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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Amazon

**Patrick Grady:**

**[129046]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the effect of Amazon's commercial practices on (a) workers' rights, (b) the environment, (c) public finances, (d) digital rights and (e) fair markets; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

All employers must comply with employment law. If a worker believes that they have suffered a breach of their employment rights, they can get support and advice from Acas. If they cannot resolve the issue with their employer, they can take a claim to an employment tribunal. The government also spends over £35m a year on enforcement of employment rights to protect vulnerable workers.

Regarding the environment, I welcome the steps that Amazon has taken so far in an effort to decarbonise and encourage the company to continue with its Science-Based Targets commitments and move quickly towards Net Zero, including working with companies in its supply chains.

Regarding public finances, I cannot comment on individual taxpayers.

Regarding digital rights, the UK has strong safeguards and enforcement regimes to ensure that personal data is collected and handled responsibly and securely. We would expect Amazon, like all organisations who process personal data, to comply with the UK's Data Protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.

Regarding fair markets, the Government is committed to ensuring digital markets remain competitive and deliver positive outcomes for consumers, small businesses, and society. That is why we have announced funding to establish a new Digital Markets Unit within the Competition and Markets Authority from 2021-22. We will consult on proposals for a new pro-competition regime for digital markets in early 2021.

#### ■ Climate Change Convention: Children and Young People

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

**[129053]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) schools, (b) university and college students and (c) youth groups on how they can engage with COP26.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Officials across Government have been working closely with young people and youth NGOs to ensure COP26 is inclusive and that this is incorporated into the legacy of the UK's presidency.

On 14<sup>th</sup> December, BEIS co-chaired a meeting with the Students Organising for Sustainability where 20 young people aged 14-28 from across the 4 nations came together to discuss how young people can be empowered to engage in the Together for Our Planet Campaign.

We will continue to ensure a diverse range of youth voices are heard in the planning of COP. For example, we have established an international Civil Society and Youth advisory council, chaired by the President of COP26 and young people, which will meet regularly to inform our planning for COP26. As part of our commitment to involving young people and students in COP26 we are also working closely with our partners Italy, who are organising a Youth4Climate webinar series, and the organisers of Mock COP. The President of COP26 helped launch both of these initiatives.

**■ Energy Supply****Layla Moran:**[\[129102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the UK's energy supply will be interrupted in the event of no deal of UK-EU trade relations at the end of the transition period.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The UK's exit from the EU does not alter the fact that our energy system is resilient and secure, and UK energy is supplied from diverse sources.

We have planned extensively for the end of the transition period, alongside National Grid and industry, to ensure electricity and gas demands are met. Electricity and gas will continue to flow over interconnectors between the UK and the EU at the end of the transition period in any scenario.

The forecast electricity margin for this winter is healthy, at 4.8GW or 8.3% additional generation. The forecast gas margin for this winter is also healthy, at around 79 million cubic metres or 15% more supply than would be required to meet demand on the coldest day in 20 winters.

**■ Green Homes Grant Scheme****Sarah Olney:**[\[129080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to paragraph 7.26 of the Spending Review 2020, how much of the over £1 billion to make further progress towards delivering the government's commitment to invest in the energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation of schools, hospitals and homes will be allocated to the Green Homes Grant scheme.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

In the Spending Review 2020, the Government has committed to invest over £1 billion next year into making new and existing homes and public buildings more efficient, including through the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Paragraph 4.7 of the Spending Review sets out the Government's intention to extend the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme with £320 million of funding in 2021-22.

■ **Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus****Andy McDonald:**[\[128990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to update its recommendations on cleaning in workplace settings to reflect updated guidance from the Health and Safety Executive on disinfecting surfaces and vehicles.

**Paul Scully:**

BEIS has worked closely with Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Public Health England and others throughout the pandemic to ensure that guidance for businesses is based on the most up to date understanding of Covid-19. There are arrangements in place between BEIS and HSE for weekly reviews of the recommendations for workplaces to ensure that any changes are rapidly reflected either through direct changes to the GOV.UK [guidance](#) or through links to the recommendations published by other departments.

■ **Innovate UK****Chi Onwurah:**[\[128965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his timescale is for the publication of Innovate UK delivery plans for (a) 2021, (b) 2022, and 2023.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Innovate UK's priorities and delivery plans for the first part of 2021 are included in UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s Corporate Plan for 2020-21. In addition to this, UKRI will publish a one-off delivery plan for Innovate UK that will sit alongside the 2021-22 Corporate Plan, based on its current budget allocation. Publication of this delivery plan is anticipated in the spring of 2021.

Publication of future Delivery Plans for 2022-23 are dependent on future budget allocations for Innovate UK.

■ **Postal Services****Chi Onwurah:**[\[128966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to reduce delays to postal services.



**Paul Scully:**

The postal service plays an important role in helping to mitigate the impacts of coronavirus on individuals, families, and businesses up and down the country.

Royal Mail, a private company, has well-established contingency plans to mitigate disruption to postal services overseen by Ofcom, the independent regulator. The Government is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the company.

**■ Sharing Economy: Industrial Health and Safety****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[129027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 123620 on Sharing Economy: Industrial Health and Safety, whether the HSE plans to bring forward proposals to extend to all workers the protections that employees are granted by sections 44 and 100 of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[129028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 124215 on Sharing Economy: Industrial Health and Safety, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to transpose Council Directive 89/391/EC into domestic law to protect workers from detriment if they take steps to protect their health and safety at work in the event of serious, imminent and unavoidable danger.

**Paul Scully:**

Following the High Court Judgment of 13<sup>th</sup> November, work is underway to amend section 44 (d) and (e) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (protection from detriment in circumstances of danger) to extend it to all limb (b) workers as well as employees.

We remain committed to ensuring that all workers are adequately protected from workplace risks.

**■ Solar Power: Planning Permission****Graham Stringer:**[\[128875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of agricultural land in each Agricultural Land Classification (ACL) category 1 to 5 which has been granted planning consent for development as solar photovoltaic generation in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

**Graham Stringer:**[\[128876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of agricultural land in each Agricultural Land Classification (ACL) category 1 to 5 which is in scoping or pre-application or is awaiting decision on an application for development as solar photovoltaic generation in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

We have not made any estimate of agricultural land in Agricultural Land Classification categories, which is in the planning system or has been granted consent for development as solar photovoltaic generation, and we do not hold this information.

■ **Work Experience: Minimum Wage****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[129050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to update the guidance on unpaid work trials in the Government's Calculating the National Minimum Wage document.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[129051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with (a) businesses, (b) trade unions, (c) employees and (d) employment lawyers on the use of unpaid work trials at the outset of employment.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that all employers pay their workers correctly. HM Revenue and Customs considers all worker complaints and will take enforcement action in any cases of abuse.

Unpaid work trials can play an important role in helping people into work opportunities, however they are not permissible if they are excessive or not part of a genuine recruitment process. Following consultation with representatives of workers and employers, the Government updated the Calculated the Minimum Wage guidance to clarify this.

**CABINET OFFICE**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Damian Collins:**[\[910448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government has taken to prepare for trade with the EU after the end of the transition period.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The transition period will end on 31 December, and the Government made extensive preparations for the changes and opportunities that will come. We have set out a package of support for border infrastructure and the customs intermediaries sector, and provided extensive guidance to business at [gov.uk/transition](https://www.gov.uk/transition).

The Government has also intensified engagement with businesses, including through the Brexit Business Taskforce, and is running a major public information campaign which tells businesses and citizens the steps they need to take to prepare.

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[910463\]](#)

What guidance he has provided to Cabinet colleagues on the timescale for responding to written questions.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

My Right Honourable Friend, the Leader of the House, has been clear to the House on this issue, he expects written questions to be answered and dealt with in good time.

Furthermore, my Right Honourable Friend has written to all members of the Cabinet to remind them of the importance of timely and helpful responses.

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[910467\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the potential effect of introducing mandatory voter ID on the Traveller and Roma communities' ability to vote.

**Julia Lopez:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ 105426](#) given on 22 October.

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[910477\]](#)

If he will bring forward proposals to amend Schedule 2, Part 1 of The Census (England) Regulations 2020 to include Welsh as an option to census questions on (a) main language and (b) language proficiency.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The Census questions to be used in England and Wales follow recommendations from the Office for National Statistics, based on an extensive three-year programme of consultation and research which included consideration of Welsh language skills questions. With Census Day around three months away, preparations are now well underway and it is not possible to change any questions at this late stage.

The UK government supports the ambition of the Welsh government to have one million Welsh speakers by 2050 and Census 2021 will provide valuable information on progress towards this objective.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[\[R\] \[127538\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure peer review of the methods and independent verification of the results of ONS estimates of covid-19 cases.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

### **Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ127358 [PQ127538.pdf]

**■ Debt Collection****Naz Shah:** [\[127576\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward a new UK Government Debt Management Bill to help ensure debt collection is fair in the long term.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is currently considering responses to a Call for Evidence on public sector debt management, which closed in September 2020. The government will publish an update in due course and make further announcements in the usual way.

**■ Employment: Coronavirus****Sir Alan Campbell:** [\[127487\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to enable key workers who will be working over Christmas to take the five day easing of covid-19 restrictions period earlier than 23 December.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Key workers make a vital contribution to the country, and the Government is grateful to all those who are working over the Christmas period. I hope employers consider how to make these arrangements work for their staff wherever practical.

**■ Government Departments: Billing****Debbie Abrahams:** [\[128981\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what data his Department holds on the total value of Government projects paid through Project Bank Accounts for each year from 2016-17.

**Debbie Abrahams:** [\[128982\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Government Departments have used Project Bank Accounts since March 2016; how many projects in each Government Department have used Project Bank Accounts since March 2016; and if he will publish a list of all Government clients using Project Bank Accounts since March 2016.

**Julia Lopez:**

Data on the use and value of Project Bank Accounts is held by departments, not centrally.

**■ Government Departments: Procurement****Owen Thompson:** [\[129063\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to take to ensure that all new procurements take account of social value.

**Owen Thompson:**[\[129064\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is Government policy that personal connections may play a formal role in the awarding of contracts during a procurement process.

**Julia Lopez:**

Through our work to extend the use of the Social Value Act we will ensure that all major central government procurements will, where appropriate, explicitly evaluate social value.

In terms of the Government's approach to procurement during the Covid-19 pandemic, I refer to the answers I gave in Cabinet Office oral questions on 17 December.

**■ National Security Council: Coronavirus****Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[128992\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many times the National Security Council has met to discuss the covid-19 pandemic; and which Cabinet members were in attendance at each such meeting.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to [PQ105615](#) on 22 October.

**■ Public Sector: Procurement****Navendu Mishra:**[\[127684\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses supplying public bodies that have been deemed to be at risk under the terms of Procurement Policy Note 02/20.

**Julia Lopez:**

This information is not held centrally.

**■ UK Membership of EU: Referendums****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[129058\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will undertake a retrospective assessment of alleged Russian interference in the 2016 EU referendum.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[129059\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Intelligence and Security Committee's 2020 report on Russia, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK's democratic institutions are protected against foreign interference.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to PQs [908687](#) and [95208](#).

**DEFENCE**■ **Afghanistan: Immigration**

**Zarah Sultana:** [129121]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment her Department has made of the risk to family members of people settled in the UK under the Afghan Ex Gratia scheme who remain in Afghanistan.

**James Heappey:**

We take the safety of immediate family members of former Locally Employed Staff (LES) eligible for relocation under the Ex Gratia Scheme (EGS) very seriously. That is why spouses and dependants under 18 are eligible to relocate with the former LES member.

If family members choose to remain in Afghanistan, then they are still eligible to seek support and assistance from our Intimidation Investigation Unit in Kabul, which is open to all immediate family members of LES, whether relocated under the EGS or not.

■ **Cobra: Coronavirus**

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [128991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many COBRA meetings regarding the Covid-19 pandemic he attended.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

■ **Gurkhas**

**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [129154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Gurkhas are serving in the armed forces.

**James Heappey:**

As at 1 October 2020, there were 3,740 Gurkhas serving in the Armed Forces. This is the latest available figure and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-index>

■ **HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance**

**Stephen Morgan:** [129100]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 126964 on HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance, what estimate he has made of the cost of the repairs.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The estimated incremental cost of the repair work is £3.3 million.

Remedial work being conducted on both Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers to help prevent a repetition of this event is expected to cost £2.2 million.

**Stephen Morgan:**[\[129101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 December 2020 to Question 126964, when HMS Prince of Wales will be operational again.

**James Heappey:**

HMS PRINCE OF WALES will return to sea in May 2021 to commence preparations for her next planned operational tasking. This underway period will take the form of activities in UK waters prior to her undertaking NATO Command duties in 2022.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Declassified UK****Zarah Sultana:**[\[129124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the parent unit was of the military officer referred to in the Government's review of the Defence Communications Directorate's response to Declassified UK.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

It's not appropriate to disclose information about individuals, particularly those not found to be at fault in this matter. The conclusion of Tom Kelly's review into the Declassified issue was announced in Parliament by myself on 7 December 2020 and a copy of the report placed in the House of Commons Library.

**■ Navy****John Healey:**[\[128871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2020 to Question 118587 on Navy, what the current limits of capability to which he refers in his answer are, and whether those limits are the same as the workforce requirements set in SDSR 2015.

**James Heappey:**

The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 15 settlement authorised the size of the Royal Navy (RN) to be 30,600 at 2025. Such plans are not static and subsequent changes to capability have been authorised which will increase the planned size of the RN to just over 31,000 by 2027. However, the date by which we expect these new vessels to be operational is unlikely to be as soon as this.

The Prime Minister's announcement on 19 November marked the first outcome of the Integrated Review. Further details of the new platforms, capabilities, programmes and personnel opportunities that stem from it will be set out alongside its full publication.

**John Healey:** [\[128872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2020 to Question 118587: Navy, whether the ships announced as part of the spending settlement are included in the current planning model for future capability.

**John Healey:** [\[128873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 November 2020 to Question 118587 on Navy, whether the new platforms and programmes specified in the funding settlement are included in the current future capability planning models.

**James Heappey:**

The Integrated Review will set out the priorities that the MOD will deliver within the new funding settlement early next year. As the Prime Minister made clear in his Integrated Review speech of 19 November, the Government are going to use the extra defence spending to restore Britain's position as the foremost naval power in Europe.

## ■ **Navy: Reserve Forces**

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[128986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the suspension of Navy Reservists until April 2021 on (a) the Royal Navy's operational capability and (b) future recruitment for the regular Royal Navy.

**James Heappey:**

The temporary cessation of some in-year Maritime Reserves activity 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.

The Maritime Reserve is an integral and highly valued part of the Royal Navy and this brief cessation of some activity will not affect Regular recruitment which is currently experiencing a surge of interest.

## ■ **Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill**

**Afzal Khan:** [\[127639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what investigations have been conducted by his Department with regard to information leaks over the Overseas Operations Bill.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[127640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department plans to take in response to reports of information leaks on the Overseas Operations Bill.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[127641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what meetings he has had with the Minister for Defence People and Veterans with regard to reports of leaked information on the Overseas Operations Bill.



**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Ministry of Defence takes unauthorised disclosures, including leaks or unsanctioned briefs very seriously. As has been the practice of successive administrations, the Government does not comment on leaks or on investigations into such unauthorised disclosures.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Bowling: Great Yarmouth****Alan Brown:**[\[129062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of whether the World Indoor Bowls Championships can take place on 9 January 2021 in Great Yarmouth; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The organisation of the 2021 World Indoor Bowls Championships is a matter for the relevant local authorities and governing bodies for the sport, subject to the overarching public health measures and the appropriate covid secure guidance for the event.

The safety and security of players and spectators in all sports remains of paramount importance and we will continue to be led by wider public health guidance.

**■ British Telecom: Redundancy****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[129120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking in response to BT Group's reported plans to make 10,000 British workers redundant in the next five years.

**Matt Warman:**

BT Group announced a modernisation programme in its 2019/20 results, which it says will enable the organisation to re-engineer old and out of date processes, switch off legacy services and make substantial cost savings over a 5-year period. Any redundancies as part of this process are a commercial decision for BT Group. However, we understand BT's approach is to minimise redundancies through natural attrition and to provide opportunities to reskill and redeploy workers whenever possible.

More generally, the Government is committed to delivering nationwide gigabit connectivity as soon as possible, and is investing £5bn to deliver gigabit-capable services to the hardest to reach parts of the UK. Nationwide gigabit rollout will create thousands of high-quality jobs in the UK and help the country build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chancellor also announced the 'Plan for Jobs' during his Summer Economic Update, through which the Government is making available up to £30 billion to create, protect, and support jobs, and to spur the UK's recovery following COVID-19.

## ■ Bus Services: Coronavirus

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[128933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will have discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Transport on support for the coach industry to maintain capacity in that sector to help sustain the leisure and tourism sector post-covid.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We will continue to engage across the Government to monitor the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the coach industry. I have discussed the problems facing the coach travel sector in detail with my Ministerial counterparts in the Department for Transport, who hold overall responsibility for coach travel. My Department also continues to engage with the Coach Tourism Association via the Tourism Industry Events Response Group (TIER).

Coach tour operators can access the Government's support package - including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, various government-backed loans, plus the new Local Restriction Support Grants and Additional Restrictions Grants delivered via Local Authorities.

We are engaging with a broad range of stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support tourism's recovery, and we recognise the importance of coaches in connecting visitors with tourism destinations.

## ■ Digital Technology: Carbon Emissions

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[128961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Royal Society's report entitled, Digital Technology and the Planet, published on 3 December 2020, what plans he has to ensure that tech firms (a) publicly share emissions data and (b) maximise use of renewable energy.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

I note and welcome the valuable insights in the Royal Society's report, and are considering its recommendations.

Many tech companies have ambitious decarbonisation pledges, are the world's largest investors in renewable energy, and have allocated significant resources to research and development of climate solutions. They have set ambitious net zero commitments and many have adopted robust action plans to fulfil them.

In the run-up to COP26, we are preparing to engage the entire UK tech sector, including big tech, on the potential for tech to contribute to tackling climate change. The UK has a thriving cleantech startup scene, and London is the fastest growing

global hub for 'impact tech' - companies that develop tech solutions addressing one or more of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In my Department's work with the tech sector, reducing emissions from the digital and tech sectors is a high priority, and we are looking to build on the work of a number of tech companies already innovating in this space.

I welcome the Royal Society's recommendations and look forward to exploring whether there is more that the UK tech sector can do to address this extremely important challenge.

## ■ Food: Advertising

**Mr William Wragg:**

[\[129042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the (a) quality of responses to his Department's consultation on total restriction of online advertising for products high in fat, sugar and salt, and (b) potential merits of extending that consultation to allow for more responses to be submitted.

**Caroline Dinanage:**

We have already received a number of responses to the current consultation, and we hope that the public and industry stakeholders make full and constructive contributions to the consultation. The consultation is due to close on 22 December, having run for a total of six weeks. We have no plans to extend the consultation.

When we announced that we would be consulting on a total online HFSS advertising restriction we committed to this being a short consultation.

The Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted that for our nation to be a healthy, resilient country we need to help prevent obesity developing and support those who are already overweight or living with obesity to reduce their weight and improve their health. The Prime Minister is clear that this is a priority for him and he wants to push ahead with measures to tackle obesity, and get policies implemented as soon as possible.

Our 2019 consultation was open for 12 weeks as it dealt with a broader range of policy including: TV, online, other media, and products in scope. This consultation just focuses on online, therefore we think a short consultation is appropriate.

## ■ Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

**Valerie Vaz:**

[\[128942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme beyond March 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We do recognise the importance of this scheme and the reliance which is placed on it. We are presently working through the implications of DCMS's Spending Review

settlement with HMT and within DCMS. We will be able to provide an update shortly on the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme.

## ■ Music: Coronavirus

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[128894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Minister for Digital and Culture's response to the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet's Oral Question of 10 December 2020, Official Report, Column 975, what the scope is of the evidence base required by his Department from the festival and events sector to prove that Government support for a covid-19 insurance scheme is needed.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

We are aware of the concerns which have been raised about the potential challenge of securing insurance for live events including festivals.

Understandably, the bar for considering Government intervention is set extremely high, especially in light of other support available including the considerable extension to the furlough. Officials have been working closely with the affected sectors over the last few months to understand the challenges and to keep the situation under review.

Evidence of market failure specific to DCMS sectors must be clearly demonstrated and robust for us to explore whether this is the right vehicle for support at this time.

## ■ Technology

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[128079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to grow the UK tech sector.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The digital sector contributed £149bn to the UK economy in 2018, accounting for 7.7% of UK GVA, and supports 1.2 million jobs. Last year venture capital investment in the UK tech sector leapt by 44%, with record growth in many key sub-sectors including fintech and AI.

My Department is striving to support this growth. This year we introduced the UK Gigabit and Shared Rural Network programmes to develop the UK's digital infrastructure; published the National Data Strategy to drive confidence in data; committed to establishing a Digital Markets Unit within the CMA to support fair and competitive digital markets; and supported programmes to showcase the unique strengths of the UK tech sector - major events across the UK include London Tech Week, Founders Forum, and Leeds Digital Festival. We also support the sector through our partnership with Tech Nation, delivering a wide range of initiatives to support and grow UK tech start-ups and scale-ups. This reiterates Government's commitment to the sector, and our ambition to ensure the UK remains Europe's No1 tech nation, and the best place to start, grow or invest in a digital business.

To help SMEs access liquidity needed to get through the COVID crisis, my Department worked closely with BEIS and the British Business Bank to introduce the Future Fund, expanded grants and loans for R&D-intensive SMEs, and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

My Department is committed to driving growth across the digital sector and wider economy, maximising the benefits of a digital-led economic recovery. The forthcoming Digital Strategy supports these objectives, in the context of Covid-19 and into the future.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Children in Care

**Christian Wakeford:**

**[127705]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children in care have been recorded by his Department as being placed in (a) handcuffs and (b) other restraints whilst being transported in the most recent period for which figures are available; and how many of these journeys were between secure settings.

**Vicky Ford:**

The information requested is not held centrally by the department.

### ■ Children: Day Care

**Kerry McCarthy:**

**[128891]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 guidance for early years and childcare providers, whether church-based childcare groups are permitted to resume under the covid-19 tier restrictions.

**Vicky Ford:**

The guidance entitled 'Local restriction tiers: what you need to know' sets out the local restriction tier system in place from Wednesday 2 December and includes what can and cannot be done in each tier.

There are exemptions that apply to all tiers, including for places of worship, that allow childcare, education, or training (meaning education and training provided as part of a formal curriculum) and supervised activities provided for children to operate. This includes wraparound care (before and after-school childcare), groups and activities for under 18s, and children's playgroups.

Further information on this guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know#exemptions>.

## ■ Coronavirus: Schools

### Wes Streeting:

[129065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what research the Government has (a) commissioned and (b) completed on the correlation between rising covid-19 infection rates and schools; and on what date that research was commissioned.

### Nick Gibb:

The Department continues to review data, analysis, and advice from a number of different sources including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), Public Health England, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the Joint Biosecurity Centre to ensure our policies are guided by the most up to date scientific evidence.

The ONS COVID-19 Infection Survey published results between 2 September (the start of the academic year) to 16 October 2020 that showed no evidence of differences in the positivity rate between primary and secondary school teachers, other key workers and other professions.

This evidence was endorsed at SAGE 65. More information is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/935102/sage-65-meeting-covid-19-s0863.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/935102/sage-65-meeting-covid-19-s0863.pdf) and <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveyspilot/6november2020#age-analysis-of-the-number-of-people-in-england-who-had-covid-19>.

The SAGE 65 meeting also commissioned the National Statistician to lead a working group to assess data on transmission in children and schools. Work involving the Children's Task and Finish Group is ongoing to address these issues.

On 26 November the ONS published additional analysis on the number of school workers, key workers and other professions in England who had COVID-19. This also shows no clear evidence from the survey as to whether there is a difference in the level of individuals who would test positive for COVID-19 between teachers and other key workers. More information is available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/statementsandletters/onsstatementaddressingquestionaroundtheanalysisofthenumberofschoolworkerskeyworkersandotherprofessionsinenglandwhohadcovid19>.

The ONS has also commissioned the COVID-19 Schools Infection Survey (SIS), which aims to assess the role of schools in COVID-19 transmission and how transmission within and from school settings can be minimised. More information is available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/covid19schools infectionsurveysis#about-the-study>

Results from the COVID-19 SIS Round 1 were published on 17 December and are available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/covid19schoolsinfectionsurveyround1englandnovember2020>.

## ■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

**Gill Furniss:**

**[129078]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish his Department's contingency plans relating to Summer 2021 GCSE and A Level exams.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government's position is clear: exams will take place in summer 2021. Schools across the country, including in areas of high prevalence of COVID-19, are doing a brilliant job staying open and providing high quality education to pupils.

We recognise that there will be challenges for students being assessed in summer 2021. We have announced a wide range of contingency measures to ensure that as many pupils as possible can take an exam paper in their chosen subjects, and all students will have the opportunity to be awarded a qualification.

Exams will be sufficiently spaced to account for periods of self-isolation. If a student misses all their assessments in a subject, they will have the opportunity to sit a contingency paper held shortly after the main exams. Students who miss part of their exams because of the COVID-19 outbreak will be able to get a grade through the special consideration process, provided they have sat one paper or non-exam assessment and met requirements.

In the extreme case where a student has a legitimate reason to miss all their papers, then a validated teacher informed assessment can be used, only once all chances to sit an exam have passed. The Government will set out further detail on this process, and on adaptations to exams, in the New Year.

## ■ National Curriculum Tests: Coronavirus

**Gill Furniss:**

**[129079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to modify Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 tests in 2021 to account for the adverse impact of covid-19 on pupils' learning.

**Nick Gibb:**

The purpose of the national curriculum tests is to determine pupil attainment in relation to the national curriculum. This enables parents to understand the performance of their child with respect to national expectations and supports schools in planning the appropriate next steps for teaching. As a result, it would not be appropriate to modify the tests to account for the adverse impact of COVID-19 as this would provide only a partial picture of pupil attainment.

Instead, to recognise the challenges that primary schools are facing, the key stage 1 tests and the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests at key stage 1 and 2 have been removed for one year. There will also be no requirement to undertake and



report on science teacher assessment at both key stages. In addition, the introduction of the multiplication tables check will be postponed by a further year, whilst still enabling schools to use it on an optional basis.

■ **Religion: Education**

**Stephen Timms:** [\[128850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 16 April 2018 to Question 134699 on Religion: Education, whether his Department has a copy of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education for each local education authority in England.

**Stephen Timms:** [\[128851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 16 April 2018 to Question 134699 on Religion: Education, what requirement is in place for local authorities to ensure that any resident can read the locally agreed syllabus for religious education; and if he will make a statement.

**Stephen Timms:** [\[128852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 16 April 2018 to Question 134699 on Religion: Education, whether his Department has a record for each local education authority of (a) the date on which its religious education syllabus was last reviewed and (b) when the current syllabus was brought into effect.

**Stephen Timms:** [\[128853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's 2012 guidance on Religious education (RE) and collective worship in academies and free schools, what information his Department holds on (a) the religious education syllabus operating in each academy school and (b) whether that syllabus is the agreed syllabus for its locality.

**Stephen Timms:** [\[128854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 16 April 2018 to Question 134699 on Religion: Education, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) adequacy of the different syllabuses for religious education in place in England and (b) extent to which those syllabuses take account of the teaching and practices of the principal religions represented in Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

**Nick Gibb:**

Local authorities are responsible for convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference every five years, and for providing an agreed syllabus which specified maintained schools must comply with. This must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are Christian, in the main, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. The Department does not hold a copy of each local authority area's agreed syllabus for religious education (RE) when it came into effect or was last reviewed. There is also no requirement for local



authority areas to provide my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education with this information.

The Department would encourage any local authority to publish their locally agreed syllabus or a summary of its main provisions, although they are not required by legislation to do so. Both maintained schools and academies should, however, publish on their websites the curriculum of every subject taught in each academic year, including RE. Local residents can find details of the RE curriculum provided by state-funded schools in their area, whether in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus or otherwise. The Government guidance for the provision of RE in local authority maintained schools is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-guidance-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>.

Academies and free schools are not required to comply with a locally agreed syllabus, though they may choose to adopt it. The funding agreement for each academy and free school does, however, require these schools to teach RE. The Department does not hold information on the number of academies and free schools that have adopted a locally agreed syllabus, or the specific details of their RE curriculum. Similarly, the Department does not quality assure a school's individual RE curriculum to assess their adequacy, or the extent to which they take account of the teaching and practices of the principal religions represented in Great Britain.

If the Department is informed that an agreed syllabus or an academy's RE syllabus may be in breach of statutory requirements or their funding agreement, this will be investigated. Where needed, the Department will remind schools of their duty on this matter and advise on how this can be met.

## ■ **Students: Coronavirus**

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[128741]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that universities provide Kosher food options to Jewish students who have been forced to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The safety and wellbeing of staff and students in higher education (HE) is always our priority. The government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to those working and studying in our HE institutions in this unprecedented situation, whilst mitigating the impact on education.

HE providers are autonomous institutions, independent from government, and have a responsibility to students when delivering services, including the provision of pastoral support, and taking steps to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of students.

To support universities with this responsibility and ensure students are well looked after during self-isolation, the department has provided advice on self-isolating students in the 'higher education reopening buildings and campuses' guidance and the 'end of term and spring term' guidance. These can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

Universities UK have also produced a checklist for supporting students who are required to self-isolate, available here: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2020/uuk-checklist-support-self-isolating-students.pdf>.

Furthermore, and to impress the importance of supporting self-isolating students, I have previously written to Vice Chancellors, asking them to ensure that all self-isolating students have a range of choices available for access to food and other essential supplies. This includes providing food that is free or at a price that can be afforded within a student's budget.

I expect this support to continue in the spring term and for universities and other HE providers to be sensitive to the diverse needs of their student population in providing this support.

## ■ Teachers: Contact Tracing

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[127673]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for how many days teachers should conduct track and trace after the last physical student day in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

We are aware that teachers and staff have worked tirelessly over the last term. This has included their important role in contact tracing, to help in the national effort to limit the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak, which we know has led to additional work over weekends and holidays.

We want to limit the impact of this over the Christmas holidays, and are clear that from 6 days after the final day of teaching, schools are not asked to play a role in any contact tracing.

During these 6 days, schools are not asked to be on-call at all times. Staff responsible for contact tracing might designate a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases, contact the DfE helpline and advise close contacts to self-isolate (this can be done by text or e-mail). If a pupil or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising that they self-isolate. This is as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school. To note, where a pupil or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.

To ensure this means staff get the time off they need and deserve, schools may wish to use an INSET day, to make Friday 18 December a non-teaching day. Where a school's last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday 23 December.

Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test & Trace who will send a text, email alert, or call with instructions on how to share details of people who have had close, recent contact.

Where pupils are required to self-isolate due to contacts during the holidays schools do not need to be informed about their absence until the first day of the new term.

The DfE helpline will remain open as normal, but close from 16:00 24 December to 28 December and on 1 January. Urgent public health advice can still be sought at these times via out of hours routes for local health protection teams.

## ■ Teachers: Coronavirus

**Sarah Olney:**

**[129081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what resources he has made available to schools which have had to replace teachers who are absent, directly or indirectly due to covid-19.

**Nick Gibb:**

Getting all children and young people back into school for this academic year has been a national priority, and schools have continued to receive their core funding allocations throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. Following last year's Spending Round, school budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, £4.8 billion in 2021-22, and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20. On average, schools are attracting 4.2% more per pupil in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20. As stated in the Department's guidance for schools on full opening, schools should use these existing resources when making arrangements for this term. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

The published guidance sets out the options available for schools seeking to manage staffing capacity and absences as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition to using supply teachers and other temporary or peripatetic teachers, schools can also consider using existing staff more flexibly, including support staff and initial teacher training staff, or volunteers, as would usually be the case.

On 27 November 2020, the Government announced a new short-term COVID-19 workforce fund that will fund the costs of teacher absences over a threshold, for those schools with high staff absences that are also facing significant financial pressures: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-to-support-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-pandemic>. This will help ensure that schools can remain open. The fund will help meet the cost of staff absences experienced during the period from the beginning of November until the end of this term. Guidance on the claims process will be published shortly so schools can have confidence in the costs they can incur and be eligible to reclaim.

Where schools do hire agency workers, we recommend they consider using the Department's and Crown Commercial Service's agency supply deal, as this offers a list of preferred suppliers that must be transparent about the rates they charge: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deal-for-schools-hiring-supply-teachers-and-agency-workers>.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Landfill: West Midlands

**Aaron Bell:** [127017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many odour complaints have been received by the Environment Agency about landfill sites in the West Midlands in each month since January 2019.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs due to time.

### ■ Odour Pollution: Monitoring

**Aaron Bell:** [127018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the Environment Agency changing its methodology for estimating the prevalence and impact of odour from using a subjective 0 to 6 scale to using scientific monitoring equipment.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Scientific instrumentation used for detecting odours in the outdoors can only be used to assess a very small number of gases, and the detection limits in these instruments may not be low enough to detect all the compounds responsible for odour annoyance detected by the human nose. The Environment Agency makes use of ambient air monitoring using instruments for specific odorous gases where this will yield useful results.

The Environment Agency regularly reviews new equipment with potential for use in field odour assessments as and when it becomes available. However, so far these solutions have not been found to be as robust and versatile as the current methods used.

### ■ Pet Travel Scheme

**Luke Pollard:** [129107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress has been made on the (a) UK's application for listed status under the EU's pet travel scheme and (b) process of pet travel between Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 1 January 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The European Commission has now responded to clarify its decision on listing the UK as a third country under Annex II of the EU Pet Travel Regulations.

On 3 December 2020 the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed of the EU voted in favour of giving the UK Part 2 listed status for the purposes of non-commercial pet travel after the transition period. This listed status has been formally adopted by the EU.

Part 2 listed status means similar health requirements to travel to the EU as to now, but new documentation will be required for pets and assistance dogs.

We are disappointed not to become a Part 1 listed third country. We are clear we meet all the requirements for this and have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity. Our disease risk will also not change after the transition period and so we will continue to press the EU Commission on securing Part 1 listed status.

The health and documentary requirements will also apply for movements of pets and assistance dogs from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. However, recognising that these changes will take time to adjust to, the UK Government is working with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on an enforcement approach that takes this challenge into account. This approach will be implemented in a way which supports pet owners and assistance dog users while the Government pursues a permanent solution.

There will be no changes to the current pet travel health requirements for entry into Great Britain and we will continue to accept EU pet passports.

**■ Walley's Quarry: Odour Pollution****Aaron Bell:****[127016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many odour complaints have been received by the Environment Agency about Walley's Quarry Landfill in Newcastle-under-Lyme in each month since January 2019.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Walley's Quarry landfill site holds a permit that is issued and regulated by the Environment Agency (EA), and the EA takes seriously any concerns expressed regarding the site. Although no landfill will ever be completely odour free, the level and type of odour arising from such operations should not be causing annoyance.

The table below details the number of odour complaints (reports of incidents received through the EA Incident Communication Service) about Walley's Quarry Landfill, over the last two-year period.

MONTH	NUMBER OF ODOUR COMPLAINTS
January 2019	81
February 2019	259
March 2019	58
April 2019	49
May 2019	31
June 2019	57
July 2019	48
August 2019	95
September 2019	134
October 2019	82
November 2019	159
December 2019	102
January 2020	37
February 2020	94
March 2020	187
April 2020	74
May 2020	68
June 2020	53
July 2020	77
August 2020	92
September 2020	371
October 2020	225

### ■ Wines: Imports

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

**[129015]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June 2020 to Question 54850 on Wine: Imports, what assessment he has made of the (a) financial and (b) other costs for (a) EU wine exporters, (b) UK wine

importers and (c) UK wine consumers of the introduction at the end of the transition period of full VI-1 import certificates for wine imported into the UK from the EU.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government has not conducted an assessment of the financial or other costs of introducing VI-1 import certificates for wine imported into the UK from the EU at the end of the transition period.

The Government recognises that businesses need time to make the necessary adaptations to meet the requirement for import certification on wine imported to Great Britain from the EU and we are therefore legislating to delay the introduction until 1 July 2021.

Defra officials are working closely with UK industry to ensure we have the capability to meet the equivalent EU requirement being introduced on 1 January 2021.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ China: Detainees

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[127689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of alleged reports from former detainees in Xinjiang detention camps that Muslim detainees were forcibly fed pork in violation of their religious beliefs.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are aware of disturbing reports alleging that former detainees in Xinjiang were forcibly fed pork in violation of their religious beliefs. We are deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in China, including reports that authorities are tightening control over how certain religions are practiced. The freedom to practise, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We continue to raise our concerns about the situation in Xinjiang, both directly with the Chinese authorities and at the UN alongside international partners.

### ■ China: Human Rights

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[127623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress has been made on bring forward proposals to introduce Magnitsky-style laws to punish supporters of human rights violations in China.

**Nigel Adams:**

On 6 July, the UK Government established the Global Human Rights sanctions regime. It is not appropriate to speculate who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations. We will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review.

## ■ China: Uighurs

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[128313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on the Human Rights Watch report into the use of the Integrated Joint Operations Platform to disproportionately target Uyghur Muslims.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are aware of recent reports on the use of data by the Chinese authorities to target Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. These reports add to the growing body of evidence of gross human rights violations perpetrated against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the region. We have repeatedly condemned these abuses and the Foreign Secretary has raised our concerns with his Chinese counterpart on a number of occasions.

## ■ Climate Change Convention

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[128152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK diplomatic staff are working on preparations for the 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference, the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26).

**James Duddridge:**

*[Holding answer 15 December 2020]:* All Heads of Mission have been instructed by the Foreign Secretary to make climate change and delivery of COP26 objectives a top priority and they are supported by around 216 UK diplomatic staff, 253 locally engaged staff and four regional COP26 ambassadors, based overseas and in the UK. In addition, a dedicated COP26 Unit of over 150 staff has been set up in the Cabinet Office to oversee preparations for COP26 and they work with other civil servants across Whitehall to deliver our objectives.

## ■ Developing Countries: Nutrition

**Christian Matheson:**

[\[128190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance will be allocated to basic nutrition services during 2021.

**Wendy Morton:**

Addressing malnutrition and acute food insecurity remains important for our objectives on global health and humanitarian preparedness and response. In September 2020, the Foreign Secretary announced a £119 million package of support to combat famine and acute hunger. This includes a new 5-year partnership with UNICEF to improve prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition.

The Department is beginning a rigorous internal prioritisation process in response to the spending review announcement and we will update on this in due course.



## ■ Gaza: Coronavirus

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[129014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the gap in oxygen supply for covid-19 patients in Gaza.

**James Cleverly:**

We remain concerned about the capacity of the Palestinian health system to cope with the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, especially in Gaza. We welcome the recent 30% increase in hospital beds for patients suffering critical and severe cases, and the recent procurement by World Health Organisation of two additional oxygen generators. The UK continues to monitor the situation closely.

## ■ Gaza: Food Supply

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[129013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on levels of food insecurity in Gaza.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK remains concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, compounded by the impact of COVID-19.

We recognise the importance of tackling food insecurity. To support, we are providing £2.5 million to the World Food Programme to provide food and cash assistance to the most vulnerable Palestinians. We have also contributed £1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's Emergency Appeal in the Occupied Palestinian Territories which will help provide emergency food to over one million food-insecure refugees in Gaza.

## ■ Gaza: Health Services

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[129012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support Gaza's healthcare system during a period of increased cases of covid-19 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK remains concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza and the impact of COVID-19 on an already fragile healthcare system. Recognising the severity of the situation, we were one of the first donors to provide funding to support the health and humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We have provided £1.25 million funding (the World Health Organisation with £630,000 and the United Nations Children's Fund with £620,000) to purchase and co-ordinate delivery of medical equipment, treat critical

care patients, train frontline health workers and scale up laboratory testing capacity - mainly in Gaza.

In addition, we are providing £2.5 million to the World Food Programme to provide food and cash assistance for the most vulnerable Palestinians to help alleviate the humanitarian situation. We have also contributed £1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's Emergency Appeal in the OPTs which will help provide emergency food to over one million food-insecure refugees in Gaza.

### ■ **Gaza: Intensive Care**

**Wayne David:**

[\[128878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the capacity of intensive care units in Gaza to treat covid-19 patients.

**James Cleverly:**

We remain concerned about the capacity of the Palestinian health system to cope with the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, especially in Gaza. We welcome the recent 30% increase in hospital beds for patients suffering critical and severe cases, and the recent procurement by World Health Organisation of two additional oxygen generators. The UK continues to monitor the situation closely.

### ■ **Hong Kong: British National (Overseas)**

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[127626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that British Nationals Overseas in Hong Kong can contact the British Consulate General in Hong Kong in the safest manner with reduced fear of oppression by the Chinese Government.

**Nigel Adams:**

Our consular work, providing help to British nationals all over the world, has always been a priority. The consular assistance we provide British nationals is set out in our guide, 'Support for British Nationals Abroad'. There is also information available on Gov.uk.

Under a Memorandum to the Joint Declaration, British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O))s are eligible to consular protection in third countries, but not Hong Kong, Macao or mainland China. The Chinese authorities do not recognise dual nationality and would not grant consular access. Where the UK Government is unable to offer consular assistance and where we have legitimate humanitarian or human rights concerns we will engage the relevant authorities and lobby on that basis. In response to the national security law the UK has already offered a new immigration path for BN(O)s, suspended our extradition treaty with Hong Kong, and extended our arms embargo on mainland China to Hong Kong.

## ■ Indonesia: Ahmadiyya

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[127692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle Ahmadi persecution in Indonesia.

**Nigel Adams:**

In October 2018 the Minister of State for South Asia visited Jakarta in his capacity as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB). There he met representatives of the Ahmadi Muslim community to discuss minority rights, underlining the UK's close interest in their welfare and protection of their rights. HMG officials regularly discuss minority rights with senior members of all six official faiths in Indonesia and meet with leaders of the Ahmadi community, most recently in January this year.

Freedom of Religion and Belief is a core aspect of the Embassy's work under the Human Rights strand. In December 2019, the British Embassy ran a workshop on media freedom in Jakarta which included a discussion on how journalists can raise FORB issues to public attention. Embassy officials also regularly attend 'Friends of FORB' meetings with likeminded countries and organisations.

## ■ Iraq: Kurds

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[128934\]](#)

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 report by the APPG on the Kurdistan Region in Iraq on bilateral relations; and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:**

As I [Minister Cleverly] discussed with the APPG on 7 December, there is much to welcome in the APPG's report on the bilateral relationship between the UK and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. During my [Minister Cleverly] December visit to Erbil, I [Minister Cleverly] discussed the mutual desire to deepen our partnership with the leadership of the Kurdistan Regional Government. The UK will continue to work closely with both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to urge a sustainable budget settlement, increase business cooperation, and to support economic reform that delivers for all Iraqis.

## ■ Nagorno Karabakh: Armed Conflict

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[127492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Azerbaijani counterpart on reported human rights abuses against Armenian prisoners of war being held as a result of the recent conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are deeply concerned of accusations from both sides that human rights abuses were and are being committed as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and continue to urge de-escalation. On 13 November I urged the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister to ensure any such accusations were the subject of thorough investigation. An investigation is currently underway and we continue to monitor the situation.

**■ Occupied Palestinian Territories: Coronavirus****Wayne David:**[\[128880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel to help encourage the provision of equitable access to covid-19 vaccines for the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines as demonstrated by our strong support for the Access for COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. The UK has contributed up to £813 million to the ACT-Accelerator partners. This includes the UK's commitment of up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, of which the UK is the largest bilateral donor. Our commitment to the COVAX AMC will support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) by contributing to the supply of one billion doses in 2021, and vaccinations for up to 500 million people (subject to vaccines successfully securing stringent regulatory approvals).

Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the occupying power, has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the OPTs to the fullest extent of the means available and with the cooperation of the local authorities. We therefore welcome the restoration of cooperation between the Government of Israel and Palestinian Authority, which shows both sides are willing to put the needs and security of Israelis and Palestinians first.

**■ Private Infrastructure Development Group: Fossil Fuels****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[129087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to prevent the Private Infrastructure Development Group from funding fossil fuel projects overseas.

**James Duddridge:**

The Prime Minister has announced that the British government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas. There will be a few - tightly bound - exemptions allowed for activities that

support health and safety improvements, form part of wider clean energy transitions, support decommissioning, or are associated with a humanitarian response.

This policy will help inform PIDG's own climate change approach. PIDG does not invest in the extraction, production or refining of crude oil, natural gas or coal. PIDG is already committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement, and has committed not to invest in any new energy projects that are not aligned with Paris.

#### ■ **Private Infrastructure Development Group: Overseas Aid**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

**[129085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance the Government has disbursed to the Private Infrastructure Development Group in each of the last 10 years.

**James Cleverly:**

During the last 10 years, the FCDO (previously DFID) has provided a total of £690 million of funding to the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG). This figure is net of any reflows to FCDO, and includes funding which has been legally committed through Promissory Notes. FCDO publishes data relating to its funding to PIDG via DevTracker.

#### ■ **South China Sea**

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

**[127690]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the geopolitical situation in the South China Sea.

**Nigel Adams:**

I expressed our concern at reports of militarisation, coercion and intimidation in the South China Sea in Parliament on 3 September. We call on all parties to refrain from activity likely to raise tensions, including land reclamation, construction and militarisation. We urge all parties to exercise restraint and behave responsibly in accordance with their international obligations. Our position is longstanding: we do not take sides on the competing sovereignty claims. Our commitment is to international law, particularly to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and to freedom of navigation and overflight.

Given the importance we attach to UNCLOS, on 3 September I set out in full our legal analysis on the South China Sea for the first time. On 16 September, we issued a joint Note Verbale with France and Germany to the UN's Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in response to assertions in Chinese Notes Verbale that we consider inconsistent with UNCLOS. Most recently, on 8 December, the UK made a national statement at the annual UN General Assembly debate on the Law of the Sea reiterating our legal position on the South China Sea. We are working closely with allies and ASEAN partners to strengthen regional capacity on maritime law and

security. This includes dialogues on maritime law and Royal Navy training courses on maritime security.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Abortion: Drugs

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[128881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many abortion pills were issued by post in the first six months since the introduction of temporary provisions permitting the application of both sets of abortion pills at home.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department does not hold information on the method of delivery for abortion pills.

### ■ Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[128211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of funding from the Infection Control Fund has been allocated to date to support the wages of social care workers who have had to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 15 December 2020]:* The Infection Control Fund, set up in May, has been extended until March 2021, with an extra £546 million for the care sector to take key steps to improve infection prevention and control, including restricting staff movement in care homes and paying the wages of staff who are isolating. This means we have provided over £1.1 billion of ring-fenced funding for infection control throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department is still assuring the information that local authorities have provided on the final expenditure against the initial fund, which ran from May to September 2020. However, on 27 July, we published data that shows that 18.7% of the funding spent by 23 July was allocated to paying staff to self-isolate following a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, totalling over £47 million.

### ■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Death

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[127565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many deaths related to drug and alcohol misuse have been recorded since March 2020.

**Jo Churchill:**

Statistics on the number of recorded deaths since March 2020 related to drug and alcohol misuse are not available.

## ■ Atrial Fibrillation: Diagnosis

**Lee Anderson:**

[127656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to expand the use of digital technologies to improve the remote detection of atrial fibrillation as result of restrictions on face-to-face appointments during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The NHS is investing £9 million to fund a demonstrator project to test out new ways of providing treatment to people with Atrial Fibrillation using virtual clinics. NHSX continues to support and encourage emerging innovative diagnostic tools, for example through the Artificial Intelligence Health and Care Awards.

## ■ Baby Care Units: Standards

**Steve Brine:**

[127539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the national standards are for neonatal care in England.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The national standards for neonatal care in England are set out in the NHS Toolkit for High Quality Neonatal Services. The standards can be found at the following link:

[https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123200735/http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_107845](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123200735/http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_107845)

In addition, the British Association of Perinatal Medicine and the National Institute of Clinical Excellence have produced standards regarding neonatal care which can be applied across the United Kingdom.

## ■ Brain Tumours: Research

**Jim Shannon:**

[126034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the National Institute for Health Research has approved only £6 million for brain tumour research this year; and if he will take steps to (a) increase funding in that area to ensure that adequate research is undertaken and (b) lower the threshold for funding approval to increase the body of research-based evidence.

**Edward Argar:**

The level of funding committed to date is more than £6 million. This figure is for the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) programmes and academy spend only. It does not include NIHR infrastructure spend, which we are confident will be significantly more.

Similar to other Government research funders, the NIHR only funds high quality research. This maximises the likelihood of positive patient impact and gives the highest chance of success. Without this there would be not only a risk to patient safety but also a risk of wasted investment.



Applications to the NIHR are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, scientific quality, and value for money.

## ■ Care Homes: Visits

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[110749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to start the pilot scheme to allow family members to visit relatives resident in care homes during the covid-19 outbreak; and how the Government has identified the care homes that will be taking part in that pilot.

**Helen Whately:**

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.

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

Testing is only one way of minimising the risk of visiting a care home. If a visitor has a negative test, is wearing appropriate PPE, and following other infection control measures, then it will be possible for family and friends to have more meaningful visits to care homes.

**John Stevenson:**

[\[116455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to prioritise the safe resumption of full care home visitation during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

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.

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

Testing is only one way of minimising the risk of visiting a care home. If a visitor has a negative test, is wearing appropriate PPE, and following other infection control measures, then it will be possible for family and friends to have more meaningful visits to care homes.



**Helen Hayes:**

[\[124806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's announcement of family being able to begin visiting care home residents and guidance to homes on testing visitors for covid-19, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of funding provided to care providers through the Infection Control Fund.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 December 2020]:* The Government has committed to providing tests for up to two visitors per resident to be tested twice a week in all care homes. This has been supported by releasing testing guidance on 8 December for care homes and visitors.

Through the Infection Control Fund, the Government has provided over £1.1 billion to the care sector to implement infection prevention measures. In addition, the Government has provided access to £4.6 billion to address pressures on local services, such as adult social care, throughout the pandemic. The Government will continue to monitor pressures, including through the reports local authorities are submitting specifying how the grant has been spent and will keep future funding under review.

## ■ Carers

**Rosie Duffield:**

[\[127617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publishing an updated National Carers Strategy.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 December 2020]:* In June 2018, the Government published its two-year 'Carers Action Plan 2018 – 2020 supporting carers today' which sets out a cross-Government programme of targeted work to support all carers in England until the end of 2020.

The Action Plan puts a focus on practical actions to support carers, recognising and supporting unpaid carers to provide care in a way that protects their own health and wellbeing, employment and other life chances.

We plan to produce a final evaluation of the Action Plan next year. Alongside this the Department, with others across Government and carers, will consider next steps to build on the work initiated through the Carer's Action Plan.

## ■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients

**Jeremy Hunt:**

[\[125967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) people with learning disabilities and/or autism and (b) other people were held in locked mental health rehabilitation facilities in England in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019 and (iii) 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 10 December 2020]:* The latest information available on the number of inpatients in England with a learning disability or autistic people by ward type is set out in the following table.

INPATIENT SETTING	MARCH 2018	% OF PATIENTS	MARCH 2019	% OF PATIENTS	MARCH 2020	% OF PATIENTS
Secure forensic	1,155	49%	1,085	48%	985	47%
Acute learning disability	375	16%	345	15%	315	15%
Acute generic mental illness	230	10%	285	13%	285	14%
Forensic rehabilitation	115	5%	105	5%	110	5%
Complex care/rehabilitation	315	13%	280	12%	245	12%
Other specialist	60	2%	50	2%	45	2%
Other	115	5%	105	5%	115	5%

Source: Assuring Transformation Data, NHS Digital.

The data excludes revisions made by providers after the data was initially collated and the data between years is therefore not directly comparable.

The information relating to the proportion of other people in locked mental health rehabilitation facilities in England is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

**Jeremy Hunt:****[125970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on ensuring that each person who is in segregation on a ward for people with a learning disability and/or autism in a locked mental health rehabilitation unit has a discharge plan.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 10 December 2020]:* In 2019, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care committed to conducting independent case reviews for people with a learning disability or autistic people who were identified as being in long term segregation. The reviews of people identified as being in long term segregation in November 2019 have now been completed and recommendations were made in each case to improve individual circumstances and support moving individuals to less restrictive settings.

## ■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[127484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that data protection is maintained in the NHS covid-19 app.

**Helen Whately:**

The NHS COVID-19 app has been designed to use the minimum possible personal data or information. Expertise from across the United Kingdom Government and industry, including the National Cyber Security Centre, has been utilised to review our design and to help test and improve the app.

The app uses Bluetooth Low Energy to measure the distance between phones with the app downloaded, but it will never access location, contacts, or any other personal data saved in a phone.

There is an ongoing programme of monitoring and assessment to make sure that user data is safe and secure and to ensure that the app complies with protective measures established by data protection law.

## ■ Coronavirus

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[118002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of people who have been diagnosed with covid-19 who have developed long covid since March 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

'Long COVID-19', which is thought to affect more than 60,000 people in the United Kingdom, can cause continuing fatigue, brain fog, breathlessness and pain. NHS England has commissioned the National Institute for Health Research to undertake further research into 'long COVID-19' and will work with 10,000 patients to better understand it and to refine appropriate treatment. Information on the findings will be published in due course.

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[105431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what role the (a) Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, (b) Merseyside Resilience Forum and (c) individual local authorities play in determining the (i) local covid-19 alert tiering arrangements and (ii) implementation of those arrangements.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 22 October 2020]:* We worked with all appropriate local leaders and representative groups to agree the right decision for the area based on the best available science, along with the consideration of the economic, operational, social and policy implications.

**Conor McGinn:**

**[105433]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the structure is for making locally-agreed decisions on covid-19 tiering arrangements between the Government and (a) regional mayors, (b) combined authorities, (c) individual local authorities, (d) local resilience forums and (e) local hon. Members.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 22 October 2020]:* The COVID-19 Contain framework sets out how NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Centre will work with local authorities, Public Health England and the public to contain and manage local COVID-19 outbreaks. This framework will support local decision-makers by clarifying their responsibilities and empowering them to take preventative action and make strong decisions locally, supported by mechanisms that safeguard key national assets and interests.

While COVID-19 presents an unprecedented challenge, well-established local and national arrangements for public health and emergency planning are being used as the basis of this enhanced response. The decision-making model follows the tried and tested approach to civil emergencies, based on the concept of subsidiarity, which is where decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with co-ordination at the highest necessary level.

**Catherine West:**

**[124816]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of resuming the practice of providing hotel accommodation for NHS and care workers in areas of high covid-19 infection.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 December 2020]:* Due to its limited use and the arrangements which have been put in place by a number of local areas, the central arrangement for providing hotel accommodation for National Health Service and care workers was stood down in October 2020. However, the position is being kept under continual review and should the need arise, the central arrangement would be resumed.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups**

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

**[128081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October 2020 to Question 81551 on Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups, if his Department will make an assessment of the effect of unconscious bias on the treatment of BAME covid-19 patients.

**Jo Churchill:**

Through Public Health England's Beyond the Data review, stakeholders said that some black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities felt that they receive different treatment when compared with white patients and that this has further exacerbated fear within BAME communities and reluctance to seek medical care.

We are concerned that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate effect on people from BAME backgrounds. The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) has been tasked to lead the Government's work tackling this issue. With the support of the Race Disparity Unit, the Minister is also reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by relevant Government departments and their agencies to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of COVID-19.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Greater Manchester**

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[102138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 source transmissions have been associated with public transport use for each Greater Manchester authority area since 1 March 2020; what proportion of all transmissions in each Greater Manchester authority area in that time period those transmissions represented; and what the proportions were of those transmissions in other settings in each Greater Manchester authority area in that time period.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 October 2020]:* This information is not collected in the format requested.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Gyms**

**Derek Twigg:**

[\[104047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) the Liverpool City Region mayor and (b) Liverpool local authority leaders agreed during their recent discussions with him that gyms in the city region area should close as part of the Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 20 October 2020]:*

We worked closely with local leaders to agree the right decision for each area based on the best available science, along with consideration of the economic, operational, social and policy implications.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

**Mr Marcus Fysh:**

[\[107039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of covid-19 tests are undertaken using the PCR process; and what estimate he has made of the (a) number and (b) variation in number of amplification cycles in the PCR testing used to identify a positive covid-19 test result.

**Helen Whately:**

We do not publish data in the format requested.

**Dan Carden:**

**[113206]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish all contracts (a) advertised and (b) awarded to private companies to supply tests for Operation Moonshot.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 12 November 2020]:* As part of Operation Moonshot, the Government has established partnerships with industry, academia, local government and others to its testing programme – from companies supplying testing kits and supplies, to logistics and processing partnerships. All Departmental COVID-19 contracts are, or will be, published on the GOV.UK Contract Finder service.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

**[113656]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for the long-term use of NHS covid-19 testing capacity when the outbreak is over.

**Jo Churchill:**

On 18 August, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced the establishment of a new organisation to provide a world-leading approach to public health protection and resilience. The National Institute for Health Protection brings together the health protection expertise of Public Health England (PHE), Joint Biosecurity Centre and National Health Service Test and Trace under unified leadership. It will start work immediately to boost the United Kingdom's ability to deal with COVID-19 and meet health challenges of the coming winter.

Preventing ill-health and reducing health inequalities remains one of our top priorities. The Department has established a senior Stakeholder Advisory Group to help identify and consider the right future for PHE's important wider work.

**Munira Wilson:**

**[114332]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applicants applying for a covid-19 home testing kit via the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre have failed to obtain a test.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 16 November 2020]:* The information is not held in the format requested.

**Philip Davies:**

**[86607]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have taken place per 100,000 of the population in (a) the Bradford district, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) England in each of the last six weeks for which data are available.

**Helen Whately:**

We publish data on the number of pillar 2 tests processed in each local authority weekly alongside the Test and Trace statistics publication on GOV.UK at the following link:

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

**Justin Madders:**

[87566]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many completed home testing kits for covid-19 were (a) collected at the individual's home by courier and (b) delivered to the nearest royal mail collection point by the person taking the test in each month since April 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 September 2020]:* The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

**Justin Madders:**

[89748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 walk-in testing centres were made appointment-only on each day from 15 August to 14 September 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 17 September 2020]:* The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

**Barbara Keeley:**

[90103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests were carried out via (a) home-testing kits and (b) walk-in or drive-through testing centres in each week from 3 August to 13 September 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* The weekly data for COVID-19 testing in the United Kingdom with the numbers of home testing kits sent out and tests undertaken at regional, local, mobile and satellite test centres is available at the following link:

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

## ■ Exercise Cygnus

**Tim Farron:**

[127514]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2020 to Question 113045 on Exercise Cygnus, for what reason his Department determined that the publication of the Exercise Cygnus report might negatively impact the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

When assessing the public interest in publication of the Exercise Cygnus report, the Department sought advice from across Government on whether any part of the report was being used to develop policies to respond to COVID-19 or contained detail that might, if released during current pandemic, introduce uncertainty relating to our COVID-19 response.



Based on this advice, the cross-Government decision was made that publication was in the public interest and the full report of Exercise Cygnus was published on 20 October 2020.

## ■ Food: Labelling

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[\[128897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to make out-of-home calorie labelling mandatory, as proposed in his Department's July 2020 policy paper, Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department has consulted on how the policy on calorie labelling for food and drink served outside of the home should be enforced and is considering what the final enforcement position should be. We are looking to introduce legislation in early 2021.

## ■ Genetic Engineering

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[127559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure timely access to gene therapies for eligible patients.

**Edward Argar:**

The Government supports the National Health Service in research, development and adoption readiness of Advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMPs), including gene therapies, through the Advanced Therapy Treatment Centre network, which is hosted by the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult and set up through funding from the UK Research and Innovation Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence appraises new drugs including ATMPs such as gene therapies. The Department has also invested over £9 million in NHS Blood and Transplants' Clinical Biotechnology Centre which manufactures recombinant proteins and gene therapy products for use in clinical trials enabling access for patients to the latest therapies.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[127560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government taking to ensure that (a) NICE and (b) NHS England processes are (i) evaluated and (ii) adapted to assess the (A) cost-effectiveness and (B) accessibility of one-time gene therapies.

**Edward Argar:**

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) appraises new innovative drugs including gene therapies and other advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMPs). NICE has recommended the majority of ATMPs it has assessed to date. NICE is currently reviewing its methods and processes for technology appraisals and highly specialised technologies and this review considers ATMPs and other emerging technologies.



The National Health Service is well prepared for the adoption of ATMPs which are recommended by NICE. NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Accelerated Access Collaborative and direct commissioning teams work with a range of stakeholders to undertake detailed horizon scanning of new health technologies to ensure the relevant clinical and implementation preparations can be made in the event that treatments are recommended by NICE.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[127561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential for gene therapies to reduce the treatment burden on hospital capacity.

**Edward Argar:**

No formal assessment has been made of the potential for gene therapies to reduce the treatment burden on hospital capacity. NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Accelerated Access Collaborative and direct commissioning teams work with a range of stakeholders to undertake horizon scanning of new health technologies to ensure the preparations can be made if treatments are recommended by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence. Hospital capacity is one of several elements that are considered by the National Health Service when implementing technologies that may have an impact on existing care pathways.

## ■ Health Professions: Training

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[127681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to make the NHS Learning Support Fund available in September 2021 for (a) new students and (b) continuing students who have benefited from that fund in 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

The Learning Support Fund will continue to be made available to both new and continuing eligible students for the duration of their course. Further details on eligibility will be published by the NHS Business Service Authority before the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

## ■ Health Services: Private Sector

**Justin Madders:**

[\[128690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) total cost and (b) cost per month was of his Department's contracts for private sector capacity in each month since 1 June 2020.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[128691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) patients seen, (b) day cases, (c) outpatient appointments, (d) diagnostic tests, (e) chemotherapy appointments and (f) elective admissions under

Government-agreed contracts for private sector capacity in each month since 1 June 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 16 December 2020]:* Total actual costs relating to the national contracts entered into by NHS England with independent sector providers for private sector capacity to address the effects of coronavirus on the provision of health services in England, will not be known until the reconciliation of the contracts in 2021.

Information on the number patients seen, day cases, outpatient appointments, diagnostic tests, chemotherapy appointments and elective admissions under National Health Service contracts for private sector capacity in each month since 1 June 2020 is not held centrally.

NHS-funded surgery in independent hospitals has substantially increased during the autumn.

■ **Hospital Beds**

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[125984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 4 December 2020 to Question 113532 on Hospital Beds, what the hospital bed occupancy rate was as of the most recent available data in November (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

This information is not available in the format requested. Collections on hospital beds are divided into key bed subgroups, including general and acute beds, critical care beds and mental health beds. Data on occupancy of hospital beds as a whole is not collected.

■ **Hospital Beds: Private Sector**

**Mr Steve Baker:**

[\[126848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the article in Health Service Journal entitled, Leaks reveal two-thirds of private hospital capacity went unused by NHS, published on 1 December 2020, what percentage of private sector (a) day case, (b) diagnostics, and (c) outpatient's capacity that was block-purchased by the NHS was in use in (i) June, (ii) July, (iii) August and (iv) September.

**Edward Argar:**

This information is not held centrally

■ **Hospitals: Admissions**

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

[\[128324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital admissions were made due to a concussion as a result of a sporting (a) event or (b) practice in England in each year since 2015.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 15 December 2020]:* Information is not available in format requested. It is not possible to specify that a concussion took place as the result of a sporting event or practice from the data collected.

**■ Medical Equipment: Licensing****Chris Green:**[\[126893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has in place to expand the scope of the MedTech Funding Mandate to cover new products not previously included in the (a) Innovation and Technology Tariff and (b) Innovation and Technology Payment programmes.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

At the current time, there are no plans to expand the scope of the MedTech Funding Mandate. To identify medical devices, diagnostics and digital products which are likely to meet the MedTech Funding Mandate criteria, NHSX will regularly review the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance and recommendations. The launch of the fund has been delayed until at least April 2021 due to the suspension of the 2020/21 NHS Standard Contract and the 2020/21 National Tariff Payment System during COVID-19.

**■ Medical Records: Data Protection****Bill Esterson:**[\[128151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the NHS retains control of access to health data for the purpose of (a) research, (b) planning and (c) innovation according to its own priority policies and associated regulations; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 15 December 2020]:* The Government is clear that patient data will only ever be used and/or shared where used lawfully, treated with respect, held securely and where the right safeguards are in place. Access to health data is controlled by the Data Protection Act 2018, which incorporates the General Data Protection Regulation into United Kingdom domestic law and the common law duty of confidentiality and we have no plans to change these.

'Creating the right framework to realise the benefits for patients and the NHS where data underpins innovation', published in July 2019, is clear that any use of National Health Service data not in the public domain must have an explicit aim to improve the health, welfare and/or care of patients in the NHS or the operation of the NHS. These principles are to be adopted in practice by NHS organisations and other publicly funded healthcare organisations, as well as those contracted to deliver NHS-funded services.

The Department together with NHSX, NHS Digital, Understanding Patient Data, academia, the Health Research Authority and others have been working on how to

improve access to high quality data for research whilst respecting a patient's right to opt out. This is to retain public confidence in data confidentiality and to ensure researchers are accurate and concise with their data requests to data custodians.

#### ■ **Medicine: Research**

**Stuart Anderson:** [\[116655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support from the public purse is available for UK medical research charities.

**Edward Argar:**

The United Kingdom is home to globally-recognised medical research charities, which are an integral part of our world-leading life sciences sector. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department of Health and Social Care officials are working closely with medical research charities to understand the impact of the pandemic, identifying how we can work together, and ensure patients benefit from charity-funded research.

The Sustaining University Research Expertise (SURE) Fund aims to help to sustain the research capacity of the university research base as a whole. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are asking universities in receipt of SURE funding to demonstrate how these funds are being utilised to sustain research in areas typically funded by charities and business. Charities also have access to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, will pay no business rates for their shops for the 2020 to 2021 tax year and can get a Business Interruption Loan.

#### ■ **NHS 111: Coronavirus**

**Kate Osamor:** [\[102132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 October 2020 to Question 96968, if he will place in the Library a copy of the mandatory training material given to NHS 111 covid-19 call handlers.

**Edward Argar:**

Call handlers and clinicians in the core NHS 111 service receive intensive training on the NHS Pathways system. NHS Digital has provided an overview of the training framework for call handlers which is attached.

NHS Digital has advised that copies of the full training materials for NHS Pathways cannot be published because this information is commercially sensitive.

#### ■ **NHS Digital: Contracts**

**Mr Richard Bacon:** [\[125951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contractors worked for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019/20.

**Mr Richard Bacon:**

[\[125952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contractors working for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20 also worked for NHS Digital in at least one of the financial years (a) 2018-19, (b) 2017-18 and (c) 2016-17.

**Mr Richard Bacon:**

[\[125953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contractors working for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20 also worked for NHS Digital in at least two of the (a) 2018-19, (b) 2017-18 and (c) 2016-17 financial years.

**Mr Richard Bacon:**

[\[125954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contractors working for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20 also worked for NHS Digital in all of the financial years 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 14 December 2020]:* One hundred and ninety three contractors worked for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20.

Eighty three contractors working for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20, also worked for NHS Digital in at least one of the financial years 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17.

Thirty seven contractors working for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20, also worked for NHS Digital in at least two of the financial years 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17 financial years.

Ten contractors working for NHS Digital in the financial year 2019-20, also worked for NHS Digital in all of the financial years 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17.

## ■ Pharmacy: Screening

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[127653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 July 2020 to Question 64351 on Pharmacy: Screening, what the terms of reference are for the evidence-based review of the NHS Health Check programme from Public Health England.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Terms of Reference for the review of the NHS Health Check programme were published on 11 November 2020 and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-health-check-programme-review/review-of-nhs-health-checks-terms-of-reference>

**■ Public Health: Nitrogen Oxides****Mike Amesbury:** [\[127637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the public health impact of increased oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions from industrial and power generation facilities located within a mile of residential areas.

**Jo Churchill:**

Public Health England has not estimated the public health impact of oxides of nitrogen emissions from industrial and power generation facilities.

**■ Social Services: Sick Pay****Helen Hayes:** [\[128210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve (a) guidance and (b) support for care providers to ensure that full occupational sick pay is paid to social care workers who are having to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 15 December 2020]:* 'COVID-19: our action plan for adult social care', published in April, was clear that adult social care providers should pay staff who are self-isolating their normal wages. We reiterated this expectation in the 'Adult social care: our COVID-19 winter plan 2020 to 2021', when we also announced that we are providing an additional £546 million to extend the Infection Control Fund. The Infection Control Fund can be used to cover the costs of paying staff to self-isolate.

We are working with local government, stakeholders and care providers to ensure as many providers as possible are following our guidance. Officials in the Department are working directly with local areas on this, including by identifying and contacting those local areas and providers who are not yet paying staff to self-isolate.

**■ Statins: Older People****Jim Shannon:** [\[126879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that statins are introduced and prescribed to people aged over 75 years old to prevent heart-attacks and strokes.

**Jo Churchill:**

There are no age restrictions for use of statins for either primary or secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD) such as heart disease and stroke in United Kingdom guidance. Current National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance recommends statins for those of 85 years or older for primary prevention of CVD. This age is highlighted because a CVD assessment can only calculate specific CVD risk up to the age of 84 years old and the guidance seeks to ensure patients of 85 years or older are not excluded from statin treatment.

## ■ Workforce Development Fund

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[127611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual budget is for the Workforce Development Fund for (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 14 December 2020]:* The Workforce Development Fund (WDF) is agreed annually as part of the Department's funding for Skills for Care's core revenue grant from the Department. In 2020-21 it is anticipated that the WDF will be funded with £11.82 million from this core funding.

As the WDF is funded from annual grant funding, the allocation for 2021-22 will be confirmed following confirmation of the Departmental budgets for that year.

## HOME OFFICE

## ■ Asylum: Applications

**Caroline Nokes:**

[\[128142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many work-in-progress asylum applications there are as of 10 December 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the asylum applications awaiting decision are published in table [Asy\\_D03](#) of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the asylum applications awaiting a decision as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and includes data for main applicants and dependents. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the [summary tables](#). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

## ■ Asylum: Employment

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[127570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the oral Answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of 18 November 2020, Official Report, column 198WH, on the Government's reasons for restricting permission to work for asylum seekers, whether her Department has made an assessment of a pull factor that would arise from changing the labour market rules for asylum seekers.

**Chris Philp:**

It is important to distinguish between those who need protection and those seeking to work here, who can apply for a work visa under the Immigration Rules. Our wider



policy could be undermined if migrants bypassed work visa Rules by lodging unfounded asylum claims here.

Unrestricted access to employment could act as an incentive for more migrants to choose to come here illegally, rather than claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

Although pull factors are complex, we cannot ignore that access to the labour market is among the reasons that so many people currently undertake the extremely hazardous journey across the channel in small boats. When so many lives are put in danger in this way, we cannot have a policy that raises those risks, whatever the number affected.

A review of asylum seeker right to work policy is ongoing, and we are considering the evidence put forward on the issue. The findings of the review will be announced once the work has been completed.

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

**Adam Holloway:**

[\[110291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many British citizens have returned home since March 2019.

**James Brokenshire:**

Around 900 people have travelled from the UK to engage with the conflict in Syria and Iraq, against the advice of the Foreign Office. Of these, approximately 20% have been killed in the conflict and around 40% have returned to the UK.

We can confirm that in the last 12 months there have been a small number of British children who have left Syria and returned to the UK via third countries.

The Government's priority is the safety and security of the people who live here. All of those who have returned, have been investigated and the majority have been assessed to pose no, or a low security risk.

#### ■ **European Criminal Records Information System**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[128125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what UK mechanism will replace the EU European Criminal Records Information System on 1 January 2021.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[128126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what UK mechanism will replace the Schenectady Information System on 1 January 2021.

**James Brokenshire:**

The safety and security of our citizens is the Government's top priority.

Negotiations continue, and on law enforcement and criminal justice, there is a good degree of convergence in what the UK and EU have been negotiating in terms of operational capabilities.



In the event that it is not possible to reach an agreement, the UK has well-developed and well-rehearsed plans in place. We will transition cooperation with EU Member States to alternative, non-EU arrangements by the end of the Transition Period, where available and relevant. Broadly speaking, this means making more use of Interpol, Council of Europe Conventions and bilateral channels.

The UK will continue to be a global leader on security and one of the safest countries in the world.

***Please note that this is a grouped with 128124***

## ■ Europol

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[\[128124\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what UK mechanism will replace the EU Europol Information System on 1 January 2021.

**James Brokenshire:**

The safety and security of our citizens is the Government's top priority.

Negotiations continue, and on law enforcement and criminal justice, there is a good degree of convergence in what the UK and EU have been negotiating in terms of operational capabilities.

In the event that it is not possible to reach an agreement, the UK has well-developed and well-rehearsed plans in place. We will transition cooperation with EU Member States to alternative, non-EU arrangements by the end of the Transition Period, where available and relevant. Broadly speaking, this means making more use of Interpol, Council of Europe Conventions and bilateral channels.

The UK will continue to be a global leader on security and one of the safest countries in the world.

## ■ Home Office: Marketing

**Feryal Clark:**

**[\[118130\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent on consultancy services including (i) communications, (ii) advertising, (iii) marketing and (iv) media buying since 1 March 2020.

**James Brokenshire:**

Data on expenditure categories are published within the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts (ARA). However, this data is only published once the accounts are closed and the figures have been audited by the National Audit Office (NAO).

Information on the above expenditure categories for the current financial year will be collated and made available in the 2020/21 Home office Statement of Accounts.

Subsequently, you may also find it useful to refer to the ARA for FY1920 to obtain the data for the total spent on the aforementioned categories.

However, please note that the data we collect and report in the ARA is not captured under the specific headings set out in the question above.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/902593/HO\\_Annual\\_Report\\_and\\_Accounts\\_2019-20\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902593/HO_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2019-20_FINAL.pdf)

## ■ Immigrants: Finance

**Brendan O'Hara:**

**[129000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to provide emergency support for highly skilled migrants with pending indefinite leave to remain applications and without rights including access to public funding under section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971.

**Kevin Foster:**

Highly skilled migrants within the cohort affected by the Judgement in the case of Balajigari (and others) are considered to have 3C leave by virtue of the fact that the original decisions were quashed by the Court of Appeal.

Section 3C leave allows an individual to continue on the conditions attached to their last grant of permission to stay and therefore in the case of these individuals they were not permitted to access public funds under Tier 1 (General).

Where an individual applied for indefinite leave to remain when their permission to stay had already expired they would not benefit from Section 3C leave. However, individuals in this position have been issued with Immigration Bail letters confirming their right to work and study.

As such we do not consider access to public funds is necessary for the purpose of these applicants as they are able to undertake employment.

## ■ Immigration Controls: Coronavirus

**Sir David Amess:**

**[128849]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) that UK borders prevent the transmission into the country of covid-19 and (b) border security and airport staff (i) adequately check people who pass through e-gates and (ii) enforce the completion of passenger locator forms by all passengers.

**Chris Philp:**

Border Force are working closely with PHE to implement all published guidance on passengers entering the UK.

We also working with carriers to ensure passengers are aware of the requirements when they book flights and that passengers fill out the passenger location form prior to travel. The vast majority of arriving passengers are complying with all the requirements of the Covid-19 related health regulations at the border. All travellers, including those from exempt destinations, are required to show a complete passenger locator form on arrival into the UK unless they fall into a small group of

exemptions. If travellers refuse to provide their contact details, they could be fined up to £100 in the first instance.

All passengers going through the UK border, including those using eGates, are required to adhere to the PHE requirements. On arrival Border Force conduct spot checks on passenger locator forms which include contact details, passport number and address while in the UK

## ■ Immigration: Afghanistan

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[129122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made on the length of time it will take for family members of people settled in the UK under the Afghan Ex Gratia scheme to be relocated to the UK.

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[129123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 66 spousal applications and 58 child applications being processed for family members of people settled in the UK under the Afghan Ex Gratia scheme have had a decision made on their case.

**Kevin Foster:**

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

The process of relocation has inevitably been impacted by COVID-19. Once a decision is made on whether family members qualify for relocation, those approved will be brought to the UK when suitable accommodation has been sourced and support arrangements for arrival are in place.

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

## ■ Immigration: Homelessness

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether police data on individuals with no fixed abode will be used by immigration enforcement officials.

**Chris Philp:**

Police Officers refer any suspected immigration offenders to the Home Office's National Command and Control Unit (NCCU), this includes details of individuals with no fixed abode. First and foremost, NCCU officers will provide appropriate advice and support where required to the police to safeguard any vulnerable individuals. NCCU officers then consider any further action required with regard to the individual's 'insecure' immigration status, including signposting individuals to other Home Office Teams to regularise their stay where appropriate.

**■ Immigration: Stop and Search****Apsana Begum:** [\[128296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether personal information gathered during a Stop and Search can then be used for immigration enforcement purposes.

**Chris Philp:**

Stop and search is an investigative tool that the police use to prevent and detect crime by allowing the police to search for offensive weapons and drugs. The police are required to take statistical records of stop and searches for accountability and transparency purposes.

Information may be shared between the Police and Immigration Enforcement under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. However, we remain clear that the Police do not use stop and search to identify potential immigration offenders.

**■ Islam****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[128887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the corrected Answer of 8 December 2020 to Question 101987 on Islam, for what reason the reference to undertaking an assessment of Turkey's Justice and Development Party's (AKP) influence on extremist Islamist activity has been removed in the corrected Answer; and whether her Department has undertaken that assessment.

**James Brokenshire:**

Regrettably owing to human error an incorrect response was provided for PQ101987. I apologise for this error. The Home Office has not undertaken an assessment of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP).

**■ Police: South Yorkshire****Dan Jarvis:** [\[R\] \[128983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) police officers, (b) PCSOs and (c) police staff earning above £24,000 will have their pay frozen in (i) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, (ii) Doncaster Council, (iii) Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and (iv) Sheffield City Council following the public sector pay freeze.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) provides independent advice to the Government on pay and conditions for police officers. The number of officers earning less than £24,000 per annum will be considered by the PRRB in the 2021/22 pay round.

The Government has no statutory role in determining the pay and conditions for police staff, including Police Community Support Officers, which are agreed locally by Chief Constables in consultation with trade unions.

## ■ Refugees: Public Consultation

**Tim Farron:**

[\[128921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, by which process the public can contribute to the statutory review and consultation on safe and legal routes for refugees.

**Chris Philp:**

This Government has made it clear that we are embarking on an ambitious programme to fix our broken asylum system to make it firm and fair. As the Home Secretary said in her Conservative Party Conference speech, 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.

Section 3 of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020 (the Act) sets out a statutory obligation to review the ways in which protection claimants, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), who are in an EU member state are able to enter the United Kingdom lawfully. As a part of this review, the statutory obligation includes a public consultation on legal routes for UASC in the EU seeking to join family in the UK.

The Act includes a requirement to lay a statement before Parliament by 10 February 2021 providing further details of the review and consultation.

## ■ Refugees: Safety

**Tim Farron:**

[\[128110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the process is by which the public can contribute to the statutory review and consultation on safe and legal routes for refugees to come to the UK.

**Chris Philp:**

This Government has made it clear that we are embarking on an ambitious programme to fix our broken asylum system to make it firm and fair. As the Home Secretary said in her Conservative Party Conference speech, 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.

Section 3 of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020 (the Act) sets out a statutory obligation to review the ways in which protection claimants, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), who are in an EU member state are able to enter the United Kingdom lawfully. As a part of this review, the statutory obligation includes a public consultation on legal routes for UASC in the EU seeking to join family in the UK.

The Act includes a requirement to lay a statement before Parliament by 10 February 2021 providing further details of the review and consultation.

## ■ Seasonal Workers: Pilot Schemes

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[129167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish (a) what plans she has to assess the success of Seasonal Agricultural Workers Pilot Scheme due to end in Feb 2021 (b) the criteria for the final assessment of that scheme and (c) the findings of assessments on that scheme carried out to date.

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[129168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to consult with expert organisations representing migrant workers on the future of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Pilot Scheme before any further rollout of that scheme.

**Kevin Foster:**

As I set out to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee on 17 November, the UK Government is looking to continue the Seasonal Workers Pilot into 2021.

When making a decision on numbers, as well as the outcomes of the evaluation, we must also consider the ongoing impacts of the pandemic on the wider economy and ensure there are employment opportunities for UK workers.

We will publish the first-year evaluation information in due course, a key part of which will be how the pilot ensured the safeguarding of migrant welfare.

## ■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[129025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2020 to Question 126060 on Undocumented Migrants: English Channel, how many additional Police Nationale and Gendarmerie land patrols will be deployed as part of the bilateral agreement agreed with France in November 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

In November the UK and France agreed a package of funding to support a range of activity as part of ongoing efforts to address illegal migration. The funding agreed by the Home Secretary and Minister Darmanin will enable an uplift to the number of Gendarmes and Police Nationale deployed daily on French beaches, which will improve capability for monitoring the coastline and surrounding areas and preventing small boats Channel crossings. Due to operational sensitivities, we cannot outline the exact number of personnel deployed.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Housing First****Neil Coyle:**[\[128997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the interim evaluation of the Housing First pilots in (a) Greater Manchester, (b) Merseyside and (c) the West Midlands; and when he plans to publish the findings of that evaluation.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Housing First has an impressive international record in helping people with complex needs to recover and stay off the streets for good, which is why we awarded £28 million to pilot Housing First at scale in three urban areas with contrasting challenges (the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region). Alongside this, we commissioned a consortium, led by ICF, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the programme, which will run for the duration of the pilots.

We recognise that rough sleeping is a nationwide challenge, and that is why it is important that we consider the findings of our evaluation, together with our experiences from the three pilots, to ensure that we know how it could work best on a larger scale. The Government is committed to building a robust evaluation and will be publishing the interim evaluation report in due course.

The Housing First pilots are now in their third year. Since their launch, our expert advisers have been working closely with each of the three pilot regions to closely monitor and support progress.

**■ Housing: Construction****Theresa Villiers:**[\[128895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister for Housing of 30 September 2020, Official Report columns 439-40, when he plans to implement a legal requirement that homes created under permitted development rights to convert offices and warehouses to residential use must meet the same space standards as those applying to newly built dwellings.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We laid regulations before Parliament on 11 November which introduced a requirement that all homes delivered through permitted development rights meet, at a minimum, the nationally described space standards. This requirement will come into effect on 6 April 2021 and will apply to applications for prior approval submitted on or after that date.



## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[128896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of buildings of three storeys or less which need to undergo an external wall survey process before dwellings can be sold or re-mortgaged.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The EWS1 process is not a Government or regulatory requirement. Whether an EWS1 is needed is determined by lenders and the professionals valuing a building - not all lenders ask for an EWS1. The Department has come to an agreement with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) that flats in blocks without cladding do not need an EWS1 form. Buildings under 18m should not fall into the EWS1 process, unless in exceptional circumstances – usually relating to the proportion of cladding on the building. The Department has not made an estimate of the number of buildings of three storeys or fewer that have been brought into the current EWS1 process. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is working with wider industry, including lenders, on new guidance for surveyors which will make clearer the circumstances when EWS1 valuation forms are, and are not, to be requested.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

## ■ Arms Trade: Export Controls

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[115685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many times the Government has suspended or revoked an existing Arms Export licence in the last five years; what the grounds were for those actions; and which countries those licences were for.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

*[Holding answer 19 November 2020]:* Since 2015, we have taken revocation action 74 times on individual licences; and suspended licences, pending further investigations, four times.

I have provided the Hon. Lady with instances below where a licence was revoked in full; where a country was removed; where goods were removed; or where goods for a country were removed.

- 9 SIELs for Ukraine were revoked following increasing tensions in the region (Criterion 3).
- 3 SIELs for Yemen and 1 OIEL destination were revoked further to the deteriorating situation in-country and the risk of diversion (Criteria 3, 7)
- 1 OIEL had seven destinations revoked (Taiwan, Spain, Qatar, Greece, Canada, Australia and Afghanistan) when extended beyond its original validity date.
- 1 OIEL has one destination revoked (Isle of Man) having been issued in error.



- 1 OIEL had three destinations revoked (Japan, Norway and Switzerland) due to the sensitivity of the goods (Criterion 5)
- 1 SIEL for the Philippines was revoked following a change of situation in country and the risk of items being used to commit abuses of rights and responsibilities (Criterion 2)
- 3 SIELs for Germany, Italy and the United States were revoked where the goods were for onward export to Venezuela following the introduction of restrictive measures by the EU in 2017 (Criterion 1).
- 2 SIELs and 13 OIEL destinations for Venezuela were revoked following the introduction of restrictive measures by the EU in 2017 (Criterion 1).
- 1 OIEL had three destinations revoked (Hong Kong, Mongolia and Taiwan), having been issued in error.
- 1 SIEL for Iraq was revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion (Criterion 7)
- 1 SIEL for Bangladesh was revoked following the provision of additional technical information on the capabilities of the equipment, giving rise to concerns over rights and responsibilities (Criterion 2)
- 1 OIEL destination for Belarus was revoked because of the risk of contravening EU financial sanctions including asset freezes (Criterion 1)
- 2 SIELs for China were revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion (Criteria 5a and 7)
- 1 SIEL and 3 OIEL destinations for Myanmar (Burma) were revoked following the expansion of EU Sanctions there in 2018 (Criterion 1)
- 1 OIEL had 31 destinations revoked (Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Barbados, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Gibraltar, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Namibia, New Caledonia and Dependencies, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, St Helena, Switzerland, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, United States and Uruguay), having been issued in error.
- 6 SIELs for China were revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion (Criteria 5a and 7), 4 of these SIELs were initially suspended.
- 1 SIEL for Pakistan was revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion to a WMD programme (Criterion 1)
- 2 SIELs for Sweden and Saudi Arabia and 2 OIEL destination for Jordan and Saudi Arabia were revoked because they were contrary to Secretary of State's commitment to Parliament that no new licences would be granted for export of arms or military equipment to Saudi Arabia or its coalition partners for possible use in the conflict in Yemen.

- 1 OIEL destination for Saudi Arabia was revoked because of the risk of internal repression and violations of rights and responsibilities (Criterion 2a)
- 2 OITCLs for Sierra Leone had goods revoked because the licences were issued in error (Criterion 1).
- 1 SIEL for Turkey was revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion to a third country of concern (Criteria 1 and 7)
- 1 SIEL for Uganda was revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion to a third country of concern (Criteria 1 and 7)
- 1 SIEL and 1 OIEL destination for Iraq was revoked following a change of situation in country and the risk of items being used to commit abuses of rights and responsibilities (Criterion 2)
- 3 SIELs for Israel were revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion to a third country of concern (Criteria 1, 5a and 7)
- 3 SIELs for South Africa, Spain and Jordan, 3 SIELs for the United Arab Emirates and 1 OIEL destination for the United Arab Emirates were revoked following new information indicating a risk of diversion to a third country of concern (Criteria 1 and 7)

In seeking to be open with the Hon. Lady, this data is provided from management information and may, therefore, not align with published official statistics. My department has identified some instances where revocations were not reported. For example, following the introduction of EU restrictive measures in 2017, we revoked Venezuela from 13 OIELs, but five were not reported. My department has identified the cause of this and put in place measures to ensure there is no re-occurrence. The data will align with the next official statistics update and the official estimates will be revised.

## ■ Digital Technology: Overseas Trade

**Bill Esterson:**

**[128939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to publish a strategy on trade in digital services.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

HM Government aims to make the United Kingdom a global leader in digital services trade, with a network of international agreements that drive productivity, jobs and growth across the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom is already one of the world's largest exporters of services, with remotely delivered services exports worth £207 billion in 2019. To build on this, we will use our independent trade policy to shape the future of global rules on digital trade. Bilaterally, we are looking for advanced digital services chapters in areas like data and digital in all of the trade negotiations we are currently engaged in.

Earlier this month, my Rt. Hon Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade announced our intention to negotiate a ground-breaking Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore.

## ■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[129089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Government announcement on an end to support for the fossil fuel sector overseas and to the Answer of 18 November 2020 to Question 91998 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees, whether those projects remain under consideration for 2021.

**Graham Stuart:**

The new policy on ending government's support to fossil fuels overseas announced by the Prime Minister at the Climate Ambition Summit will be implemented as soon as possible following the conclusion of the consultation process that was launched on 12 December.

During the consultation period and ahead of the implementation of the new policy, the government will continue to apply current policy for all in-scope activities including proposals for high carbon projects, with consideration of relevant factors including climate change. During this period, UK Export Finance (UKEF) will apply government's current policy and continue to consider applications for support in the oil and gas sector.

## JUSTICE

## ■ Courts: Coronavirus

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[128948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the data used to model the (a) court recovery plan and (b) plan for reducing the court backlog due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

During the pandemic we have been publishing detailed management information used by HMCTS for understanding workload volumes and activity across the court and tribunal system. These key datasets are used to inform recovery modelling in courts and tribunals. The data breaks down weekly figures on receipts, disposals and outstanding case volumes across jurisdictions. The most recent figures were updated on 10 December. Taken together, this data forms the primary basis for our internal modelling on recovery, along with additional intelligence from the operational teams and planned interventions as set out in our published recovery plans. The full data is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-march-to-november-2020>

**Catherine West:**

[\[129074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases have been heard in Nightingale courts; and what proportion of court cases in 2020 in England and Wales those account for.

**Chris Philp:**

Recovering from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is our top priority. By opening 17 Nightingale courts, we have added vital capacity and provided 32 extra court rooms, alleviating the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic. Additionally, we have secured £30m of funding to open a further 40 Nightingale court rooms in early 2021.

We do not break down data on cases heard in Nightingale Courts.

**Catherine West:**

[\[129075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether additional administrative and support staff have been employed in the courts service during the covid-19 outbreak to ensure the safe operation of courts.

**Chris Philp:**

Yes, we have employed additional administrative and support staff in the courts service during the covid-19 outbreak to ensure the safe operation of courts. As at Mon 14 Dec 2020, we have employed an additional 1000 staff to assist with HMCTS recovery work across our courts and tribunal sites. Please note that the additional staff have been employed in a range of posts including administrative, court clerk, usher and marshall roles who all contribute to the safe operation of courts.

**Catherine West:**

[\[129076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether additional remote hearings have been used during the covid-19 outbreak compared with previous periods.

**Chris Philp:**

We have responded quickly and innovatively to the challenge posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to our criminal courts and the wider justice system. This includes making video technology available across the entirety of the criminal, civil, family and tribunal estates, as well as the expansion of audio capability. Together this has enabled more judges and magistrates to conduct many more remote hearings.

## ■ Courts: Disability

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[128949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June to Question 61493 on Courts: Disability, how many disabled court users have participated in remote hearings since March 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

This information is not collected in a way that enables central collation of the data.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) have worked closely with the judiciary to safely continue thousands of hearings during the pandemic.

HMCTS is currently undertaking an evaluation of the use of remote hearings during the covid-19 outbreak and will publish the findings of once it is complete and has been quality assured.

The findings will be disaggregated by protected characteristic, including disability, where data are available and robust conclusions can be drawn.

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[128950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June to Question 61493 on Courts: Disability, what data his Department records on the outcomes secured by disabled court users in relation to their hearings.

**Chris Philp:**

Data on outcomes secured by disabled court users cannot currently be extracted from digital case management systems. Under the HMCTS Reform Programme new systems are being developed to improve accuracy and consistency of data in court proceedings. This includes data on disability and other protected characteristics.

## ■ Courts: Video Conferencing

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[128946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 81881 on Courts: Video Conferencing, what data has been collected on the duration of video rather than in person hearings.

**Chris Philp:**

We continue to carefully monitor and evaluate the use of video and technology in courts, so that we can improve services and support access to justice. The decision to deal with a hearing or part of a hearing remotely is a matter for the judiciary and the length of hearings vary significantly whether in person or remote.

We are listening to feedback from all court users including the judiciary, legal professionals, staff and other key stakeholders to understand the impact of the technology during Covid and findings of that evaluation will be available in Spring 2021.

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[128947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost of video hearings to (a) HM Courts and Tribunals Service, (b) the Mental Health Tribunal of the NHS and (c) other agencies involved in supporting the courts.

**Chris Philp:**

The costs which have been incurred in the rolling out the Cloud Video Platform (CVP) in the 2020/21 financial year, to the end of November 2020 together with costs relating to the Video Hearings Service project amount to £2.117m. There are running and other costs in supporting video hearings, but these cannot presently be easily

disaggregated from the total costs of running hearings (in court or elsewhere), and the figures presented therefore focus upon the direct costs of video hearings only.

The answer can only focus on part (a) of the question, as HMCTS do not have records of costs relating to the Mental Health Tribunal of the NHS and/or other agencies involved in supporting the courts.

## ■ Domestic Abuse

**Jessica Morden:**

**[128905]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of domestic abuse convictions related to controlling and coercive behaviour in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Justice does not hold data centrally on how many domestic abuse convictions relate to coercive and controlling behaviour. Offences involving domestic abuse can take various forms and are prosecuted under the offence in law that best reflects their nature and circumstances, for example, harassment, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, a public order offence. These offences can take the form of domestic abuse or non-domestic abuse and data collected centrally from courts does not distinguish between the two. The data on domestic abuse offences could only be identified by manually searching case records at disproportionate cost.

However, the Ministry of Justice regularly publishes information on all prosecutions and convictions for offences related to controlling and coercive behaviour, as defined by section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, in the 'Principal Offence Proceedings and Outcomes by Home Office Offence Code 2013 to 2019' data tool, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938554/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx)

The number of convictions can be identified for each year from 2016 to 2019. Data from 2020 will be published in May 2021.

## ■ Prisons: Coronavirus

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[125976]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2020 to Question 115561 on Prisons: Coronavirus, whether regular covid-19 testing of frontline staff was in place in all prisons in England and Wales on 1 December 2020.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has been working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the NHS, and public health colleagues in England and Wales on providing access to Covid-19 tests in prisons.

On 3 December, which is the earliest confirmed data available for that month, regular front-line staff testing was in place at 117 sites. Such testing is now taking place across the whole of the estate.

## ■ Probate: Coronavirus

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[128987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of HM Courts & Tribunals Service Centres answering Grant of Probate calls from March 2020 on the effectiveness of that process.

**Chris Philp:**

As of March 2020, all calls are now answered by the Courts & Tribunals Service Centres which are equipped with modern technology to monitor performance levels and make improvements to the service being offered. The service can be contacted Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm via telephone on 0300 303 0648.

The average wait for people telephoning the national Courts and Tribunal Service centre with queries relating to Probate between April 2019 to March 2020 was 2 minutes 21 seconds.

Volumes and waiting times for calls have risen since March 2020. Waiting times rose to an average of 19 minutes in July 2020 but had been steadily improving prior to November 2020 when the service received the highest number of calls to date and waiting times increased as a result. HMCTS are committed to reducing call waiting times and have improved call routing as well as increasing resources to meet demand.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

## ■ Members: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[128925\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what steps he plans to take to allow hon. Members to adhere to the Tier 3: Very High Alert Guidance to (a) work from home if possible, (b) avoid travelling outside a Tier 3 area and (c) reduce the number of journeys made wherever possible; what assessment he has made of the effect on the transmission of covid-19 of allowing hon. Members to contribute to debates virtually whilst London is under Tier 3 Guidance; if he will take steps to allow hon. Members to contribute remotely to debates in the House of Commons; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

The Government guidance is clear that you can continue to travel into or out of Local COVID Alert Level: Very High areas, if you need to for work, school, or caring responsibilities, or where doing so is necessary as part of a longer journey. It is the Government's view that we best serve our constituents when we are in Westminster, carrying out our essential functions. The House authorities have put in place robust and effective measures to ensure that the House of Commons is a covid-secure workplace.

The Government is sympathetic to those Members who are currently unable to participate in some aspects of our proceeding and has worked hard to mitigate that,



including a wide scale roll out of proxy voting and providing for remote participation in scrutiny proceedings. The Government also brought forward a motion to enable those Members who are clinically extremely vulnerable to contribute virtually in Chamber debates and it was unfortunate that this was talked out so the House did not make a decision. I will continue to engage with Members on how we best strike the balance between facilitating virtual participation and allowing scrutiny and legislation to continue. As I have always said, the Government continues to keep this matter under review.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Arms Length Bodies

**Dehenna Davison:**

[\[129108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on ensuring the effective control of levels of pay in arm's-length bodies connected to his Department.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Transport bodies deliver complex, nationally important, infrastructure that is critical to building back better – however exceptional pay demands exceptional performance and remuneration must be proportionate. We are firmly focused on addressing the issue of high pay within the transport sector. The overall senior pay bill to taxpayers has reduced this year by over £1 million, and we intend to continue this trend.

Each year, the Cabinet Office publishes transparency data on senior salaries at public sector bodies. Analysis of this data since 2015 for Network Rail, Highways England and HS2 Ltd shows that an overall downward trend in pay awards to these high earners has begun, both in numbers of staff involved and total spend.

The Secretary of State has taken a personal interest in this issue and is bearing down on senior pay at the Department of Transport's Arms-Length Bodies. This includes agreeing with some CEOs and Chairs voluntary, temporary, pay cuts in the light of current economic circumstances.

Taxpayers must be confident that their money is being spent wisely, with due regard to real-world performance and conditions.

### ■ Blue Badge Scheme: Coronavirus

**Justin Madders:**

[\[129033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is taking longer to process Blue Badge applications due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department for Transport is responsible for the legislation of the Blue Badge scheme. The day-to-day administration of the scheme remains the responsibility of local authorities. Each local authority will have a plan in place to ensure the



continuation of its services during times of uncertainty, including providing the Blue Badge service.

■ **Buses: Hydrogen**

**John Spellar:**

[\[128869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial and other support his Department is providing for the roll-out of hydrogen powered buses; and how many of those buses have been (a) ordered and (b) delivered.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government has supported the use of a range of low carbon bus technologies, including hydrogen buses and supporting infrastructure, through funds including the Low Emission and Ultra-Low Emission Bus Schemes.

As set out in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the Spending Review 2020 the Government will invest £120 million in 2021-22 to start the delivery of the 4,000 zero emission buses announced by the Prime Minister in February. The Department is considering all funding mechanisms, and the role that all technologies can play, in delivering these ZEBs and the infrastructure needed to support them. Further details on how funding will be distributed will be announced in due course.

■ **Freight: Felixstowe Port**

**Joy Morrissey:**

[\[129115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to clear the backlog of containers at the port of Felixstowe.

**Robert Courts:**

The Government is liaising closely with the Port of Felixstowe, but also other UK ports, and international shipping lines on their response to the current global container demand surge. Ports are working hard to handle volumes of freight significantly in excess of normal peaks and under challenging Covid-19 operational circumstances. Whilst this is predominantly a commercial issue, Government is taking action to reduce supply chain pressures, for example a temporary relaxation of HGV drivers rules and we acted to remove the majority of PPE containers from Felixstowe.

■ **Highways England: Air Pollution**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[127467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that Highways England is putting in place plans to reduce air pollution, including with its (a) contractors and (b) sub-contractors.

**Rachel Maclean:**

To measure the performance of its contractors in delivering better environmental outcomes, Highways England focuses on carbon dioxide equivalents (CO<sub>2</sub>e) in tons associated with its supply chain.

With certain contracts Highways England allocates work based on past performance. Therefore, if a supplier does not comply with the carbon measurement tool, it could lead to a reduction in the projects they are allocated.

Recent major tenders set out a clear CO<sub>2</sub> statement and require carbon commitments from the bidders which are then built into contracts. Other live tenders include an environmental management plan which asks suppliers to target a reduction in carbon usage and to define their air quality strategy.

Furthermore, Highways England has for several years been investigating measures that it can take to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> pollution from road users. This has included monitoring the effectiveness of tall barriers and running an open competition to gather ideas from a wide range of organisations. Highways England is now applying some of these measures where they will make a difference, as can be seen from the 60mph speed limits on the M1 and M6.

Further information on air quality activity, including links to the findings from research, is available online at <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/our-work/air-quality/>

**Jetties: River Thames****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[128058]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) existing jetties on the River Thames are (i) protected and (ii) retained and (b) new jetties are developed to ensure that goods, construction materials, and waste can be put on and taken off the river.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The safeguarding of wharves and jetties on the Thames is the responsibility of the Mayor of London, and the Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority. It would be a matter for the Mayor to determine what types of river boat services might operate on the River Thames.

**Motorways: Accidents****Alun Cairns:****[128944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) accidents and (b) breakdowns on each stretch of smart motorway in each of the last 5 years.

**Alun Cairns:****[128945]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) longest and (b) shortest amount of time taken for rescue vehicles to reach vehicles that have broken down on smart motorways in each of the last 5 years.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The number of accidents has been taken to mean the number of injury casualties. The tables in Annexes B, C and D of the *Smart Motorways Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan* show the number of reported casualties by road class on England's Strategic Road Network (SRN) for slight, serious and fatal casualties. These tables show the casualty split on different types of motorway. These tables are attached for ease of reference. Highways England is currently analysing the 2019 data and, when available, will analyse the 2020 data, which is expected to be in Autumn 2021.

The last full year of data available is for 2019, the statistic for which are set out in the table 1, note that 'motorway' refers to 'conventional motorways' excluding all other types set out in the table.

As outlined in the published STATS19 data, the number of incidents increased across the network in 2019, and the amount of All Lane Running (ALR) sections of the network also increased over this period. In the time available, it has not been possible to provide data on accidents and breakdowns for each stretch of motorway.

Highways England does not hold data for the attendance of incidents by vehicle recovery companies or the emergency services.

**Attachments:**

1. Table as mentioned in the PQ answer [128944,128945 - Tables .docx]

**■ Pedestrians: Safety****Stuart Anderson:**[\[128729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) improve road safety for pedestrians and (b) tackle pavement parking.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department recently consulted on proposed changes to The Highway Code which include clarifying existing rules on pedestrian priority on pavements, and providing more clarity on the need for drivers and riders to give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross the road. The consultation closed on 27 October with over 20,000 responses received and we are currently undertaking a full analysis of all replies.

The Department also carried out a public consultation on possible solutions to the complex pavement parking problem, which closed on the 22 November with over 15,000 responses received. The Department is now carefully analysing the responses and the results will inform future policy decisions.

**■ Railway Stations: Staffordshire****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[129135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve access at railway stations for disabled people in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Government has made £350 million available to make accessibility improvements at a further 209 stations through the Access for All programme, including Kidsgrove. We also require the industry to comply with current accessibility standards whenever they install, replace or renew station infrastructure.

**Railways: Standards****Jim McMahon:**[\[129077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2019 to Question 208287 on Railways: Standards, what progress has been made on learning and sharing the lessons on the introduction of new rolling stock.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Operators, working alongside manufacturers, owners and other industry partners, remain the key players in the procurement and introduction of new trains as they have the practical implementation knowledge of what is required. The Rail Delivery Group published a guide in March 2020 which describes good practice that organisations should consider when commissioning and introducing new trains. The guide can be found here:

<https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/files/Publications/RDG-ENG-GN-008-NewTrains-AGoodPracticeGuide2.0.pdf>

**Railways: Tickets****Navendu Mishra:**[\[127679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) oversight of and (b) involvement in the rail industry's Ticketing and Settlement Agreement the Government has.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA) is an agreement between train operators providing passenger services in Great Britain. The Secretary of State exercises various roles under the TSA while not being a party to it. If operators agree between themselves to propose changes, the Secretary of State's approval is required for changes to take effect.

**Roads: Staffordshire****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[129132\]](#)

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

**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[129133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to review the funding formula for road maintenance.

**Rachel Maclean:**

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

In addition, Stoke-on-Trent council were successful in their £5 million 'Keep Stoke Moving' key corridor Challenge Fund bid in February this year. Staffordshire County Council also successfully bid for £2.35 million to upgrade Chetwynd Bridge, a historic Grade II\* structure.

The Department for Transport held two consultation exercises in 2014 to seek views from local highway authorities, organisations, and members of the public regarding how we allocate funding to local highway authorities. Following the consultation exercises, it was agreed that we would allocate funding to each highway authority in England, outside London, based on road lengths and highways assets such as bridges and lighting columns for which they are responsible. This is the most fair and proportionate way to distribute this funding.

**■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions****Douglas Chapman:**[\[128189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment the Government has made of the potential role of maritime decarbonisation in reaching net zero emissions.

**Robert Courts:**

The domestic maritime sector falls under the UK's current national net zero target, and in common with the wider economy will need to be decarbonised by 2050 in order to achieve net zero.

The Department has published extensive research as part of the Clean Maritime Plan on Gov.UK assessing the opportunities and challenges presented by the sector's transition to net zero, and the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, planned for publication in Spring 2021, will outline our next steps to decarbonise the sector.

**■ Shipping: Pay****Mick Whitley:**[\[128282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase rates of pay for UK seafarers working on vessels flying flags of convenience in British waters to at least the UK minimum wage.

**Robert Courts:**

The recent amendments to National Minimum Wage legislation, which came into force on October 1, 2020, extended its scope and now applies to all domestic operations in the UK territorial waters and to offshore activity in the UK continental shelf. The application of these new amendments is not dependant on the flag state of the vessel or the nationality of its crew.

## ■ Shipping: River Thames

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase use of the River Thames as a means of increasing (a) sustainable commerce and (b) transport throughout London.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London. It would be a matter for the Mayor to determine what types of river boat services might operate on the River Thames.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Transport for London on improving air quality and lowering congestion in London through improved use of the River Thames.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London, and the Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority. The Department has regular discussions with Transport for London and the Port of London Authority on a range of issues, including freight and environmental issues.

## ■ Stockport Viaduct: Repairs and Maintenance

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[127503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Network Rail on the condition of the Stockport rail viaduct.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

No recent discussions have taken place with Network Rail on the condition of the Stockport rail viaduct.

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[127504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will ask Network Rail to set out a timetable for (a) the removal of graffiti, (b) the restoration of the brickwork and (c) the removal of overgrowth and vegetation on the Stockport rail viaduct.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Stockport Viaduct is a vital part of the railway infrastructure and Network Rail take seriously the responsibility to maintain it in safe working order. They carry out detailed examinations of the structure and address any defects or problems these highlight. This year Network Rail have spent £50k on repairing the brick work in areas highlighted by their examinations.

The main vegetation growth on the viaduct is buddleia which is challenging to manage as it grows so quickly. Network Rail have a specific £1m fund for Control

Period 6 (1 April 2019- 31 March 2024) to be used on brick repair and de-vegetation work on the viaduct.

The viaduct is a listed structure in recognition of its importance to Stockport's industrial heritage. Network Rail look to manage any graffiti on the viaduct in accordance with their policies and will review any specific areas of concern and will take action where appropriate.

## ■ Transport for London: Finance

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[128097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Transport for London on the (a) recent decision to reduce expenditure on asset management in the next financial year and (b) implications of that decision for urgent road network upgrades and road safety in London.

**Rachel Maclean:**

As transport in London is devolved, it is for the Mayor and TfL to assess the merits of capital projects including asset management expenditure and any implications for road safety. As part of the recent Emergency Funding Agreement with Government, by 11 January 2021 TfL will produce a single, comprehensive management plan with options as to how a trajectory to financial sustainability by 2023 can be achieved, including their contribution to capital projects within London.

## TREASURY

## ■ Bus Services: Coronavirus

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[128932\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on funding for sector specific support for the coach industry.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the coach sector as a result of Covid-19, and firms experiencing difficulties are able to draw upon the unprecedented package of cross-economy measures the government has put in place, including Time to Pay flexibilities with tax bills, financial support for employees and tax deferrals. These measures have been designed to ensure that firms of any size receive the help they need to get through this difficult time.

Treasury Ministers meet with the Secretary of State for Transport on a regular basis to discuss a variety of important issues.

## ■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[128202\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure lenders extend the repayment period for Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans from six to 10 years in the event that such requests are made by borrowers.

**John Glen:**

As part of the Winter Economy Plan, the Chancellor announced our intention to allow lenders to extend the repayment period for CBILS loans where this is needed, to a maximum of 10 years. Since then, we have worked at pace alongside BEIS and the British Business Bank to implement this policy, in line with EU State Aid rules. I can confirm that the British Business Bank has now begun updating scheme documentation with lenders to allow for the extension of a CBILS facility in this way – this process is expected to complete shortly.

I should be clear that CBILS term extensions will be offered at the discretion of lenders, unlike the “Pay As You Grow” options for Bounce Back loans. Extensions will be limited to those borrowers that lenders assess are in difficulty and will benefit from the extension, and only for the duration required, meaning that lenders may offer an extension to 7 years, for example, rather than the maximum 10 years allowed.

## ■ Off-payroll Working: Coronavirus

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[129043\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the IR35 off-payroll working rules on self-employed contractors during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The off-payroll working rules (commonly known as IR35) have been in place for nearly 20 years and are designed to ensure that individuals working like employees but through their own company pay broadly the same Income Tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) as those who are employed directly.

These rules only apply to individuals who are working like employees under the current employment status tests, and do not apply to the self-employed.

As part of the support the Government provided for businesses and individuals to deal with the economic impacts of COVID-19, the reform to the off-payroll working rules was delayed for one year, from 6 April 2020 until 6 April 2021.

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[129045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of delaying the implementation of the IR35 off-payroll working rules during the covid-19 outbreak.



**Jesse Norman:**

The Government made the decision to delay the reform of the off-payroll working rules until April 2021 in response to the COVID-19 crisis. There is no rationale for further delay. The legislation has now received Royal Assent as part of Finance Act 2020, and the reform will be implemented in April 2021 as announced.

The reform was originally announced at Budget 2018. Many businesses would have been prepared for the reform to be implemented in April 2020 as originally planned, and HMRC have undertaken a significant programme of education and support to ensure that large and medium-sized businesses are ready to implement the reform.

Further delaying implementation of these changes would have very significant drawbacks. It would prolong the fundamental unfairness of taxing two people differently for the same work, in addition to the fiscal cost. It would also extend the disparity between the private and voluntary sectors, and the public sector, where the reform has been in place since 2017.

**■ Off-payroll Working: Ethnic Groups****Patrick Grady:****[129044]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what equality impact assessments his Department has carried out on the effect of the IR35 off-payroll working rules on the BAME community.

**Jesse Norman:**

As set out in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) published in July 2019, the reform of the off-payroll working rules is not anticipated to have a specific impact on groups sharing protected characteristics.

The TIIN can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rules-for-off-payroll-working-from-april-2020/rules-for-off-payroll-working-from-april-2020>.

**■ Self-employed: Coronavirus****Sarah Olney:****[129083]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support the future of self-employment in the UK following the ineligibility of many self-employed individuals for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has provided and will continue to provide substantial support to self-employed people who meet the eligibility criteria.

The design of the SEISS, including the eligibility requirement that an individual's trading profits must be no more than £50,000 and at least equal to their non-trading income, means it is targeted at those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

The first SEISS grant supported 2.7 million individuals with claims totalling £7.8 billion. A further £5.9 billion has been claimed through the second SEISS grant.

Applications for the third SEISS grant opened on 30 November. The third grant covers the three-month period from November 2020 until January 2021. It is a taxable grant calculated at 80 per cent of three months' average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment and capped at £7,500 in total. Combined with up to £14,070 worth of support for each individual from the first and second grants, it makes the SEISS one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

There will also be a fourth grant covering February to April 2021. The Government will set out further details, including the level of the fourth grant, in due course.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a comprehensive package of support for the self-employed which includes Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[128051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of written complaints to her Department's Debt Management team were answered within 15 working days in (a) August (b) September (c) October and (d) November 2020.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 15 December 2020]:* The proportion of written complaints answered by Debt Management within 15 working days for the months requested are set out in the table below:

	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
Proportion of complaints answered by Debt Management within 15 working days	93%	88%	88%	49%

It is important to note the caseload of people on UC has increased since March from around 3 million to 5.8 million. Deductions were paused at the height of the pandemic and staff from the Debt Management team were redeployed to process claims. Staff have now returned to their roles, and deductions restarted in a phased way from July 2020.

Therefore the number of complaints received by Debt Management increased during this period. This was due to the increased caseload leading to some customers experiencing difficulties when trying to contact Debt Management by telephone.

Debt Management have put steps in place to address this issue. Firstly, a limit to the number of notifications issued has been set to ensure any 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.

## ■ Habitual Residence Test

**Neil Gray:**

[\[128993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of social security benefit claimants required a habitual residence test in each month for which data is available since March 2018.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The table below gives the total number of Habitual Residence Tests (HRT) completed by Universal Credit (UC) full service claimants since March 2018, the total number of UC claims that were declared in the same months, and the proportion of these UC claims where a HRT was completed.

The Department only holds information on the Habitual Residence Tests (HRT) completed by Universal Credit (UC) full service claimants for the time period requested.

DECLARED DATE	TOTAL HRTs COMPLETED	CLAIMS MADE TO UC	PROPORTION OF UC CLAIMS WHERE A HRT WAS COMPLETED
<b>Mar-18</b>	13,900	102,100	14%
<b>Apr-18</b>	14,200	103,500	14%
<b>May-18</b>	15,300	108,200	14%
<b>Jun-18</b>	16,600	127,100	13%
<b>Jul-18</b>	21,100	163,300	13%
<b>Aug-18</b>	22,100	167,200	13%
<b>Sep-18</b>	24,600	173,800	14%
<b>Oct-18</b>	29,600	204,700	14%

DECLARED DATE	TOTAL HRTs COMPLETED	CLAIMS MADE TO UC	PROPORTION OF UC CLAIMS WHERE A HRT WAS COMPLETED
Nov-18	31,000	211,400	15%
Dec-18	26,900	168,800	16%
Jan-19	40,800	275,800	15%
Feb-19	34,600	243,100	14%
Mar-19	35,700	253,300	14%
Apr-19	32,400	236,000	14%
May-19	34,600	245,700	14%
Jun-19	32,100	240,000	13%
Jul-19	35,300	269,100	13%
Aug-19	31,500	245,500	13%
Sep-19	36,000	258,100	14%
Oct-19	37,400	236,800	16%
Nov-19	32,200	214,600	15%
Dec-19	26,500	166,200	16%
Jan-20	38,100	259,300	15%
Feb-20	32,100	208,800	15%
Mar-20	165,600	1,209,100	14%
Apr-20	173,400	985,800	18%
May-20	93,400	441,000	21%
Jun-20	59,700	283,800	21%
Jul-20	58,800	262,400	22%
Aug-20	55,500	243,600	23%

## Table Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to 100. The proportion of UC claims where a HRT was completed (%) is calculated using the unrounded figures.

2. Data on claims made to UC are for Great Britain only. HRTs completed are for Great Britain only.
3. The UC HRT statistics are taken from Management Information on UC Full Service claims and do not include Live Service claims for which HRT data is not available.
4. The statistics on claims made to UC are taken from the UC Official Statistics in the 'Claims made to Universal Credit' table on the DWP Stat-Xplore portal.
5. The month used in this table is the month in which the UC claim was declared.
6. The HRT UC full service data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The HRT data should therefore be treated with caution.

**Neil Gray:**

**[128995]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of social security benefit claims were closed as a result of the claimant having failed a habitual residence test in each month for which data is available since March 2018.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The table below gives the number of UC claim closures due to a claimant failing the Habitual Residence Test (HRT) and the monthly percentage share of all UC claim declarations on a monthly basis from March 2018 to November 2020.

The Department only holds the requested information for Habitual Residence Tests (HRT) completed by Universal Credit (UC) full service claimants for the time period requested.

	NUMBER OF CLOSURES DUE TO FAILING HRT	PERCENTAGE OF UC CLAIMS IN MONTH
Mar-18	1,340	1.3%
Apr-18	1,470	1.4%
May-18	1,570	1.4%
Jun-18	1,920	1.4%
Jul-18	2,400	1.4%
Aug-18	2,400	1.3%
Sep-18	2,410	1.3%
Oct-18	3,030	1.3%
Nov-18	3,170	1.3%
Dec-18	2,770	1.4%

	NUMBER OF CLOSURES DUE TO FAILING HRT	PERCENTAGE OF UC CLAIMS IN MONTH
Jan-19	4,170	1.4%
Feb-19	4,030	1.5%
Mar-19	4,140	1.5%
Apr-19	3,500	1.3%
May-19	3,500	1.2%
Jun-19	3,310	1.1%
Jul-19	3,630	1.1%
Aug-19	3,150	1.0%
Sep-19	3,080	0.9%
Oct-19	3,470	1.2%
Nov-19	3,150	1.2%
Dec-19	2,710	1.3%
Jan-20	3,610	1.1%
Feb-20	3,010	1.2%
Mar-20	8,240	0.8%
Apr-20	11,750	1.3%
May-20	11,700	2.4%
Jun-20	8,220	2.5%
Jul-20	7,460	2.5%
Aug-20	6,710	2.5%
Sep-20	9,210	2.9%
Oct-20	11,150	3.6%
Nov-20	7,300	2.3%

## Notes:

1. We have taken the cohort of declarations and found the closures due to failing HRT within that cohort, as opposed to grouping by closure date.

2. Figures are for households on UC, either couple or single claims, and does not represent the number of individuals within the household.
3. Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
4. Please note that percentages have been rounded to the nearest 0.1% and may not sum due to rounding.
5. Figures cover claims in Great Britain only.

**Neil Gray:**

[\[128996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department blocks payments for social security benefit claimants requiring a habitual residence test; and if she will make a statement.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As part of the eligibility criteria for income related benefits claimants need to have a legal right to reside and factual habitual residence. When eligibility needs to be determined, evidence is gathered and an assessment made through the Habitual Residence Test.

#### ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[130132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the accuracy of telephone-based personal independence payment assessments compared with face-to-face appointments.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The department is committed to improving the assessment process and ensuring that claimants receive high quality, objective and accurate assessments, as part of the suite of evidence the department uses to decide entitlement. We are closely monitoring all new assessment processes, including telephone assessments, to ensure they are working well for those claiming Personal Independence Payment, as well as providing the right level of information to allow claims to be assessed.

#### ■ **Social Security Benefits**

**Naz Shah:**

[\[127578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she will suspend all benefit debt deductions during the winter months with immediate effect.

**Will Quince:**

DWP and HMRC currently have no plans to suspend benefit debt deductions.

There are established support processes in place for any claimants who may be experiencing financial difficulty.

Anyone unable to afford a rate of recovery proposed by DWP is encouraged to contact them so an affordable rate of repayment can be negotiated.

Anyone unable to afford a rate of recovery proposed by HMRC is encouraged to check the HMRC webpages, or contact them to see what support they can offer.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[126045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many welfare claimants have a 9-month benefit cap grace period due to end in (a) January, (b) February and (c) March 2021.

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[126046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many welfare claimants in each region and nation of the UK have a 9-month benefit cap grace period due to end in December 2020.

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[126047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many welfare claimants that have a 9-month benefit cap grace period due to end in December 2020 are (a) families with children and (b) single-parent households.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 10 December 2020]:* The Department can identify the number of households who have a grace period and when it is due to end. However, those volumes do not equate to the number of people who will be in scope of the cap when their grace period ends. This is because the grace period is applied irrespective of whether or not the household has sufficient benefit income to be in scope for the cap. This ensures that a claimant will benefit from the grace period exemption should any change of circumstances bring them into the scope of the cap during that period. Many claimants who have the grace period applied will not be in scope of the cap.

The Department is not able to provide information on the number of households who will newly be subject to the benefit cap at the end of their grace period because any estimate does not account for changes to personal circumstances which would see some claimants continue to be exempt.

i. The table below shows, for the latest available data as at August 2020, the number of Universal Credit households with a grace period due to end in each calendar month of January 2021 to March 2021.

CALENDAR MONTH	NUMBER OF GRACE PERIODS ENDING IN UNIVERSAL CREDIT
January 2021	128,100
February 2021	29,800
March 2021	25,900



ii. A regional breakdown of the number of Universal Credit households in Great Britain with a grace period due to end in December 2020 is provided in the table below for the latest available data, as at August 2020.

REGION	NUMBER OF GRACE PERIODS IN UNIVERSAL CREDIT ENDING IN DECEMBER 2020
England	139,400
<i>of which:</i>	
North East	6,200
North West	18,200
Yorkshire and the Humber	12,200
East Midlands	10,800
West Midlands	13,700
East of England	15,600
London	27,300
South East	21,800
South West	13,600
Scotland	13,200
Wales	7,000
Not Known	700

iii. As at August 2020, there are 51,800 couples with dependent children and 18,800 single parents, who have a Universal Credit grace period due to end in December 2020.

#### ■ Social Security Benefits: EU Nationals

**Neil Gray:**

[\[128994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of social security benefit claimants were EU nationals in each month for which data is available since February 2018.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

**Karl Turner:**

[R] [[128935](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to resume face-to-face medical assessments for (a) universal credit and (b) employment support allowance claimants.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 December to Question [UIN 126162](#).

## ■ Statutory Sick Pay

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

[[129052](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer ahead of Spending Review 2020 on increasing the level of statutory sick pay.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is paid entirely by employers to employees where they are sick or incapable of work and where they meet the qualifying conditions. As such SSP rates are not relevant to Spending Review discussions, which focus on Departmental Admin expenditure plans.

SSP provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are sick or incapable of work. It is designed to balance support for an individual when they are unable to work because of sickness with the costs to employers of providing such support. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

This government has a strong safety net that helps people who are facing hardship and are unable to support themselves financially and we have taken steps to strengthen that safety net. SSP is just one part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need. Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, for example where they are not eligible for SSP, they may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances. We have strengthened our wider safety net by temporarily increasing the standard allowance of Universal Credit by the equivalent of £20 per week, meaning that claimants will be up to £1,040 better off for the 20/21 tax year.

### **Background**

The government recognises that small and medium employers may struggle to deal with the increased costs of sick pay as a result of coronavirus.

To support businesses with the temporary economic impacts related to coronavirus, small and medium employers with fewer than 250 employees, are currently able to reclaim up to two weeks' of SSP paid per employee for sickness absences related to coronavirus.

■ **Unemployment: Coronavirus**

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[128988]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have become economically inactive since the start of March 2020.

**Mims Davies:**

In the latest data for August – October 2020 the estimated number economically inactive aged 16-64 was 8,602,000. Further information on this can be found [here](#).

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey. Estimate is seasonally adjusted. Economically inactive individuals are not employed and have not looked for work in the last four weeks and/or are not available to start work within the next two weeks.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ **Update: Publication of the Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure and the Criminal Procedure Investigations Act 1996 Code of Practice**

**Attorney General (Suella Braverman):**

[\[HCWS662\]](#)

I wish to provide an update in relation to the Attorney General's Guidelines and the CPIA Code of Practice.

#### **Disclosure**

The disclosure of unused material in criminal cases remains a crucial part of ensuring a fair trial takes place and is essential in avoiding miscarriages of justice. Unfortunately, the failure to disclose material promptly has led to the collapse of a number of trials and has impacted on the public's confidence in the administration of the criminal justice system.

It is a priority for this Government to continue to encourage improvements in the disclosure process and to achieve permanent change. It is essential that we ensure there are fair trials for all and that we increase confidence in the criminal justice system.

#### **The Proposed Changes**

In November 2018, the Government published a [Review of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Disclosure in the Criminal Justice System](#), which made a set of recommendations to improve disclosure performance and to address the key challenges of modern disclosure practice. The Review recommended that the Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure required an update in order to truly reflect the challenges of today's disclosure regime.

The Guidelines provide a set of high-level principles on the disclosure of unused material in criminal cases, aimed at assisting investigators, prosecutors and defence practitioners in England and Wales apply the disclosure regime contained in the CPIA Code of Practice.

The changes seek to provide a better representation of the challenges the modern-day investigator, prosecutor and defence practitioner faces. The updated Guidelines address the need for culture change, earlier performance of disclosure obligations, the use of technology and balancing the right to privacy with the right to a fair trial.

This is an opportunity to take a crucial step in the disclosure process, both to deal with issues that have been a long-standing concern and to provide practitioners with the tools they need to handle their disclosure obligations effectively.

Following the successful Parliamentary passage of the Statutory Instrument in relation to the Code of Practice, I can now confirm that both the Guidelines and the Code will be effective from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The Lord Chancellor and I thank all of those who have engaged with us during the process and we are grateful for the role that they have

played in recognising the complex challenges that affect the proper performance of the duty of disclosure.

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### ■ Update on the UK Internal Market (UKIM) Bill

**Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully):** [\[HCWS665\]](#)

The UK Internal Market (UKIM) Bill is fundamental to providing a reliable legal basis for the effective and coherent functioning of the UK internal market. It guarantees that businesses and consumers across the UK are not subject to harmful internal trade barriers following our exit from the EU Single Market regime. Legislation of this kind must be in place across the whole UK in order to provide businesses and consumers from all parts of our country with the same legal protections and advantages.

From the outset, it has been the UK Government's objective to legislate for the UK Internal Market Bill with the consent of all the devolved legislatures. At every stage, we have followed the spirit and letter of the devolution settlement and worked hard to secure legislative consent for this vitally important piece of legislation for all of the UK. We have also engaged with businesses, business representative organisations and wider stakeholders, such as academics, across the entire country since the Bill's introduction to better understand expectations, needs and concerns. The UK Government regrets the Scottish Government's decision to withdraw from UK-wide work on the internal market in Spring 2019.

The engagement with the Welsh Government, in particular, has resulted in tangible changes to the Bill to accommodate concerns as well as strengthen devolved involvement within the machinery of the legislation; this includes putting the relationship between the Market Access Principles and Common Frameworks on the face of the Bill as well as ensuring that the Secretary of State is obliged to seek the consent of the Devolved Administrations when panel appointments are made to the Office of the Internal Market (OIM). We have also agreed to have an annual meeting to review the operation of Parts 1-4 of the UK Internal Market legislation with the Devolved Administrations, including the Office for the Internal Market's reports and new developments that might require the use of delegated powers, using our intergovernmental structures.

The UK Government does however deeply regret that the Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru have both refused to provide their consent for the Bill. We have maintained, throughout the Bill's passage, that the Government is open to discussing the concerns of each Devolved Administration, and would make changes to the Bill where it is possible, without undermining the necessary purpose and integrity of the legislation. Proceeding with the Bill to Royal Assent is necessary to put the legal structures in place which provide clarity and consistency for businesses and citizens working across the country.

The Sewel Convention envisages situations where the UK Parliament may need to legislate for the whole country in this way. The exceptional circumstances of our departure from the EU, and the need to provide a UK-wide legal underpinning for the internal market, is clearly one such situation. This Government is fully committed to the Sewel Convention and the associated practices for seeking consent. Indeed, in the current legislative session of Parliament alone, the UK Government has secured (to date) 37 LCMs from the devolved legislatures; this is in addition to the hundreds of other LCMs passed by the devolved legislatures over the last 21 years of devolution. We will, of course, continue to seek legislative consent, take on board views, and work with the Devolved Administrations on all future Bills that engage the legislative consent process, just as we have always done.

The UK Internal Market Bill will allow people to do business reliably and seamlessly across all parts of the UK and enable the UK Government to boost our economic recovery, increase investment across the whole UK, create new jobs and be stronger as a country as we emerge from this pandemic. The UK Government stands as the conservator of this great Union - the most successful political and economic Union in history - as a force for bettering peoples' lives, with devolution delivering clear benefits for all UK citizens. The UK Internal Market Bill will help to ensure that England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland remain more prosperous, stronger and safer together.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office**

**(Michael Gove):**

[\[HCWS683\]](#)

The Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee met today, 17 December, by video conference.

The meeting was co-chaired by the UK Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, and European Commission Vice President, Maroš Šefčovič, and attended by alternate Joint Committee co-chairs, the First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, and Member State representatives.

The Committee undertook a review of Specialised Committee activity and Withdrawal Agreement implementation throughout the transition period. The Committee agreed to publish the second citizens' rights Specialised Committee Joint Report on Residency and to finalise the list of arbitrators before the end of the transition period. The Joint Committee also adopted the following five Decisions:

#### *Citizens' rights*

1. Triangulation of social security coordination between the UK, EU, European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) States;

#### *The Northern Ireland Protocol*

1. Agricultural subsidies;

2. Determination of goods not at risk;
3. Errors and omissions in the Withdrawal Agreement;
4. Arrangements under Article 12(2) of the Protocol.

Both the UK and EU made five unilateral declarations relating to the Northern Ireland Protocol:

1. Export declarations;
2. Meat products;
3. Official certification;
4. Human and veterinary medicines; and
5. Article 10(1) of the Protocol.

The Decisions adopted at this meeting demonstrate the UK's and the EU's commitment to the implementation of the Protocol in full so the people of Northern Ireland can have the fundamental legal assurances they need. Both the UK and the EU reiterated their commitment to upholding obligations under the Withdrawal Agreement and protecting the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all respects.

The UK and the EU emphasised their commitment to EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU, and to ensuring their rights under the Withdrawal Agreement are protected. The Committee agreed to extend Withdrawal Agreement social security coordination between the UK and EU to European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) States from 1 January 2021.

The UK and the EU took the opportunity provided by this meeting to underline its commitment to continued constructive engagement through the Joint Committee processes after the end of the transition period.

Separately, the UK has confirmed that it will provide additional funding of over £200 million to the PEACE PLUS programme up to 2027, on top of the £300 million already committed, recognising its important contribution to the promotion of peace and reconciliation, and to cross-border economic and territorial development of Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland.

## ■ State of the Estate in 2019-20

**Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez):**

**[[HCWS669](#)]**

I have today laid before Parliament, pursuant to Section 86 of the Climate Change Act 2008, the "State of the Estate in 2019-20". This report describes the efficiency and sustainability of the Government's Civil Estate and records the progress that Government has made since the previous year. The report is published on an annual basis.

### **Attachments:**

1. State of the Estate in 2019-20 [(Unnumbered Act Paper) - State of the Estate in 2019-20.pdf]
2. State of the Estate in 2019-20, Large Print [(Unnumbered Act Paper) - State of the Estate in 2019-20, Large Print.pdf]

## ■ The 2025 UK Border Strategy

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office  
(Michael Gove):**

[\[HCWS668\]](#)

Today, the Government will publish the 2025 UK Border Strategy. As we reach the end of the transition period, we have a unique opportunity to redesign our border for the benefit of the UK. The 2025 UK Border Strategy sets out how we will do this in partnership across the nations of the UK, the border industry and users of the border.

The 2025 UK Border Strategy sets out the transformations we will make to the border to create the most effective border in the world, harnessing the power of technology and data to revolutionise how the border operates. Implementing these transformations will make it easier for UK businesses to export and import while improving our ability to keep the UK safe and secure.

The strategy has been developed using the wealth of evidence and insight we received from stakeholders across the UK through the consultation we ran over the summer. The Target Operating Model for the border which the strategy sets out will help businesses understand the longer term ambitions for the UK's border, and plan and invest accordingly.

The 2025 UK Border Strategy has today been laid as a Command Paper.

**Attachments:**

1. The 2025 UK Border Strategy [(CP352) The 2025 UK Border Strategy.pdf]
2. The 2025 UK Border Strategy, Large print [(CP352) The 2025 UK Border Strategy, Large Print.pdf]

## DEFENCE

## ■ Future Nuclear Deterrent Annual Update 2020

**Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**

[\[HCWS671\]](#)

On 18 May 2011, the then Secretary of State for Defence, the Right Hon. Member for North Somerset (Dr. Liam Fox) made an oral statement to the House (Official Report column 351) announcing the approval of the Initial Gate investment stage for the procurement of the successor to the VANGUARD Class ballistic missile submarines. He also placed in the Library of the House a report "The United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Submarine Initial Gate Parliamentary Report".

As confirmed in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, this Government has committed to publishing an annual report on the programme. I am today publishing the ninth report, "The United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: 2020 Update to Parliament".

A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Attachments:**

1. Future Nuclear Deterrent Annual Update 2020 [2020 Nuclear Deterrent Update to Parliament.docx]



## EDUCATION

### ■ Education Updates

#### **The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

[\[HCWS684\]](#)

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.

Since the start of the academic year, the continuing efforts of leaders, teachers and staff across education and childcare has ensured that settings remain as safe and COVID-19 secure as possible. That remains the case but the return at the start of January 2021 will take place in exceptional circumstances, when winter risks are acute and at a critical point in national efforts to control the virus.

We announced on 15th December 2020 that we will be deploying the latest rapid-result coronavirus tests to schools and colleges from January to enable weekly screening for the workforce and daily testing for the workforce and students who are a close contact of a positive case. This will help us to find those with the virus and isolate them quickly. It will also help us reduce the need for self-isolation of close contacts of positive cases, keeping staff and students in education and childcare. We will continue to work closely with schools, colleges, Directors of Public Health and Directors of Children's Services to implement this plan.

Today we can announce that we will be offering all secondary schools (including all-through schools and middle deemed secondary schools), colleges, special schools and Alternative Provision settings the help, support and supplies to test as many secondary-age and FE students as possible as they resume education in January. We have prioritised these settings because they have seen more disruption so far, associated with older children and young adults having had higher rates of COVID-19. This will help identify asymptomatic cases – which make up a third of all cases – limiting the spread of the virus and we strongly encourage all schools and colleges to participate. In middle deemed secondary schools, testing would be for Year 7 and 8 pupils.

Already, the implementation of safety measures and the system of controls in place in education settings creates an inherently safer environment for children, young people and staff, in which PHE and DHSC have confirmed the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. Given the exceptional public health circumstances, when settings return in week commencing week beginning 4th January, testing will help to identify asymptomatic cases more quickly. This will avoid individuals carrying the infection unknowingly and potentially spreading it in the local community.

For the week commencing 4th January, secondary schools (including middle/all-through schools, special schools and alternative provision) and colleges will only offer on-site provision for vulnerable children and young people, children of critical workers, those studying for or taking exams this academic year. They will provide remote education to all other pupils, before a full return to school and college from 11th January. The groups

attending school and college from 4th January will be prioritised for testing, alongside the school workforce. Schools that wish to can use an extra INSET day on 4th January to prepare to deliver the testing. Early years settings and primary schools will be open as normal in week commencing 4th January

Testing will not be mandated and all students will be expected to attend school or college from 11th January regardless of whether a test has been undertaken (unless they are self-isolating because they have tested positive for coronavirus, have symptoms or have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace).

To deliver testing at this speed and scale Armed forces personnel will support directly through planning with schools and colleges, in every local area. The remaining testing workforce will be made up of volunteers and agency staff and reasonable costs will be reimbursed. Schools and colleges that opt in will need to provide a few members of staff to support the testing programme.

Testing, along with existing infection prevention and control measures such as ventilation, increased hygiene, and wearing of face coverings in communal areas of secondary schools where appropriate, can limit the number of children and young people missing out on face-to-face education because they have to isolate.

We realise that this year has been incredibly difficult for staff, students, pupils and parents. I want to thank all involved in education and childcare for their tireless dedication. The hard work of our education workforce has already substantially reduced the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within education settings and we will now use this new testing approach to ensure to reduce the risk of local community transmission in this age group and ensure more young people are able to remain in education, benefitting from the national priority of keeping education open for all.

This policy will be kept under review in light of scientific evidence, and the government will provide further advice if necessary.

Today I am also glad to confirm school and early years revenue funding allocations for 2021-22. This announcement covers the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the pupil premium and the free school meal supplementary grant. The DSG distributes the second year of the multi-billion school funding settlement that I announced to Parliament on 3rd September 2019. Compared to 2019-20, core school funding is increasing by £2.6 billion for 2020-21, £4.8 billion for 2021-22, and £7.1 billion for 2022-23. In addition, we continue to fund increases in teacher pay and pension costs from 2018 and 2019, worth £2 billion in 2021-22.

The distribution of the DSG to local authorities is set out in four funding blocks for each authority: a schools block, a high needs block, an early years block, and a central school services block. In July 2020, the Minister of State for School Standards informed Parliament of the publication of primary and secondary units of funding for the schools' block, and the provisional allocations for the high needs block and central school services block. In the DSG, these have now been updated with the latest pupil numbers to show how much each local authority will receive in 2021-22.

In the schools' block, funding in 2021-22 is increasing by over 3% per pupil, or 3.5% overall, compared to this year. In the high needs block, funding to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is increasing by 10%.

I am also confirming the final hourly funding rates for the free early education entitlements in 2021-22. As a result of the £44 million investment in 2021-22 announced by the Chancellor in the Spending Review, we will increase the hourly funding rates for all local authorities for the two year old entitlement by 8 pence an hour. Funding for the three and four year old entitlement will increase by 6 pence an hour in the vast majority of areas. We are increasing the minimum funding floor for the three and four year old offer to £4.44 per hour.

Twelve local authorities have had their 2020-21 hourly funding rates for 3 and 4 year olds protected by the "loss cap" in the Early Years National Funding Formula, to ensure that they do not face large drops to their funding rate. Funding for ten of these local authorities will be maintained in 2021-22 and two will see an increase to their hourly rate as they come off the loss cap in 2021-22.

I can also confirm that supplementary funding for Maintained Nursery Schools will continue for the whole of the 2021-22 financial year and, the government's commitment to the long-term funding of maintained nursery schools is unchanged.

Today, I am also announcing that the Pupil Premium will continue in 2021-22 with the same per pupil funding rates as in 2020-21. We will use the October 2020 census to calculate individual school-level allocations. This will ensure that this targeted investment can continue to support the most disadvantaged children in our schools.

Finally, I am also confirming that the free school meal supplementary grant, which was due to end in 2019-20, will be extended for one additional year, to 2020-21.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Covid-19 Update

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):** [\[HCWS677\]](#)

Local action is vital to our strategy of suppressing the virus, while protecting the economy, education and the NHS, until a vaccine can make us safe. Help is on its way thanks to the rollout of a safe and effective vaccine, but we are not there yet.

While we have moved to a localised approach through the tiers system, we have been clear that these must be tough, recognising that case rates are rising in many areas of the country, and our knowledge that the winter months are the most challenging for our NHS.

We have assessed each area individually, and as Monday's decisions on Essex and today's decisions on Waverley and parts of Hampshire show, we are prepared to move at a more localised level where the data and human geographies permit.

As set out in the COVID-19 Winter Plan, there are five indicators which guide our decisions for any given area, alongside consideration of 'human geographies' like travel patterns.

These are:

- Case detection rates in all age groups
- Case detection rates in the over 60s
- The rate at which cases are rising or falling
- Positivity rate (the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken)
- Pressure on the NHS.

While each metric is important in its own right, the interplay between each indicator for a given area is equally important, so a hard and fast numerical threshold on each metric is not appropriate.

These are not easy decisions, but they have been made according to the best clinical advice, and the best possible data from the JBC.

The regulations will require the Government to review the allocations at least every 14 days. We will also take urgent action when the data suggests it is required, as we did on Monday.

The first formal review took place yesterday, and the allocations and a detailed rationale is attached.

I will also deposit the data packs used to inform these decisions in the libraries of both Houses.

These changes will be implemented from 00:01 on 19 December. This list will also be published on GOV.UK and a postcode checker will be available for the public to check what rules apply in their local area.

**Attachments:**

1. 16 December Tier Review [16 December Tier Review.docx]

■ **DHSC Contingencies Fund Advance**

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):** [\[HCWS666\]](#)

The Department of Health and Social Care has sought a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund of £34,000,000,000

The Department of Health and Social Care's Net Cash Requirement cash limit has been used in full between April 2020 and December 2020 to support the running costs of the department, NHS and Arm's Length Bodies, including expenditure on the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Department of Health and Social care will seek a significant increase to its voted funding at Supplementary Supply Estimate to cover the increased costs of the Covid-19

pandemic and this will be used to repay the advance after the Supply and Appropriation Act has received Royal Assent in March 2020.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £33,350,000,000 and additional capital of £650,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department of Health and Social Care. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £34,000,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

## ■ **Update on Reciprocal Healthcare Arrangements**

**Minister of State for Health (Edward Argar):**

[\[HCWS670\]](#)

Today I am notifying the House about arrangements the Government has made to support people who require ongoing, routine healthcare treatment in order to be able to travel to the European Economic Area or Switzerland after the end of the Transition Period, should there be no further negotiated outcome with the EU. These arrangements would commence from 1 January 2021.

Current reciprocal healthcare arrangements enable large numbers of UK-insured individuals to access healthcare when they live, study, work or travel in the European Economic Area or Switzerland, and visa-versa when European Economic Area or Switzerland-insured individuals come to the UK. Although some people are covered under the Withdrawal Agreement, for everyone else these arrangements will come to an end on 31 December 2020.

Negotiations on future arrangements with the EU are ongoing and include necessary healthcare provisions. If agreed, such provisions would provide effectively the same healthcare cover as the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The Government continues to work hard to secure these arrangements.

In the event we have not reached an EU-wide agreement on reciprocal healthcare, the Government will implement a time-limited healthcare scheme that supports UK residents with ongoing, routine treatment needs, who are visiting the European Economic Area or Switzerland from 1 January 2021. This type of treatment was previously covered under the EHIC scheme.

This Government will introduce the scheme with the intention that it is used by individuals who are certain to require treatment while abroad, such as regular dialysis, oxygen therapy or certain types of chemotherapy. The Government recognises that these ongoing, routine treatment costs can be expensive, and makes travelling abroad extremely challenging for many people.

The scheme will be temporary and will cover travel that takes place between 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021. People applying for the scheme must be ordinarily resident in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and entitled to the treatment on the NHS. Individuals will need to work with their NHS clinician to agree their treatment requirements and confirm they meet the criteria in the scheme.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) will deliver this scheme for the whole of the UK. NHSBSA is an Arm's Length Body of the Department of Health and Social Care.

It provides a range of critical central services to NHS organisations, NHS contractors, patients and the public.

The exception to the new scheme is travel to Ireland as the UK and Irish governments are committed that UK and Irish residents should continue have access to necessary healthcare when visiting the other country.

The Government will assess its options for reciprocal healthcare if we do not achieve an EU wide arrangement. This includes the possibility of negotiating bilateral arrangements on social security coordination, including reciprocal healthcare, with individual EU member states.

The Department of Health and Social Care will publish further guidance on the scheme, its criteria and application process shortly.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ **Provisional Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2021/22**

**The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse):**

**[[HCWS663](#)]**

My rt hon Friend the Home Secretary has today published the Provisional Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2021/22. The Report sets out the Home Secretary's determination for 2021/22 of the aggregate amount of grants that she proposes to pay under section 46(2) of the Police Act 1996. A copy of the Report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Today the Government is setting out the provisional police funding settlement for 2021/22. Overall funding for the policing system will total up to £15.8 billion, a £636 million increase on the 2020/21 funding settlement. Within this, available funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will increase next year by up to an additional £703 million, assuming full take-up of precept flexibility. This would represent an increase to PCC funding in cash terms of 5.4% on top of the 2020/21 police funding settlement.

#### *Recruitment*

The additional funding for PCCs includes an increase of £415 million to government grants for the recruitment of a further 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2022, the second year of the Police Uplift Programme (PUP). This increased investment for year 2 will allow PCCs and their forces to continue building on the excellent progress made so far in year 1 of the PUP, where, so far, 5,824 of the year 1 target of 6,000 officers have been recruited.

We are expanding the scope of the Police Uplift Programme for year 2 to bolster capability in Serious and Organised Crime Units across forces and Counter-Terrorism policing. Strengthening policing's presence in the organised crime units will help us meet our manifesto promise to counter the growth of serious and organised crime, including fraud, county lines, child abuse and cyber-crime. The uplift in counter-terrorism policing will ensure they have the resources needed to maintain capacity against a changing and



increasingly complex threat picture. Recruitment allocations for year 2 of the programme are set out in the tables attached to this statement.

To ensure that progress in recruitment is maintained, and to track the use of this investment efficiently, the Government will continue to ringfence £100 million of the additional funding. PCCs will be allocated their share of ringfenced funding in line with their funding formula allocation, and will be able to access the funding as they progress against their recruitment targets. Further information will be set out as part of the grant agreements for 2021/22. Each PCC will be awarded a local (territorial policing) officer recruitment target as in year 1, and for year 2 will also be provided a Regional and Organised Crime Unit officer target, also in line with their funding formula allocation. The ROCU uplift will be funded through PCCs using the same mechanism. As ROCU functions require more experienced officers, forces will release existing officers to ROCUs and replace them with the additional officers recruited via the PUP to ensure overall workforce growth.

Funding for the recruitment of officers in counter-terrorism policing will be paid to forces through dedicated counter-terrorism policing grants.

#### *Precept*

As set out as part of the Spending Review 2020, PCCs will also be able to raise further funding through precept flexibility, subject to confirmation at the final Local Government Finance Settlement. PCCs will be empowered to increase their Band D precept by up to £15 in 2021/22, without the need to call a local referendum. If all PCCs decide to maximise their flexibility, this would result in up to an additional £288 million of funding for local policing next year. It is for locally accountable PCCs to take decisions on local precept.

In addition to this, PCCs will receive a portion of the £670 million of additional grant funding announced for local council tax support as part of the Spending Review 2020. This funding will help local authorities to continue reducing council tax bills for those least able to pay, including households financially hard-hit by the pandemic. Further details on the proposed allocation methodology has been announced as part of the policy paper on Covid-19 support in 2021/22.

#### *Capital funding*

This settlement will provide PCCs with £12.3 million funding for capital expenditure. £52.3 million capital funding will be spent on national priorities and infrastructure including police technology programmes, the College of Policing and Serious Organised Crime programmes.

#### *Counter-terrorism policing*

It is important that we ensure counter-terrorism policing has the resources needed to deal with the threat we face. That is why funding for CT policing will total up to £914 million in 2021/22. This continued investment in CT policing will support record high numbers of ongoing counter-terrorism policing investigations and enable the UK to respond more



quickly and effectively to keep the country safe from a range of threats, wherever they take place.

In addition, CT policing will receive £32 million for a new CT Operations Centre. The new CT Operations Centre will co-locate partners from across law enforcement, the UK intelligence community and criminal justice system to improve the way in which we respond to a range of threats, including terrorism, and some elements of hostile state activity and organised crime.

PCCs will be notified separately of force-level funding allocations for CT policing, which will not be made public for security reasons.

#### *National priorities*

The Home Office will continue to invest in law enforcement through funding for national policing priorities.

This settlement of £1.1 billion in 2021/22 for national policing programmes and priorities builds on the government's commitment to reduce serious violence and crime and clamp down on county lines. This will allow us to 'surge' the police's response to violent crime where it is most prevalent, expand police capacity to tackle online drivers of violence and build stronger evidence on how to prevent homicides. We are continuing to invest in violence against women and girls, and the scourge of domestic abuse.

Tackling serious and organised crime and delivering our manifesto commitment to strengthen the National Crime Agency (NCA) is also a critical part of the Government's wider crime reduction agenda. As criminal networks become increasingly adaptable and resilient, we need to ensure that the funding is available to support the police in disrupting organised criminal activity. To this end, this settlement will protect funding for the NCA to target drug trafficking, child sexual exploitation and abuse, economic crime and organised immigration crime. ROCUs, which are an essential part of this approach, will also see their officer numbers boosted as part of the PUP. This will unlock the outcomes we all want to see for the country – more of the highest harm criminal enterprises disrupted and dismantled, more disruptions and convictions of high harm organised criminals, reducing the cost of serious crime to our economy, and increasing confidence in the UK's financial system.

#### *Transformation and reform*

The Government will continue to support the completion of national transformation policing programmes delivering enhanced national capabilities across policing. This will include: continuing delivery of the Single Online Home digital platform to forces and providing better engagement between the police and the public; completing the roll out of the National Enablers Programme to ensure all forces have the enabling tools that support collaboration and agile ways of working in response to Covid-19 and access to cyber-security capabilities to increase resilience; helping forces to deliver a fully accredited, more integrated and sustainable forensic service; maintaining investment in forensics, including digital forensics, to build capability across policing and for new officers; and further development of the National Data Analytics Solution to support

preventative policing interventions and the formation of the new National Crime and Justice Lab through the use of data analytics to identify perpetrators and protect the vulnerable to effectively reduce crime. We are also increasing funding for the National Police Chiefs Council to boost co-ordination of, and response to, national issues and providing strong central support so Chief Constables can focus on fighting crime.

I have established and chair the Strategic Change and Investment Board (SCIB), which forms part of the sub-governance of the National Policing Board. The SCIB will oversee all national law enforcement programmes; it will coordinate, prioritise and drive investment in and delivery of national capabilities across the policing system to ensure they support Government priorities around crime prevention and reduction. The SCIB will also oversee the investment in major technology programmes and, through the newly established Digital and Technology sub-board, it will support delivery of complex technology programmes and prioritise policing's future investment requirements.

#### *Outcomes and efficiency*

The Government expects the police to continue to build on the progress made on improving efficiency and productivity in return for the significant increase in investment. As such, the Government expects to see:

1. 6,000 further officers – on top of the first tranche of 6,000 to be recruited in 2020/21 – recruited by the end of March 2022. The Government will ringfence £100m of the funding for the uplift, which will be paid to forces in line with their progress in recruitment.
1. £120m of efficiency savings from across the law enforcement sector – which are reflected in the funding set out as part of the settlement – delivered in 2021/22. We expect these to be delivered through a combination of improved procurement practices (including the delivery of £20m of savings through BlueLight Commercial) as well as savings in areas such as estates, agile working and shared/enabling services. We expect the policing sector to work with the Home Office in setting up and supporting a new Efficiency in Policing Board. The Board will improve the evidence base on efficiencies delivered to date, identify opportunities for gains over this and future SR periods, share best practice in relation to the delivery of efficiencies, and monitor and support delivery of gains.
1. Policing needs to ensure that high quality data is collected and utilised effectively to support local delivery, identify efficiencies and support the National Policing Board's drive to deliver the best possible policing outcomes for the public. The Home Office & National Police Chiefs' Council will bring together in one document their strategies, plans and initiatives for improving data collection and use across the sector and with key delivery partners such as criminal justice agencies.

This settlement sets out the Government's continued commitment to supporting and investing in our police. I am extremely pleased with the progress forces have made on recruitment, and we are firmly on track to meet the first-year target. This year has once again highlighted the police's exceptional bravery and commitment to public service. Sector leaders, frontline officers and staff have responded with speed and flexibility to the

unprecedented challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, forces have re-designed their working practices, adapted to implement new and evolving Covid-19 regulations and collaborated to ensure all personnel have had the necessary equipment and support to do their jobs safely. Officers and staff have worked tirelessly with the public to build understanding of the rules intended to control this deadly virus, all the while continuing to tackle crime and disorder in our communities. This is policing at its best, and I would like to express my immense gratitude for these continued exemplary efforts.

I have set out in a separate document, attached, the tables illustrating how we propose to allocate the police funding settlement between the different funding streams and between Police and Crime Commissioners for 2021/22. These documents are intended to be read together.

**Attachments:**

1. Tables [Police Funding Settlement (Written Statement) TABLES.pdf]

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Building Safety Update

**Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS685\]](#)

I have today announced the next set of measures as part of our ongoing support to the thousands of leaseholders who have found themselves living in unsafe buildings through no fault of their own.

These measures support our unwavering commitment to improve the safety of buildings across the country which will be enshrined in law next year through the Building Safety Bill.

#### **£30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund**

Research undertaken and published by my Department has illustrated clearly the excessive costs some leaseholders are facing to fund interim safety measures such as waking watches. Such excessive costs are a national scandal and it is right that we step in to support leaseholders in this position.

That is why today I have announced a new £30 million fund for leaseholders in England to pay for the installation of fire alarm systems in high-rise buildings with cladding, removing or reducing the need for costly interim safety measures such as waking watch. Our research suggests this will save individual leaseholders an average of £137 per month and collectively over £3 million per month.

This step is supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council who have been clear in their updated October guidance that building owners should move to install common fire alarms as quickly as possible to reduce or remove dependence on waking watch.

The fund will open in January, but importantly, will also provide immediate, emergency support to Wicker Riverside Apartments in Sheffield to ensure that the 35 evacuated families should be able to return to their homes before Christmas. They were told to evacuate after the building failed fire safety tests.

This intervention will help worried leaseholders by providing financial support and delivering a better, long term fire safety system in their buildings.

### **Building safety fund**

In May we launched the £1 billion Building Safety Fund to accelerate the removal of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings, taking Government's total funding for cladding remediation to £1.6 billion.

Demand for this fund has been significant, receiving over 2,700 registrations since opening. My Department has been working at pace and with building owners to process these registrations and ensure that as many buildings as possible can access the fund – a task that has been made challenging by the failure of many buildings to provide basic eligibility information.

It has become clear that many building owners will be unable to complete applications by our intended deadline of 31 December 2020, adding to the concerns of many leaseholders. To address this I have announced that building owners will now have until 30 June 2021 to complete their applications.

This means hundreds more buildings will be remediated and thousands of residents will be protected from costs. We are also making good progress on applications already received and expect many more to be agreed before Christmas.

### **ACM cladding remediation**

Today we have also published the latest data setting out our progress in removing the most dangerous 'Grenfell type' ACM cladding.

We have continued to prioritise this vital safety work throughout the pandemic seeing a 50% increase in buildings where workers have started on site this year compared to December 2019 and an increase of 58% in fully remediated buildings. This work is particularly challenging due to the complex construction issues affecting many buildings which must be overcome to ensure they are remediated safely.

Final figures for the year will be published in January and we expect this to show that around 95% of high-rise buildings with ACM cladding identified last year will have started remediation works by the end of 2020. This is significant progress that we will continue to drive forward to meet our commitment that these buildings should be fully remediated by 2022.

### **Ongoing work to support leaseholders**

Today's measures are another important step in our ongoing work to support leaseholders and builds on progress we have already made. This includes securing agreement that owners of flats in buildings without cladding do not need an EWS1 form to

sell or re-mortgage their property – benefitting nearly 450,000 homeowners. Real progress has been made in an incredibly challenging and complex area.

We have been clear that the building industry must contribute towards the costs of making homes safe and set right decades of unsafe practices. Work continues at pace to develop further financial solutions to protect leaseholders. I look forward to announcing further details in the New Year.

## ■ Local government update

**Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS681\]](#)

It is a matter of public record that Merseyside Police have for many months been conducting an investigation which has resulted in a number of arrests made on suspicion of fraud, bribery, corruption and misconduct in public office, both in December 2019 and in September 2020. Further arrests were made on 4 December 2020 in connection with offences of bribery and witness intimidation. This investigation involves a significant connection to Liverpool City Council.

This raises significant concerns as to whether the authority is currently complying with its best value duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Having carefully considered the evidence available to me, including information provided by the city council in response to requests from my department, it is clear that the council has taken significant steps to improve governance and assurances processes within the council, with respect to the authority's planning, highways, regeneration and property management functions. However, given the seriousness of the issues identified through the police investigation, and to support the council to continue to strengthen its governance, and deliver services for the people of the city, I would like to direct, independent assurance that the council is compliant with its Best Value Duty. I have therefore today decided to exercise the powers granted to me by Parliament under the Local Government Act 1999 to appoint Max Caller CBE to carry out an inspection of the authority's compliance with its best value duty. The matters to be covered by the inspection will be the authority's planning, highways, regeneration and property management functions and the strength of associated audit and governance arrangements.

I have asked Max Caller CBE to report findings to me by 31 March 2021, or such later date as he agrees with me.

I hope Honourable Members will appreciate that we cannot be drawn into more detail while investigations are ongoing. Once the inspection is complete, I will carefully consider the inspection report. If it shows that the authority is in breach of its best value duty, I will then consider whether or not to exercise my powers of intervention under section 15 of the 1999 Act.

At this challenging time with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is critical that Liverpool City Council continues to deliver public services and carry out its other statutory duties as effectively as possible, and I thank those working in the council for all they have done to

date. My department is committed to providing the local authority with whatever support it may need to address these issues. Honourable Members and the people of Liverpool can be assured that the government will do all we can to support the city of Liverpool.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Government response to independent review of terrorist supervision

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):**  
[\[HCWS686\]](#)

In November last year, Usman Khan, a convicted terrorist being supervised in the community on licence and managed under the statutory Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), attacked and killed Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones at Fishmongers' Hall, London Bridge. This was a terrible atrocity that understandably aroused significant public concern, and as part of our response to it, my Right Honourable Friend the Home Secretary and I commissioned a review in to the effectiveness of MAPPA in the management of terrorist and other extremist offenders. We appointed Jonathan Hall QC, the Government's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, to undertake the review.

In his report, Jonathan Hall found that MAPPA is a well-established process and did not conclude that wholesale change is necessary. However, he made important recommendations to enhance the statutory agencies' capabilities in managing terrorist offenders under MAPPA. We published his report on 2 September and indicated that we would in due course provide him with a formal response to his recommendations. I can tell the House that the Home Secretary and I have today written to Jonathan Hall, setting out how we are implementing the key changes which he recommended.

I have placed a copy of our letter in the Library of the House.

The Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill is introducing a number of changes which Jonathan Hall subsequently recommended, including giving judges the power to define crimes as terror-related, even if not terror offences as set out in law, and requiring high-risk terrorist offenders to undergo polygraph tests while on licence. We will legislate next year to introduce further powers for the police and probation service in line with Jonathan Hall's recommendations.

The creation of a new National Security Division in the National Probation Service will mean there are twice as many probation staff dedicated to the supervision of terrorism-risk offenders and strengthen its work with police, prisons and the security services.

Keeping our communities safe is the Government's first priority and we have made considerable investment in counter-terrorism. Our security services, police, prison and probation officers epitomise public duty and we hope that these new powers and ways of working will help them to further improve the tremendous, challenging work they do.

Recent atrocities in France and Austria have shown us that continued vigilance is needed to protect the United Kingdom from the scourge of terrorism and extremism. We believe



that implementing agreed recommendations from Jonathan's report will, alongside improvements already in progress by Counter Terrorism Police and the National Probation Service, strengthen the supervision of these dangerous offenders and give the statutory agencies the tools which they need to defeat those who threaten us and our way of life.

## ■ **Judicial Conduct Investigations Office Annual Report 2019–2020**

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):**

**[[HCWS682](#)]**

With the concurrence of the Lord Chief Justice, I will today publish the fourteenth annual report of the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office (JCIO).

The JCIO supports the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor in our joint statutory responsibility for judicial discipline.

The judiciary comprises approximately 22,000 individuals serving across a range of jurisdictions. Over the past year, the JCIO received 1,292 complaints against judicial office holders. 42 investigations resulted in disciplinary action.

I have placed copies of the report into the libraries of both Houses, the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office. Copies are also available online at:

<https://judicialconduct.judiciary.gov.uk/reports-publications/>

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ **Machinery of Government Change**

**Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):**

**[[HCWS667](#)]**

The sponsorship and secretariat of the Social Mobility Commission will move to Cabinet Office to be part of the new Equality Hub. This machinery of government change will put the Commission's work at the heart of Government and ensure our commitment to levelling up and equality of opportunity is the responsibility of all departments. This change is also in line with the recommendation from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. The change will take effect on 1 April 2021.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ **Contingencies Fund Advance**

**Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

**[[HCWS664](#)]**

I hereby give notice of the Department for Transport having drawn advances from the Contingencies Fund totalling £5,808,000,000 to enable expenditure on COVID-19 support packages to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act. The schemes include:

Emergency Measures Agreements and Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements with the Train Operating Companies; the COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant; safeguarding critical ferry freight routes; and supporting regional transport networks such as Transport for London and light rail networks.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £4,574,000,000 and additional capital of £1,234,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Transport. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £5,808,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent of the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Bill.

## TREASURY

### ■ **Bilateral loan to Ireland under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010**

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):**

[\[HCWS673\]](#)

I would like to update Parliament on the loan to Ireland.

In December 2010, the UK agreed to provide a bilateral loan of £3.2 billion as part of a €67.5 billion international assistance package for Ireland. The loan was disbursed in 8 tranches. The final tranche was drawn down on 26 September 2013. Ireland has made interest payments on the loan every six months since the first disbursement.

On 7 December, in line with the agreed repayment schedule, HM Treasury received a total payment of £407,852,313.75 from Ireland. This comprises the repayment of £403,370,000 in principal and £4,482,313.75 in accrued interest.

In October, as required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010, HM Treasury provided the latest Statutory Report to Parliament covering the period from 1 April to 30 September 2020. The Report set out details of future payments up to the final repayment on 26 March 2021. The government continues to expect the loan to be repaid in full and on time. The next Statutory Report will cover the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021. HM Treasury will report fully on all repayments received during this period in the Report.

### ■ **Contingencies Fund advance**

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):**

[\[HCWS674\]](#)

HM Treasury and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury have agreed additional Resource DEL funding of £40,500,000 for National Savings and Investments to respond to Covid-19 issues, build greater operational resilience and prepare for a major retendering event.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £40,500,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for National Savings and Investments. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £40,500,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.



## ■ Economy Update

**Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):**

**[\[HCWS680\]](#)**

Covid-19 is the biggest threat this country has faced in decades and, throughout the first and now second waves of the virus, the government has sought to protect peoples' jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK with over £280 billion of support spent so far. The vaccine deployment is a milestone in the recovery from the pandemic and the eventual return to normal life. While vaccination of the most vulnerable people has begun, it will take some time for the vaccine to be rolled out to the wider population. During this time, the government remains committed to supporting people and businesses and providing them with the certainty they need.

In my previous statement to the house on 5 November 2020, I said we would review the scheme in January 2021. However, to provide certainty to businesses so that they can plan for the remainder of the winter and the New Year, we have undertaken this review earlier. As the CJRS is already UK-wide, these changes will continue to apply to all Devolved Administrations.

Following my last update in November, I can announce today that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) will be extended by another month, until the end of April 2021 with employees continuing to receive 80 per cent of their current salary for hours not worked. Employers will be required to pay wages, National Insurance Contributions (NICS) and pensions for hours worked; and NICS and pensions only for hours not worked. The eligibility criteria for the scheme will remain unchanged as I have previously set out.

The Government-guaranteed Covid-19 business loan schemes – the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) have been open since the Spring. As of 13 December, over 1.5 million businesses have been supported with facilities worth more than £68 billion.

To support UK businesses through continuing economic disruption, the government has decided to extend the closing date to new applications for CBILS, CLBILS and BBLs. The schemes, currently due to close on 31 January 2021, will now be open to applications until the end of March. Together, the schemes provide vital support across all sectors of the UK economy for businesses who have been impacted by coronavirus. The loans can be used to support businesses with any liquidity needs, whether covering costs, additional expenditure or investment. We are extending the schemes now, ahead of Christmas and further into the new year, to provide businesses with continued access to the support they need through any continued disruption in early 2021. The British Business Bank will provide accredited lenders with further guidance in due course.

The government will provide a further update on Covid-19 economic support at Budget, which will be held on 3 March 2021.

## ■ Financial Services Update

### Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS678\]](#)

On 24 November, in a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) (HCWS595), I committed to working with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to lay before Parliament and publish online Dame Elizabeth Gloster's report into the FCA's regulation and supervision of London Capital & Finance plc (LCF) and the FCA's response before the December recess.

This WMS provides an update on the investigation, the FCA's response and the Government's response. Pursuant to Section 82 of the Financial Services Act 2012 the Report into the Independent Investigation, the FCA's response and a statement of reasons for withholding any material have been laid in the House today.

LCF was an FCA authorised firm that primarily offered an unregulated investment product – commonly known as mini-bonds – to retail consumers. It entered administration in January 2019, impacting 11,625 people who invested around £237 million.

The Serious Fraud Office and FCA enforcement have launched an investigation into individuals associated with LCF. The Financial Reporting Council have also launched investigations into the audits of LCF.

I know that this has been a very difficult time for LCF bondholders. For some, this will have formed part of an investment portfolio, but for others, it will have represented a significant portion of their savings.

In May 2019, I directed the FCA to launch an independent investigation into the events relating to the FCA's regulation and supervision of LCF. To lead the investigation, I approved the appointment of Dame Elizabeth Gloster, who has had a distinguished career as a barrister and as a judge, on the High Court and the Court of Appeal.

On 23 November 2020, Dame Elizabeth delivered her report to the FCA. It concludes that the FCA did not effectively supervise and regulate LCF during the relevant period. She makes nine recommendations for the FCA, focusing on how they should improve their internal authorisation and supervision processes. The Government welcomes the FCA's apology to LCF bondholders and their commitment to implement all of Dame Elizabeth's recommendations.

Dame Elizabeth also makes four recommendations for HM Treasury regarding the regulatory regime, which we accept in full.

Firstly, Dame Elizabeth rightly recognises the challenges the FCA faces in regulating almost 60,000 firms and recommends that the Treasury should consider the optimal scope of the FCA's remit. The Government agrees that it needs to consider whether this scope is manageable, but it would be premature to do so before the ongoing FCA Transformation Programme has been delivered. I have discussed this reform programme with the Chair and Chief Executive and I am convinced it is the best means to address the recommendations. I have today exchanged letters with Mr Rathi agreeing that he will provide regular updates on the progress of these vital reforms.

Secondly, with regards to the regulation of mini-bonds, in May 2019 I announced that the Treasury would review the regulation of non-transferable debt securities. The FCA have also banned the promotion of high-risk 'speculative illiquid securities' – including some of the riskiest 'mini-bonds' – to ordinary retail consumers. Building on this work, and in light of Dame Elizabeth's report, the Treasury will launch a consultation in the New Year on the regulation of non-transferable debt securities.

Thirdly, Dame Elizabeth raises concerns about a potential gap in responsibilities between Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the FCA in relation to the Innovative Finance ISA (IF ISA) products.

The FCA is making improvements to its oversight of financial promotions and, with HMRC, the Treasury is urgently looking at the sufficiency of checks on IF ISA managers and the penalties regime. To improve communication and intelligence sharing, the FCA and HMRC are working to update their Memorandum of Understanding, and will set up an ISA Intelligence Working Group. And reflecting the findings in Dame Elizabeth's report, the Treasury will also look at how understanding of the ISA wrapper could be increased so that consumers recognise that, as with any investment, there can be risks as well as possible rewards.

Finally, Dame Elizabeth notes the challenges that increased financial activity online poses for regulation. The FCA already has powers to take a variety of enforcement action against firms that carry out fraudulent activity. Nevertheless, the Treasury will continue to keep the legislative framework under review. As part of this, the Treasury is working with the FCA to consider whether paid for advertising on online platforms should be brought into the scope of the financial promotions regime. The Treasury is also working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that fraudulent online advertising is addressed as a priority harm through its Online Advertising Programme.

It is important to acknowledge again that LCF's failure had a significant impact on the bondholders who have lost their hard-earned savings. There are several ongoing, interlinked processes addressing the reasons for the failure of LCF and seeking to recover bondholders' investments. The three main channels through which bondholders can seek compensation are:

- First, LCF's administrators are pursuing legal action to recover money. This process is ongoing but is not expected to recover bondholders' investments in full, with the current estimate being that recoveries will be as low as 25% of a bondholder's investment.
- Second, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) has carried out extensive investigations to determine if LCF bondholders were eligible for FSCS compensation, and it has since compensated 159 bondholders who transferred out of stocks and shares ISAs to LCF bonds. The FSCS is also continuing to issue decisions to LCF bondholders who may have received misleading advice and will provide an update in the New Year. These activities – arranging transfers and advising on investments – are regulated activities and therefore eligible for compensation. In total, as of the start of December, the FSCS has paid out just

over £50.9 million in compensation to 2,584 LCF bondholders. There is also an ongoing legal process, with a hearing scheduled for January 19, which may further affect eligibility for FSCS coverage.

- Lastly, the FCA will consider claims for compensation from LCF bondholders through their complaints scheme, which is available to bondholders who believe they have suffered financial loss as a result of actions or inactions of the FCA.

The Government recognises that LCF's failure and the loss of investment has had a significant and distressing impact on LCF's bondholders. With any investment there is a risk that, sometimes, investors will lose money. The purpose of regulation is to ensure that investors have the right information to understand their risk. Within this system, even the best regulators, doing everything right, will not be able to, and should not be expected to, ensure a zero-failure regime. And the Government cannot, and should not be expected to, step in to compensate for every failure and every loss.

But it is clear in the case of LCF that there are multiple, complex reasons why people lost money. And the Government recognises that there is likely to be some variation in how much of their investment bondholders are able to recover through these processes.

The Government therefore announces that, taking into consideration the specific and complex set of circumstances surrounding the collapse of LCF, the Treasury will set up a compensation scheme for LCF bondholders. The scheme will assess whether there is a justification for further one-off compensation payments in certain circumstances for some LCF bondholders.

I will provide a further update in the New Year with more detail on the Government's approach.

I would like to reiterate my sympathy for LCF bondholders and my commitment to act on Dame Elizabeth's recommendations, to ensure our regulatory system maintains the trust of the consumers it is there to protect.

## ■ **National Risk Assessment of money laundering and terrorist financing in the UK**

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):**

[\[HCWS672\]](#)

The UK's status as a global financial centre, our openness to trade and investment, and the ease of doing business here are all vital for our prosperity. These remarkable strengths also make us vulnerable to the risk of illicit financial flows from money laundering and terrorist financing. The Government is committed to tackling these risks which undermine our economy and society and enable those who wish us harm to fund their activities.

Today, the Treasury and the Home Office are jointly publishing the UK's third National Risk Assessment of money laundering and terrorist financing (NRA). This assessment updates the findings of the second NRA to take account of new information and developments that have emerged since its publication in 2017. The report has also been laid in Parliament.

The key findings of the 2020 NRA are as follows:

- The traditional high-risk areas of money laundering remain, including financial services, money service businesses (MSBs), and cash. However, new methods continue to emerge within these, as criminals adapt to increased restrictions and exploit vulnerabilities in different sectors and emerging technology.
- The cryptoasset ecosystem has developed and expanded considerably in the last three years, leading to increased risk of money laundering.
- The ability to conceal the beneficial owners make the art market attractive for money laundering, and art market participants have been assessed as posing a high-risk of money laundering.
- Professional services remain attractive to criminals as a means to support laundering the proceeds of crime, through the creation and operation of corporate structures, the investment and transfer funds to disguise their origin, and through lending layers of legitimacy to their operations.
- The UK's terrorist financing threat continues to involve low levels of funds being raised by UK individuals for the purpose of lifestyle spending and low sophistication attacks.

Since 2017, the UK's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regime has undergone review by the Financial Action Task Force. The UK achieved one of the best ratings of any country assessed so far in this round of evaluations, outperforming other states who are at the forefront of tackling money laundering and terrorism financing. However, no country can afford to be complacent, and there remain vulnerabilities that we must work to address.

Since the 2017 NRA, the Government has continued to take action to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. We have built on the success of the economic crime public-private partnership through the inception of the Economic Crime Strategic Board and the publication of the Economic Crime Plan in 2019. We have also created the National Economic Crime Centre, and the Office for Professional Body Anti-Money Laundering Supervision, both of which have helped to further strengthen and coordinate our response to money laundering. The Government is also bringing forward plans to further strengthen corporate transparency through reforms to Companies House and the register of companies.

The UK will look to remain a leader in the global fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, and we will continue to revise and reform our response to economic crime as new risks and methodologies emerge. The publication of the third NRA today is an important step in this fight, as it provides a critical component of continued partnership and prioritisation between government, law enforcement, supervisors and the private sector.

■ **Tax exemptions: Employer-reimbursed coronavirus antigen tests and easement for employer-provided cycles exemption**

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):**

[\[HCWS676\]](#)

***Employer-reimbursed coronavirus antigen tests: Exemption from Income Tax and National Insurance contributions***

On 9 July 2020, the Government agreed to introduce an income tax exemption and National Insurance contributions (NICs) disregard to ensure that Coronavirus antigen testing provided to employees outside the Government's national testing scheme will not attract tax and NICs liabilities.

The Government is now introducing a second income tax exemption and NICs disregard, to ensure that employees who purchase their own coronavirus antigen test and are reimbursed by their employer, will not attract tax and NICs liabilities.

The Government recognises the importance of COVID-19 testing. Currently, regular tests are available through the Government testing programme to a wide range of employees, including NHS workers. If an individual is tested through the Government testing programme, no tax or NICs liability will arise.

Under normal rules, the cash reimbursement of a test by an employer to an employee, would constitute earnings, and the amount reimbursed would be subject to income tax and Class 1 NICs as a result. However, the Government introduced NICs regulations - The Social Security Contributions (Disregarded Payments) (Coronavirus) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1523) on 14 December and will introduce a tax exemption in the next Finance Bill to ensure that no tax and NICs liabilities arise.

These exemptions will ensure that Income Tax and NICs will not be due on employer-reimbursed antigen tests carried out during the current tax year 2020-21.

***Easement for employer-provided cycles exemption***

The tax exemption for the employer provision of cycles and cyclist's safety equipment was introduced to support employers in promoting healthier journeys to work and to encourage green commuting. Many employers offer this in the form of Cycle to Work schemes.

One of the conditions of the exemption is that the cycling equipment provided should be used mainly for qualifying journeys (to or from work or in the course of work).

The Government's COVID-19 restrictions have required many employees to work from home where possible. Therefore, many existing users of the scheme are not travelling to work and may be unable to meet the condition for qualifying journeys. Under the current application of the rules, these individuals would become liable to an income tax Benefit in Kind charge.

However, the Government will introduce a time limited easement to disapply the condition which states that cycles must be used mainly for qualifying journeys. The easement will apply to existing users and will allow those individuals to continue to benefit from the tax exemption without needing to meet the qualifying journeys condition.



The easement will be available to employees who have joined a scheme and have been provided with a cycle or cycling equipment on or before 20 December 2020. The easement will be in place until 5 April 2022, after which the normal rules of the exemption will apply.

Therefore, employees who have joined a scheme and have been provided with a cycle or cycling equipment on or before 20 December 2020, will be permitted to an easement, and will not have to meet the qualifying journeys condition until 5 April 2022. Employees who join a scheme from 21 December 2020 will need to meet all the normal conditions of the exemption.

## ■ Treasury Update

**Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):** [\[HCWS679\]](#)

Today I can inform the House that I have asked the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) to prepare an economic and fiscal forecast for a Budget on 3 March 2021.

## ■ Updating the Special Resolution Regime Code of Practice

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):** [\[HCWS675\]](#)

I have today laid before Parliament an update to the Special Resolution Regime Code of Practice. This update accounts for the transposition of the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive (BRRD) II; changes made to the Special Resolution Regime as a result of onshoring, including removing references to the concept of State aid; and increasing alignment with the Bank of England and HM Treasury Crisis Management Memorandum of Understanding.

The Special Resolution Regime Code of Practice provides industry and the wider public with important guidance on how UK authorities would use the tools provided by the Special Resolution Regime to protect UK financial stability by resolving failing financial institutions in an orderly way.

This version of the Code of Practice reflects the transposition of BRRDII through provisions in the Bank Recovery and Resolution (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/ 1350). These provisions will come into effect on 28 December and update the UK's resolution regime. The approach to transposition has been tailored to suit the UK's resolution regime and the Code of Practice provides further guidance on what this means for firms.

The UK authorities have taken all the action they can to mitigate risks of disruption to cross-border financial services at the end of the Transition Period. As part of this preparation, the Treasury has amended the Code of Practice where EU legislation, including the concept of State aid, was referenced previously.

As set out in the Banking Act 2009, the Code of Practice has been updated in consultation with the Bank of England, the Prudential Regulation Authority, the Financial Conduct Authority and the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

The Treasury has also consulted the Banking Liaison Panel, a group of industry stakeholders who represent the interests of banks, and who have expertise in law relating to the UK's financial system and to insolvency law and practice.

This updated version of the Code of Practice will provide firms with the certainty and clarity they need by setting out how the UK's resolution regime will operate following changes in legislation and as a result of the ending of the Transition Period.

The report has been published on gov.uk :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/banking-act-2009-special-resolution-regime-code-of-practice-revised-march-2017>