Dynamic Purchasing System please find link [Contracts Finder](#), which has been operating for some time, managed by our Operation staff. Following a survey of some 2000 organisations we are seeking to make improvements in that system and approach to make it easier for organisations to navigate.

For larger procurements, there are supply chain opportunities and under the government transparency requirement many of these opportunities are advertised (please refer to the Procurement Policy Notice [04/19](#) issued by the Cabinet Office) which we fully embrace.

We understand that the Employment Category uses a range of approaches including Provider Code of Conduct, supply chain payment mystery shopper and other commercial levers to ensure a positive environment for all providers to assist the Department.

■ Jobcentres: Coronavirus

Chris Stephens:

[128205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether job centre staff working from home due to health concerns in relation to covid-19 are to be expected to attend a job centre for Saturday opening.

Mims Davies:

Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentres have remained open to help any claimant who needs face-to-face support, and who we cannot get help in any other way. We have made all of our Jobcentres COVID secure, not only for our staff but for claimants, by introducing a range of safety measures, including screened desks, social distancing signage, mandatory face coverings for customers, the provision of hand sanitiser, and regular touch point cleaning.

In line with public health guidance, colleagues are only advised to follow shielding advice if they receive a new written shielding notification. Colleagues who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable are not being asked to work from the office and equipment has been provided to enable them to work from home.

Colleagues who are permanent members of teams in Jobcentres which are open on Saturdays, including those currently working from home, are included in this change. This ensures that everyone, regardless of their current working situation, is treated equally.

■ **Jobcentres: Wolverhampton**

Stuart Anderson: [\[126135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many job work coaches her Department is planning to deploy in in Wolverhampton.

Mims Davies:

The Department currently has 131 Work Coaches allocated to two Wolverhampton Jobcentres, with a 55 further new entrants due to be deployed by early 2021.

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Justin Madders: [\[127582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 118005, when the Kickstart data will be available by region.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given to question 122760 on 11th December 2020.

■ **National Insurance: British National (Overseas)**

Afzal Khan: [\[128263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure BNO holders are able to secure a National Insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

You can apply for and start work without a National Insurance number if you can prove you can work in the UK. Employers are required to conduct mandatory Right to Work checks on all prospective employees. Having a NINo is not part of these checks, and the possession of a NINo does not prove that an individual has a right to work.

As part of the application process for a National Insurance Number, BN(O) holders would be required to attend a face to face appointment where the DWP could validate and confirm their Identity and Right to Work. Due to Covid, the face to face NINo service is currently suspended.

■ **National Insurance: Coronavirus**

Afzal Khan: [\[128264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure people who are unable to secure a National Insurance number as a result of the temporary suspension of services are able to access employment.

Guy Opperman:

DWP have worked closely with HMRC to enable them to issue revised guidance to employers regarding the continued suspension of the NINo service, which reiterates that they are able to employ individuals who do not have a NINo.

An individual does not need a National Insurance Number (NINo) to apply for, or take up employment. They evidence their right to work in the UK by providing their status within the UK, through either Home Office documentation, for example a Biometric Residence Permit, Passport or National Identity card to prospective employers.

All employers are required to conduct mandatory Right to Work checks on all prospective employees, however these checks do not include the provision of a NINo. A list of acceptable documents that enables an individual to demonstrate they have the right work is set out on Gov.uk in the Employers Guide to Right to Work Checks.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checks-employers-guide>

The possession of a NINo does not prove to an employer that the employee has a right to work.

Afzal Khan:**[128265]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she estimates the National Insurance issuance service will resume a full service, following the temporary suspension of services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

The National Insurance Number allocation service (NINo) has continued to offer a service, throughout the pandemic, to our most vulnerable customer groups (Benefit Applicants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees) Students who are entitled to Student Finance and in June we resumed our service for visa applicants.

DWP started testing a partial digital solution, on a small scale, in mid-October, to support the issuing of National Insurance Numbers, which is still ongoing. This solution enables collection of the applicant's data, but not the online verification of their identity. Alternative identity verification solutions to reduce the need for a face to face identity check for some customer groups is under development as part of this test.

The digital solution will be considered by the Government Data Service (GDS) for its ability to move into Public Beta and thereby deliver a service to a greater number of customers early next year.

Given the uncertainty of COVID-19 restrictions impacting upon DWPs ability to offer an interview service to some customers who will still be required to attend an office to confirm their Identity, it is not possible at this time to provide you with a firm date as to when DWP are able to resume their full service.

Older Workers: Coronavirus**Seema Malhotra:****[128174]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress she has made on supporting back into work older people who have lost their jobs since March 2020.

Mims Davies:

The department is supporting people of all ages back in to work. The Government's recently announced Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people, including older workers, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work. This includes £895 million to double the number of Work Coaches in Jobcentre Plus by March 2021; a £150m increase in the Flexible Support Fund which will also boost the capacity of the Rapid Response Service to help those facing redundancy move into other jobs; £40m for a new online support service will provide tailored one-to-one job finding support to the recently unemployed.

The Government also aims to triple the number of sector-based work academy programme placements, supporting unemployed claimants of all ages through training and work experience to find a job. A further £95 million will expand the Work and Health programme to offer new support to those who have been made unemployed.

To support long term unemployed, in the Spending Review 2020, Government has also announced the Restart programme that will provide intensive and tailored support to over one million people and help them find work.

Pension Wise: Reigate**Crispin Blunt:****[128048]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have had a Pension Wise guidance appointment (a) by telephone and (b) in person in Reigate constituency between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.

Crispin Blunt:**[128049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have had a Pension Wise guidance appointment (a) by telephone and (b) in person in the South East between April 2019 and March 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Money and Pensions Service publishes data on pension wise appointments across 2019-2020 here:

<https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Pension-Wise-Service-Evaluation-report-2019-2020.pdf>

■ Pensions: Direct Marketing

Neil Gray:

[\[126053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will include online activity in the ban on pensions cold calling.

Neil Gray:

[\[126054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that the ban on pensions cold calling includes recipients of calls who have an existing relationship with the scam caller.

Neil Gray:

[\[126055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with technology companies and platforms on free pension reviews being offered by people seeking to commit fraud via social media to circumvent the pensions cold calling ban.

Guy Opperman:

This government is committed to safeguarding consumer savings. DWP, and other departments, have introduced measures that assist all savers to understand their choices and the possible risks of the choices they make, along with legislation to protect those most vulnerable to scams. This includes the ban on cold calling, which was introduced January 2019. Further action is being taken legislatively and operationally.

To help protect people from pension scams, clause 125 in the Pension Schemes Bill is being introduced, following extensive consultation and debate. It will allow government to introduce measures to limit the statutory right to transfer.

The Bill will ensure that a range of consumer protections will apply to all pension savers, regardless of what avenue, such as online or via social media, is used by potential scammers to contact them with regards to their pension savings. The powers in this Bill will enable government in certain circumstances (red flags) to remove the statutory right to transfer. The Government is working cross department and with industry & regulators to determine red flags including the use of online channels to make contact with pension savers.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), plays a key role in protecting the UK from cybercrime and fraud. The NCSC's Active Cyber Defence (ACD) programme tackles cyber-attacks in an automated and scalable way, to improve national resilience. This includes a takedown service which searches for and identifies malicious websites. Where found, it removes them at source so they cannot cause further harm to the public.

To complement the ACD programme, the NCSC recently launched the Suspicious Email Reporting Service, which allows the public to flag suspicious emails to the NCSC simply by forwarding them to report@phishing.gov.uk. They are then analysed and malicious content is taken down where found.

The Government continues to raise public awareness of scams through ongoing communications directly from DWP and with other organisations. Joint and independent communications from the FCA and tPR spelling out the dangers, what to watch out for and giving clarity to trustees and providers on the boundaries between guidance and advice have been issued since April this year (<https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/covid-19-savers-stay-calm-dont-rush-financial-decisions> (opens in a new tab)). Prior to Covid-19 the FCA and tPR conducted regular campaigns, through the ScamSmart branding, to raise awareness of pension scams and what to watch out for, these have been deemed very successful, over 222,000 visited the ScamSmart website to find out how to identify a scam scheme as a result of the most recent pre Covid campaign, July – November 2019.

DWP continues to communicate regularly on social media to set out the warning signs of a scam and has made multiple posts referencing Pension Scams and #ScamSmart in total across Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn in the period March to September 2020.

■ **Personal Independence Payment**

Apsana Begum:

[128293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria was used to determine which personal independence payment awards, due for review in 2021-22, would be extended.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department has been automatically applying extension of awards of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for all claims due for review in 2021-22. This does not include cases with a new decision from July, when review and reassessment activity resumed, as they are not part of the Covid-19 easements exercise.

■ **Radiation Exposure**

Chi Onwurah:

[126875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Under-Secretary of Digital Infrastructure on the Health and Safety Executive's responsibility for radiation exposure to the public.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for workplace exposures in relation to radiation, not public exposures. This is the responsibility of Public Health England. Consequently, there have been no discussions with the Under-Secretary of Digital Infrastructure on HSE's role in this area.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[128099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 123540, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into potential maladministration in her Department's communication of changes to women's state pension age.

Guy Opperman:

It would not be appropriate to comment on the possible implications of an ongoing Ombudsman's investigation.

■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus

Karen Bradley:

[\[128157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will extend statutory sick pay to members of a household who are required to self-isolate and take unpaid covid-related absence due to another member of that household requiring non-covid related surgery.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay is payable from the first day of absence from work, rather than the fourth to individuals who have been told to self-isolate by their doctor or a clinician before being admitted to hospital for planned or elective surgery. SSP eligibility conditions apply, including the requirement that an individual is sick or incapable of work for at least 4 days in a row (including non-working days).

SSP is just one part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need. Those who are not eligible for SSP may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances, to support them when they are unable to work during a period of isolation.

Employers can choose to furlough employees through the CJRS if they are eligible to do so. Employees are able to be furloughed if they are unable to work because they have caring responsibilities resulting from coronavirus.

■ Universal Credit

Chris Stephens:

[\[128206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the length of front line interviews by her Department's staff on the number of people claiming Universal Credit.

Chris Stephens:

[\[128207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of effect of the length interview times between work coaches and new claimants on

the number of people claiming Universal Credit; and what her timescale is for returning interview lengths to 50 minutes per session.

Mims Davies:

The frequency of interventions that Universal Credit Work Coaches undertake with claimants is determined by the individual circumstances of the claimant, the duration of their claim, and the level of support required at that particular time. Since Covid restrictions began earlier this year, claimants have been supported by Work Coaches applying a more flexible approach. The Claimant Commitment interview was shortened to enable work coaches to support as many claimants as they can back into work. The length of this interview will be reviewed against our Work Coach recruitment plans and subsequent operational capacity.

■ **Universal Credit: Carers**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[128280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of payment of (a) the carer element of universal credit, (b) carer addition and (c) the carer premium as at 10 December 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The available information on the number of households with a carer entitlement on Universal Credit, currently for August 2020, is published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The latest available statistics on the number of Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit claimants in receipt of the carer premium, and the number of Pension Credit claimants in receipt of the carer addition are shown in the following table.

Number of Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit claimants in receipt of the carer premium and the number of Pension Credit claimants in receipt of the carer addition, Great Britain, Feb 20, May 20 and Aug 20

BENEFIT	LATEST QUARTER AVAILABLE	NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS
Jobseeker's Allowance	Feb-20	1,600
Income Support	May-20	200,000
Pension Credit	May-20	134,800
Housing Benefit	Aug-20	152,080

Source: DWP Quarterly Statistical Enquiry 5% data and 100% Work, Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) and DWP Single Housing Benefit Extract

Notes

1. Figures for Income Support, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit are rounded to the nearest 10 and Jobseeker's Allowance is rounded to the nearest 100.
2. JSA figures have been updated using 5% proportions against 100% Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) totals.

The information requested is not readily available for Employment and Support Allowance claimants and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Universal Credit: Poplar and Limehouse**

Apsana Begum:

[\[128305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of not extending the £20 uplift in universal credit beyond April 2021 on the 17,000 households in Poplar and Limehouse in receipt of that benefit.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until April 2021. As the Government has done throughout this crisis, it will continue to assess how best to support low-income families, which is why we will look at the economic and health context in the new year.

■ **Waste Disposal: Air Pollution**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[127468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that drivers of heavy goods vehicles are sufficiently protected from poor air quality.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[127473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that refuse collectors are not exposed to high levels of air pollution.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[127474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to (a) incentivise and (b) encourage local authorities to transition to low-emission refuse collection vehicles in order to protect refuse workers from high levels of air pollution.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[127475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the effect of (a) ambient air pollution and (b) exhaust emissions on refuse collectors.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulates work-related health and safety in Great Britain. Employers, including Local Authorities (LAs), have existing duties under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 to manage health risks where workers may be exposed to hazardous substances as a result of work. The Regulations are supported by Workplace Exposure Limits (WELS) for substances hazardous to health. These will inform an employer's assessment and management of risk from exhaust emissions and pollutants such as Nitrogen Dioxide and Carbon Monoxide that can give rise to Occupational Lung Diseases (OLD).

Low emissions vehicles have only recently become available and HSE is aware that a number of LAs are assessing their economic and environmental benefits. HSE's remit does not include environmental pollution and HSE does not incentivize or encourage transition to low-emission vehicles. The responsibility for air quality is a devolved matter. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has responsibility for meeting limits in England and co-ordinates assessment and air quality plans for the UK as a whole.

Tackling OLDs as a result of exposure to hazardous substances at work is one of HSE's health priorities. HSE works with a broad range of stakeholders including trade associations, employers, trade unions, third sector and professional bodies to reduce the incidence rate of OLDs.

■ **Work Capability Assessment: Coronavirus**

Aaron Bell:

[\[126162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the feasibility of restarting face-to-face work capability assessments; and what plans her Department has to expedite the backlog of cases waiting for assessment.

Justin Tomlinson:

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, remains in place, and is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance. Any re-introduction of face-to-face assessments would involve additional Covid-related safety measures, and guidance for claimants and assessment providers to ensure compliance with the relevant public health guidance.

Throughout the pandemic our immediate focus has been on supporting people impacted by COVID-19 by putting claims into payment as quickly as possible, as well as paying any additional benefit where claimants may be entitled to a higher award.

We continue to complete paper based assessments where possible and have introduced telephone assessments.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Impact Target

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS653\]](#)

My Right Honourable friend Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Climate Change and Corporate Responsibility (Lord Callanan) has today made the following statement:

This statement sets the Government's Business Impact Target in respect of the economic impact on business of qualifying regulatory provisions which come into, or cease to be, in force for this Parliament, and covers related matters as required under section 21 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 ("the Act").

The Manifesto undertook that Government "*will strive to achieve the right regulatory balance between supporting excellent business practice and protecting workers, consumers and the environment*". The Government does not believe that the current methods of assessing regulatory impacts allow for this. Therefore, the Government will consult with business to ensure the impact of regulation is reflected more effectively, so as to continue to provide necessary protections without placing unnecessary burdens on business. Until the completion of the review the Government will set a target of zero. This will in effect be a holding target and will enable Government to continue to monitor regulatory impacts and remain transparent to business on the impacts of the regulatory programme it is delivering in the immediate term. This holding target makes clear that Government remains committed to achieving regulatory balance and does not intend to increase the regulatory burden on business.

Upon completion of the review, the target and the methodology to be used for assessing the economic impact, along with any other related matters as required under section 21 of the Act, will be revised to reflect the findings of the review.

Business Impact Target^[1]

The Government is setting a net target of zero savings to business and voluntary or community bodies from qualifying measures that come into force or cease to be in force during this Parliament.

Interim Target^[2]

The interim target covers the savings to be achieved from qualifying measures that come into force or cease to be in force in the first three years of this Parliament. The Government's interim target is also set at zero.

Measurement of the Business Impact Target ^[3]

The impact of each qualifying measure will be assessed on the basis of its Equivalent Annual Net Direct Cost to Business (EANDCB) measured in 2019 prices and with a 2020 present value base year. As in the previous Parliament, the contribution to the Business

Impact Target will be the sum of the EANDCB over the first five years for which the measure will be in force, or the sum of the EANDCB over the full lifetime of the measure for measures that are, or will be, in force for less than five years.

Qualifying Regulatory Provisions ^[4]

Under the Act, the measures that are in scope for the Business Impact Target are described as “regulatory provisions”. That includes both legislation and the activities of Ministers and listed regulators. The Secretary of State must determine the regulatory provisions that are to be scored against the target (“qualifying regulatory provisions”). Qualifying regulatory provisions are regulatory provisions that do not fall within any of the exclusions set out below:

- a) Regulatory provisions that have been certified by departments or regulators as falling under the *de minimis* rule, namely those that have an EANDCB of less than \pm £5 million;
- b) Regulatory provisions that implement new or changed obligations from European Union Regulations, Decisions and Directives, and other international commitments and obligations, except in cases of gold-plating. This includes measures incorporating EU law into domestic law under the EU Withdrawal Bill and legislation made for the purpose of implementing the EU Withdrawal Agreement, including implementation of new EU law during the implementation period.
- c) Regulatory provisions that have been certified by departments or regulators as dealing with deficiencies in retained EU Law (under the EU Withdrawal Bill and other legislation);
- d) Regulatory provisions that are intended to deliver – or to replicate – better competition-based outcomes in markets characterised by market power;
- e) Regulatory provisions relating to systemic financial risk;
- f) Regulatory provisions relating to civil emergencies;
- g) Regulatory provisions concerning fines and penalties, and redress and restitution;
- h) Regulatory provisions that implement changes to the classification and scheduling of drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 where these follow the recommendations of the relevant independent advisory body;
- i) Regulatory provisions that have been certified by departments or regulators as relating to the safety of tenants, residents and occupants in buildings that stem from, or relate to, Government’s response to the Grenfell tragedy, reviews, inquiries or working groups;
- j) Regulator casework including specific investigation and enforcement activity, individual licence decisions, and individual advice;
- k) Education, communications activities, and promotional campaigns by regulators, including media campaigns, posters, factsheets, bulletins, letters, websites, and information / advice helplines;
- l) Policy development by regulators, including formal and informal consultations, policy reviews, and ad hoc information requests;

m) Changes to the organisation and management of regulators, except for those resulting from legislative changes or another policy change that is a Qualifying Regulatory Provision;

Independent Verification Body[5]

The Government will reappoint the Regulatory Policy Committee as the Independent Verification Body to verify the impact on business of measures in scope of the Business Impact Target [and the list of non-qualifying regulatory provisions].

[1] As required under section 21(1)(a) of the Act.

[2] As required under section 21(1)(b) of the Act.

[3] As required under section 21(3)(b) of the Act.

[4] As required under section 21(3)(a) of the Act.

[5] As required under section 25(1) of the Act.

■ Climate Ambition Summit 2020

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):
[[HCWS655](#)]

On Saturday, 12 December, the United Kingdom co-convened the Climate Ambition Summit with the United Nations and France, and in partnership with Chile and Italy, on the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement. The Summit marked a major milestone on the road to the crucial UN climate conference COP26 in Glasgow next November.

Countries representing around 65% of global carbon dioxide emissions, and around 70% of the world's economy have now committed to reaching net zero or carbon neutrality. This includes announcements made in the run up to and at the Climate Ambition Summit and those expected early next year. This follows a huge diplomatic and cross-government effort to raise ambition.

75 leaders from all continents outlined over 90 commitments at the Summit demonstrating that climate change is a global priority despite the shared challenges of COVID-19. There is mutual understanding that the science is clear. Climate destruction is accelerating, and there remains much more to do as a global community to keep the global temperature rise to 1.5C.

The UK met commitments covering the 3 pillars of the Paris Agreement. We formally communicated our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the UNFCCC which commits the UK to a new ambitious target to reduce the UK's emissions by at least 68% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, published our first Adaptation Communication and reiterated our commitment to providing £11.6 billion in climate finance. A copy of the NDC has been laid in Parliament.

The Prime Minister announced that the UK will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, other than in exceptional circumstances, as soon as possible, and align its support to enable clean energy exports. The consultation, which is now live, will seek views on how to

further enable an accelerated growth in UK clean energy exports, and on the impacts of the timing of implementation of the policy shift.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution announced last month which spans clean energy, buildings, transport, nature and innovative technologies and will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030; support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs; and level up regions across the UK.

44 countries and the EU announced headlines of their more ambitious NDCs. This includes a number of countries who have made significant increases such as Colombia, Jamaica, Peru and the EU, as well as the UK.

24 countries have now announced new commitments, strategies or plans to reach net zero or carbon neutrality. With recent commitments from China, Japan, South Korea and Argentina establishing a clear benchmark for G20 countries.

The Summit heard from the poorest and most vulnerable countries, who are already feeling the impacts of climate change. Barbados, Ethiopia and Maldives set themselves an aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, with the right support. Meanwhile, Fiji, Malawi, Nauru and Nepal and others are aiming for 2050.

20 new or forthcoming adaptation commitments including in National Adaptation Plans, Adaptation Communications and NDCs. Countries such as Ethiopia are leading the way, by taking a whole-of-economy approach that protects people and nature and Suriname is stepping up its implementation of its National Adaptation Plan. Developed countries, including the UK, Netherlands and Spain, are also upping their adaptation efforts, showing no country is immune to the impacts of climate change. The Summit also saw the launch of the Race to Resilience setting a goal of safeguarding 4 billion people vulnerable to climate risks by 2030 (more detail below).

A number of leaders set out concrete policies to implement their economy-wide targets. Pakistan announced that they will have no more power based on coal, while Israel has committed to ending fossil fuel energy use by 2050. Canada greatly increased the floor price for carbon. Denmark announced that it will end all new oil and gas exploration in the North Sea. 15 countries profiled their targets to accelerate the transition to renewable energy by 2030 - with Barbados (fossil-fuel free), Vanuatu (100% renewables) and Austria (100% renewables), all turning their backs on fossil fuels. Alongside the UK, France and Sweden set out plans to end international financial support for fossil fuels.

A strong commitment to protecting nature was also clear. Leaders spoke about their existing plans to increase the use of nature-based solutions to combat climate change.

12 donor countries highlighted their commitments to support developing countries, including just under €500m in additional investment from Germany, an additional €1bn per year from France from its previous target, as well as a World Bank commitment to ensure that 35% of their portfolio includes climate co-benefits, and EIB commitment to ensure that 50% includes climate co-benefits, as well as 100% alignment

of EIB's activities on Paris agreement. However, it is clear that there is much more to do to ensure that no one is left behind. COVID-19 has impacted international climate finance flows this year. 2021 will be a critical year to show that finance is flowing and to meet and surpass the \$100bn goal.

The Summit also saw commitments from business, cities and investors. Over 2,500 businesses, cities, regions, investors and members of the Climate Ambition Alliance representing nearly 70% of the global economy have now got commitments to net zero by 2050.

- The Race to Resilience campaign, launched at the Summit, brings together non-state actors and initiatives which commit to building resilience actions to safeguard by 2030 the lives and livelihoods of 4 billion people from groups and communities vulnerable to climate risks. Examples of actions include: Zurich Insurance (Switzerland) announced that the Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance will triple funding by 2025 and expand its reach from 11 to 21 countries and the Mayor of Freetown (Sierra Leone) committed to planting 1 million trees between 2020 and 2021.
- Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative (Global) - representing US\$9 trillion of assets under management has seen each of the 30 founding members unequivocally commit to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This includes setting individual portfolio targets, as well as engaging companies in each member's portfolio to set decarbonization goals in line with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5C.
- C40 Cities (Global) - announced the launch of the Cities Race to Zero campaign and that 70 cities and local governments have joined in the first month.
- Godrej & Boyce (India) - a manufacturing company, announced commitments to key global initiatives including the Business Ambition for 1.5C, setting science-based targets, and advancing energy efficiency, in line with their overall ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.
- International Airlines Group (Spain/UK) - are the first airline group worldwide to commit to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and the Oneworld Alliance of 13 airlines representing 20% of global aviation, is investing US\$400m in the development of sustainable aviation fuels (over the next 20 years).
- Dalmia Cement (India) - 40 of the world's leading producers of cement issued an industry commitment to deliver carbon-neutral concrete by 2050. The Indian cement company has gone further and established a roadmap to become carbon negative by 2040 and is working globally to meet its 100% renewable energy objectives.
- Movida-Rent-a-Car (Brazil) - presented the actions that will underpin their pledge of net-zero emissions by 2030 and becoming carbon positive by 2040.
- Apple (United States) - pledged carbon neutrality for its supply chain and products by 2030 and announced new progress that 95 of its suppliers have committed to moving to 100% renewable energy.

- Artistic Milliners (Pakistan) - a textile company announced joining the UN Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action and shared their actions on the circular economy to reduce their carbon footprint and provide zero emissions energy to thousands of homes.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Government Transparency and Accountability

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):

[\[HCWS654\]](#)

Since 2010, the Government has been at the forefront of opening up data to allow Parliament, the public and the media to hold public bodies to account.

Despite the need to reprioritise resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, tremendous progress continues to be made this year by central government departments in publishing core transparency data. Such online transparency is crucial to delivering value for money, cutting waste and inefficiency, and ensuring every pound of taxpayers' money is spent in the best possible way.

The Government will continue to look at how the range of information published by Government can be improved and made as useful as possible to the public, press and Parliament.

The following subject areas include documents and information that the Government is due to publish, or which have recently been made available.

Ministerial Transparency

The Government is today publishing an updated List of Ministerial Responsibilities.

Transparency on Senior Officials and Special Advisers

An annual list of salary details for senior public officials in departments and arms' length bodies earning £150,000 and above will be published today. These government organisations need to be able to attract high calibre people who can deliver quality services and drive forward projects in a way that represents true value to the taxpayer. However, very high salaries in the public sector must be justified, so it is important that we publish this information and allow it to be scrutinised.

In line with legislation, an annual list of current Special Advisers and their costs is being published. Special advisers are a critical part of the team supporting Ministers. They add a political dimension to the advice and assistance available to Ministers while reinforcing the impartiality of the permanent Civil Service by distinguishing the source of political advice and support.

Transparency in the Civil Service

The Government is publishing new annual figures on gender pay differentials across the Civil Service. Our gender pay gap continues to narrow and is still significantly lower than the private sector, but we know there is more to do so continue to work hard to tackle

this. In recent years we have introduced blind recruitment, advertised all jobs as flexible and continued to review recruitment policies to ensure fairness and equality.

Demographic data of the 2019 Civil Service People Survey, an annual survey of our employees' attitudes and experiences of working in the Civil Service has also been published. The Employee Engagement Index was 63% in the 2019 People Survey, the highest it had been since the survey began in 2009.

Transparency on spending

Departments have published routine prompt payment data, demonstrating our continued commitment to supporting businesses by ensuring they are paid on time. Departments will also be publishing routine spend data.

The Government has begun publishing the top three Key Performance Indicators for central government's most important contracts.

Transparency in public procurement

Transparency is a key principle of public procurement. Openness underpins accountability for public money, anti-corruption and the effectiveness of procurements. Long planned reforms in our Green Paper on transforming public procurement, published today, will ensure open and transparent contracting.

Transparency on delivery

HM Treasury will today be publishing new priority outcomes for each UK government department. These capture the government's long-term policy objectives, from reducing crime to improving education standards across the country.

These outcomes and metrics include cross-cutting outcomes and shared metrics in areas where closer working between departments would achieve better results. This reflects the Government's commitment to breaking down silos and enabling stronger collaboration between departments. Citizens will be able to track performance against finalised outcomes through public reporting.

Copies of associated documents are being placed in the Library of the House and will be published on GOV.UK.

Further transparency publications will be published in the New Year, in the usual way.

■ **Transforming Public Procurement**

Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez):

[[HCWS651](#)]

The UK spends around £290 billion per year on public procurement. Leaving the EU offers us a huge opportunity to reform how this money is spent so that it better meets the needs of this country. We can create a new, simpler procurement regime that will reduce costs for business and the public sector by reducing bureaucracy and improving commercial outcomes. Such a large amount of government spending must be leveraged to play its part in the UK's economic recovery and unleash opportunities for small businesses to innovate in public service delivery.

The UK remains open for business and committed to our international obligations. Being a member of the WTO Government Procurement Agreement gives British businesses access to £1.3 trillion in public procurement opportunities overseas. The terms of that trade agreement mean we cannot simply discriminate against suppliers from other GPA countries. Neither would we wish to discriminate against overseas suppliers that deliver inward investment and better value for UK taxpayers.

In support of this, I am launching a public consultation by a Green Paper on 'Transforming Public Procurement'. The consultation will be open until March 2021.

In developing the Green Paper proposals, officials in the Government Commercial Function engaged with over 500 stakeholders and organisations through many hundreds of hours of discussions and workshops. Stakeholders included those from central and local government, the devolved administrations, education, and health as well as start-ups, small, medium and large businesses, the voluntary and charity sectors, academics, international experts and procurement lawyers.

Our proposals are wide-ranging and include:

- reducing the overall volume of legislation by harmonising the different regulatory schemes for the public sector, utilities and concessions contracts;
- overhauling the current seven complex and inflexible procurement procedures and replacing them with three simple, modern procedures;
- increasing the scope to take account of societal benefits when awarding contracts;
- making procurement more transparent through greater use of open contracting and enabling a more efficient 'tell us once' register of supplier data;
- making it mandatory to publish a notice when a decision is made to use the limited tendering procedure.
- providing more scope to exclude suppliers in certain circumstances, such as for poor past performance, and corruption-related matters; and
- reforming the remedies system, through making the court review process faster and less costly, capping damages, and further investigating the feasibility of tribunals.

The consultation published today gives everyone an opportunity to help shape public procurement for the future and I wish to encourage all involved in public procurement to have their say. This includes those small and medium-sized enterprises and voluntary, community and social enterprises who feel the existing EU rules hinder their participation in the market.

Attachments:

1. Transforming Public Procurement [(CP353) - Transforming Public Procurement.pdf]
2. Transforming Public Procurement (Large Print) [(CP353) - Transforming Public Procurement, Large Print.pdf]

■ Unconscious Bias Training

Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez):

[\[HCWS652\]](#)

This government is committed to levelling up opportunity for everyone, no matter what their background. We are also determined to eliminate discrimination in the workplace. To meet those ambitions, we must ensure that policy and advice on equality is evidence-based, and is delivered in a way that means we can respond quickly to new insights.

Earlier this year, the Government Equalities Office commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team for a summary of the evidence on unconscious bias and diversity training. Titled 'Unconscious bias and diversity training - what the evidence says', the report highlights that 'there is currently no evidence that this training changes behaviour in the long term or improves workplace equality in terms of representation of women, ethnic minorities or other minority groups'. It also states that there is emerging evidence of unintended negative consequences.

The report is published alongside this response, and will be deposited in the House Libraries, today. In light of its findings, Ministers have concluded that unconscious bias training does not achieve its intended aims. It will therefore be phased out in the Civil Service. We encourage other public sector employers to do likewise.

Background

Unconscious bias training typically aims to raise awareness of the potential biases and cognitive shortcuts that may negatively affect decision-making and behaviour in the workplace. The intent is usually to reduce both explicit and implicit bias towards members of particular groups that share characteristics protected under law and change behaviour.

Although unconscious bias training takes a variety of forms, it is normally delivered as a discrete individual or group session that aims to set out the theory behind implicit bias, provide exercises that demonstrate how such biases might potentially affect behaviour, and suggest strategies to participants for avoiding that behaviour in future.

Such training sessions have been introduced by a range of organisations as part of a well-intentioned effort to build fairer and more inclusive workplaces. They have often formed part of a wider employer toolkit aimed at tackling discrimination and building inclusion.

However, in recent years a significant debate has emerged over their effectiveness and quality. Despite a growing diversity training industry and increased adoption of unconscious bias training programmes, a strong body of evidence has emerged that shows that such training has no sustained impact on behaviour and may even be counter-productive.

Lack of evidence to support positive change

To be successful in tackling discrimination, unconscious bias training should change behaviour. However, evidence suggests that attitudes and behaviours are each driven by different psychological systems, so a single intervention is unlikely to impact effectively on both. A systematic review of unconscious bias training examining 492 studies

(involving more than 87,000 participants), found changes to unconscious bias measures were not associated with changes in behaviour (1). Formal assessments of bias (eg the Implicit Association Test) have also been criticised for failing to generate replicable results even when the same individuals have been re-tested (2).

Further evidence also suggests that unconscious bias training may even have detrimental effects. The Equality and Human Rights Commission found that evidence for its ability effectively to change behaviour is limited and “there is potential for back-firing effects when UBT participants are exposed to information that suggests stereotypes and biases are unchangeable.” Instructions to suppress stereotypes may not only activate and reinforce unhelpful stereotypes, they may provoke negative reactions and actually make people exacerbate their biases (3).

Finally, there is no recognised way of assuring the quality of unconscious bias training and multiple interventions of variable content may be given that label. This has serious implications for organisations, who risk putting funding into poor quality and ineffective training.

Government conclusion

The Civil Service is committed to being an open and inclusive employer. Civil servants work on a range of complex policies every day; working inclusively means that they will make better decisions, solve problems more effectively and ultimately deliver better services to citizens. An individual’s background must never be a limiting factor in the workplace. Our aspiration is clear: a Civil Service open to all, with individuals from a variety of backgrounds adding breadth and depth to our understanding of contemporary British society, providing greater challenge to received wisdom and fresh perspectives to the challenges we face as a nation - united by a commitment to the fundamental values of public life and service.

Efforts to ensure the Civil Service is representative of the whole population it serves, and that its workplaces are free from discrimination, must be based on clear evidence of what works, must uphold the merit principle for recruitment and promotion, and must represent value for taxpayers’ money. This approach is the reason, for example, that the Civil Service uses clear, standardised assessment techniques for recruitment and tests the fairness of any such tools with diverse user groups before deploying them.

Given the evidence, now captured in the report accompanying this statement, an internal review decided in January 2020 that unconscious bias training would be phased out in departments. In addition, while there is clearly a role for training to support a more inclusive workplace and Civil Service, evidence also suggests that even the broader category of ‘diversity training’ as a standalone exercise can undermine such efforts if it appears to be a “tick box exercise”. The Civil Service will therefore integrate principles for inclusion and diversity into mainstream core training and leadership modules in a manner which facilitates positive behaviour change. This new strategy will be published in the new year, and will reassert our commitment to being an inclusive employer with a stronger focus on engaging measurable action.

The government expects other parts of the public sector, including local government, the police, and the NHS, to review their approaches in light of the evidence and the developments in the Civil Service. We will continue to build the evidence on what works to make our workplaces fairer, and unite and level up across our country, with the reformed Equality Hub playing a key role.

1. Forscher, P. S.*, Lai, C. K.*, Axt, J. R., Ebersole, C. R., Herman, M., Devine, P. G., & Nosek, B.A. (2019). A meta-analysis of procedures to change implicit measures. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 117, 522-559
2. Gawronski, Bertram & Morrison, Mike & Phills, Curtis & Galdi, Silvia. (2017). Temporal Stability of Implicit and Explicit Measures: A Longitudinal Analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. 43. 300-312. 10.1177/0146167216684131.
3. Dobbin & Kalev (2018), Why Doesn't Diversity Training Work? The Challenge for Industry and Academia, 10(2), 48-55; Dobbin & Kalev (2016) Why Diversity Programs Fail, *Harvard Business Review* 94, (7); Michelle M Duguid, Melissa C Thomas-Hunt, Condoning stereotyping? How awareness of stereotyping prevalence impacts expression of stereotypes, March 2015, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25314368/>; Frederick L Oswald, Gregory Mitchell, Hart Blanton, James Jaccard, Philip E Tetlock, Predicting ethnic and racial discrimination: a meta-analysis of IAT criterion studies, 17 June 2013, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23773046/>

Attachments:

1. Unconscious Bias Training BIT report [20-12-14 - Unconscious Bias Training BIT report.pdf]
2. Unconscious Bias Training BIT report (Large Print) [20-12-14 - Unconscious Bias Training BIT report - large print.pdf]

EDUCATION

■ Education Updates

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[[HCWS656](#)]

As a government we have made it a national priority that education and childcare settings should continue to operate as normally as possible during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and we have continued to work with the profession to continue full-time face-to-face education.

We are therefore deploying the latest rapid-result coronavirus tests to schools and colleges from January. This will help us to find those with the virus and isolate them quickly to break chains of transmission. It will also help us keep close contacts of positive cases – whether staff or students – in education as we will test them every day rather than asking them to self-isolate.

Testing, along with existing infection prevention and control measures such as ventilation, increased hygiene, and wearing of face coverings in communal areas where appropriate, can ensure pupils are given the best chance of continuing face-to-face education.

The testing programme builds on the success of testing pilots in schools and colleges over the past few months. It will start with secondary schools and colleges, with staff eligible for weekly rapid tests.

This will help identify asymptomatic cases – which make up a third of all cases – limiting the spread of the virus.

Staff and students who are close contacts of positive cases will be eligible for daily testing, preventing the need for self-isolation. Only if a daily test returns a positive result will the person need to isolate.

Using daily testing for close contacts of positive cases will help tackle COVID-19 related absence among the workforce and students, allowing them to continue in face-to-face education, with all the benefits that this brings.

To support delivery of asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges, settings will be able to apply for reimbursement for reasonable administrative costs such as staff time.

We realise that this year has been incredibly difficult for staff, students, pupils and parents. I want to thank all involved in education for their tireless dedication. The hard work of our education workforce has already substantially reduced the risk of transmission of coronavirus within education settings and we will now use this new testing approach to ensure more young people are able to remain in education, benefitting from the national priority of keeping education open for all.

As with all policy, this will be kept under review in light of scientific evidence, and the government will provide further advice if necessary.

HOME OFFICE

■ Paper on characteristics of group-based child sexual exploitation

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[\[HCWS648\]](#)

Today I am publishing a paper on the characteristics of group-based child sexual exploitation, which was prompted by high profile cases of sexual grooming in towns including Rochdale and Rotherham.

An External Reference Group, consisting of independent experts on child sexual exploitation, reviewed and informed this work. Members included Labour MP for Rotherham Sarah Champion, Conservative MP for Wakefield Imran Ahmad Khan, survivor and campaigner Sammy Woodhouse, and Simon Bailey, National Police Chiefs Council lead on child protection.

The paper summarises studies which suggest individuals committing group-based child sexual exploitation are predominantly, but not exclusively, male and often under the age of 30.

Studies indicate that motivations differ between offenders, but that a sexual interest in children is not always the predominant motive. Financial gain and a desire for sexual gratification are common motives, and misogyny and disregard for women and girls may further enable the abuse.

Offenders can come from a range of social backgrounds – some have been stable middle-class professionals, some of whom were married, whilst others have had more chaotic lifestyles.

Some studies have indicated an over-representation of Asian and Black offenders. However, it is difficult to draw robust conclusions about the ethnicity of offenders as existing research is limited and data collection is poor.

This is disappointing because community and cultural factors are clearly relevant to understanding and tackling offending. Therefore, a commitment to improve the collection and analysis of data on group-based child sexual exploitation, including in relation to characteristics of offenders such as ethnicity and other factors, will be included in the forthcoming Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy.

Victims and survivors of these abhorrent crimes have told me how they were let down by the state in the name of political correctness. What happened to these children remains one of the biggest stains on our country's conscience. I am determined to ensure the government, law enforcement and other partners better understand any community and cultural factors relevant to tackling offending – helping us to safeguard children from abuse, deliver justice for victims and survivors, and restore the public's confidence in the criminal justice system's ability to confront these repulsive crimes.

The paper is available on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-characteristics-of-offending>). A copy of the paper will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I thank Members for their continued engagement on this important issue.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Annual Report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner 2019

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[HCWS649]

I have today laid before both Houses a copy of the annual report of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner 2019. The report was drafted and submitted by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Sir Brian Leveson QC.

Overall, this report demonstrates that the security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies and other relevant public authorities show extremely high levels of operational competence combined with respect for the law. The report also sets out the breadth and complexity of the powers covered by Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and other legislation, and offers constructive criticism on the practical framework and individual instances of how these are used. Where IPCO have identified problems, departments and agencies have worked rigorously to address these.

Further to Section 234 of the 2016 Act, the Commissioner has also submitted to me a confidential annex to the Report, dealing with the work of the intelligence agencies. I concur with the Commissioner that publication of this annex would be prejudicial to national security and not in the public interest. However, I can confirm that the Annex does not raise substantive concerns or criticisms not covered in the main report.

I would like to add that this Report demonstrates the high quality of the oversight of our security and intelligence agencies' use of the most intrusive powers. I am satisfied that our arrangements are amongst the strongest and most effective in the world.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the current and previous Commissioners and their staff for their work, as well as echoing the Commissioners' thanks to the agencies and departments and civil society organisations which have helped with the establishment of IPCO over the past few years.

I commend this report to the House.

■ Investigation Update

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[\[HCWS650\]](#)

At the beginning of Prime Minister's Questions on 18 November, I updated the House on the Cabinet Office investigation into the unauthorised disclosure on 30 October of the decision to put in place further restrictions across England to combat the spread of Covid-19 (official report column 909044).

This investigation remains ongoing. If the final aspects of the investigation identify the source, the Government will provide a further update to the House.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Plan for Jobs Update

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[\[HCWS647\]](#)

The Government's Plan for Jobs is already supporting people back into employment. Jobcentres are open across the country, including 262 Jobcentres that recently started opening on Saturdays, and we are now making over 750,000 contacts a week. With an extra 7,000 work coaches already in place, we are on track to meet our commitment to double the number of work coaches by the end of this financial year. While many claimants are ready to move back into work, others may need additional support including acquiring work experience, training or new skills.

For young people especially, a lack of work experience can be a barrier to stepping on to the jobs ladder. That is why, through our Kickstart scheme, we are funding the creation of new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds, with work coaches referring young people to prospective employers who are able to spread the start date of job placements over the next year.

After inviting expressions of interest from employers in September, young people started benefiting from the first placements in November. We have seen a brilliant response from employers with over 32,000 roles already approved. Vacancies have been created with employers large and small and across a range of sectors, including construction, digital and technology, logistics and manufacturing. Processing of applications is now proceeding at pace and we hope to see many more of our young claimants starting placements early in the New Year.

In delivering Kickstart, it is important we use taxpayers' money carefully to ensure the quality of the wraparound support to young people and avoid fraud. Therefore our processes have rightly been rigorous in assessing applications made directly from employers and those made through a Kickstart 'gateway' where employers, particularly smaller ones, can receive help such as from a local authority or charity. We have over 200 'gateway' organisations now approved with a significant number of roles. However, we know our processes have led to a number of employers and organisations not being approved, particularly applications by sole traders, whether directly or through gateways.

We are continuing to review and improve our assessment and control processes, including those on financial due diligence. For example, currently there is only one route for sole traders to be involved in Kickstart and that is through a gateway that provides a PAYE service as part of their support. We have now approved a new gateway, operated by the Federation of Small Businesses and in partnership with Adecco Working Ventures, to provide such a route. Other organisations are considering creating similar models.

Disabled people receiving support through Access to Work are eligible for Kickstart placements and these will be actively promoted by our work coaches and national employment programme teams. I am pleased that a number of people on Kickstart have come from particularly disadvantaged groups and we will continue to make our work programmes appropriately inclusive.

Other parts of our Plan for Jobs agenda being delivered by DWP include SWAPs, JETS and JFS: Sector Work-based Academy Programmes, Job Entry Targeted Scheme and Job Finding Support. The number of referrals and starts made to SWAPs has exceeded our initial estimates and we are seeing thousands of people being supported through our other schemes. In light of this uptake and to ensure that we can continue to support claimants we are taking steps to increase the number of placements available on the SWAPs scheme.

Work is also underway on Restart, our long-term unemployment programme, that will support over one million individuals. We have issued our Invitation to Tender for the programme to start in summer 2021.

Our Plan for Jobs is the most ambitious employment programme ever undertaken, particularly the scope and extent of Kickstart. I encourage members of the House to work with local employers to ensure Kickstart helps provide a flying start for our young people.