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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

#### ■ Association of Medical Research Charities

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[127553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December 2020 to Question 121276, whether he has reached an agreed approach with the Association of Medical Research Charities for supporting research that their members fund.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Health and Social Care regularly discuss the impacts of Covid-19 on charity-funded research with the Association of Medical Research Charities, and we are continuing to engage with them.

#### ■ Carbon Emissions

**Darren Jones:**

[\[127619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the letter on Climate Assembly UK he received from six select committee Chairs dated 10 September 2020, whether he plans to publish a response before Christmas 2020 to the recommendations of Climate Assembly UK's report entitled, The Path to Net Zero, published on 10 September 2020.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy spoke at the launch event of the Climate Assembly UK report on 10 September and welcomed its findings. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister responded to both the interim and the final Climate Assembly UK reports via letters to the six select committees.

We are working closely with Climate Assembly UK to ensure that government departments are familiar with their findings. We invited the Climate Assembly UK's expert leads to present the recommendations via seven briefings for officials from across government that took place between 14 and 24 September and covered all the policy areas discussed in the report.

The report's recommendations are an important part of the evidence base for developing the Government's Net Zero Strategy, which will be published in 2021.

#### ■ Casinos: Ownership

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[127552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

on the effect of section 790ZG of the Companies Act 2006 on the ability of the Gambling Commission to investigate the ownership of UK casinos.

**Paul Scully:**

Section 790ZG of the Companies Act 2006 provides a route for people to apply for their personal details to be withheld from the public register of people with significant control information, where the publication of the person's link to the company would place the person or their immediate family at risk of harm.

The information is held securely by Companies House and can be accessed by specified public authorities on request. The Gambling Commission are one of the specified public authorities listed under schedule 3 of The Register of People with Significant Control Regulations 2016.

■ **Climate Change Convention**

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[128112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to (a) ensure gender equality in the COP26 leadership team and (b) facilitate women's equal participation at COP26.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The UK has committed to championing diversity and inclusion throughout our COP26 Presidency and all civil servants in the Cabinet Office COP26 unit have been appointed in line with civil service guidance and rules. In the COP Unit, 45% of the senior management team in the COP26 unit are women. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently appointed my Hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP) as the COP26 Adaptation and Resilience Champion. Working alongside the COP26 leadership team is a wider global network of around 120 climate and energy Attaches. All ambassadors have a COP26 objective, ensuring that a diverse group of leading diplomats are engaging internationally around COP26.

Visible and diverse leadership is just one part of the picture however. Championing women's roles as decision-makers, educators and climate leaders is essential if we are to deliver effective, long-term solutions to climate change and ensure that women and girls are empowered as agents of change, including at COP26. This means working closely with civil society, amplifying the voices of those most affected by climate changes and facilitating the meaningful contribution of female negotiators. We see women's rights organisations, amongst others, as essential partners in effectively tackling climate change and are also supporting a 'Women Negotiator Mentoring Initiative' through the European Capacity-building Initiative and our Climate Ambition Support Alliance. This initiative will level the playing field not only in terms of developed and developing countries but also between men and women, ultimately strengthening capacity and professional development of both current and future climate leaders.

## ■ Clothing and Textiles: Regulation

**Claudia Webbe:**

[\[128317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received on bringing forward legislative proposals on textile and garment adjudication similar to the Groceries Code Adjudicator to regulate the purchasing practices of brands.

**Paul Scully:**

The Groceries Code Adjudicator was established in 2013 to enforce the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (the Groceries Code). The Groceries Code was introduced to address unfair trading practices identified by the Competition Commission in a market investigation into the grocery retail sector in 2009. The competition authorities have not investigated similar supply chain issues in the textile and garment sectors.

## ■ Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

**Claudia Webbe:**

[\[128319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to (a) tackle the payment of illegal wages to workers in parts of Leicester's garment industry and (b) ensure those workers are (i) compensated and (ii) reimbursed.

**Paul Scully:**

As a result of the allegations of labour exploitation in Leicester, a new multi-agency taskforce led by the GLAA has been set up to bring together the enforcement bodies to continue to work together to secure robust intelligence to enable appropriate enforcement activity. It consists of: HMRC National Minimum Wage; Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (BEIS); Leicestershire Police; National Crime Agency; Leicester City Council; Department for Work and Pensions and Immigration Enforcement (Home Office).

HMRC's National Minimum Wage team are active participants in the Leicester Taskforce and are attending visits to textile businesses in Leicester. They have also set up a new dedicated team to investigate Leicester textile businesses and other potential non-compliance textile hotspots across the UK. Where appropriate, these cases will be investigated with HMRC tax colleagues and taskforce partners. While we cannot comment on individual cases, HMRC have a number of open investigations in the textiles industry in Leicester. Where non-compliance is found, they will take appropriate enforcement action. This can include issuing notices of underpayment, recovering arrears for workers, issuing penalties to employers and, in the most serious cases, prosecutions. Since 2012/13, HMRC have recovered over £215,000 in wage arrears for 411 textile workers in the UK and issued over £325,000 in corresponding penalties to employers.

HMRC are also undertaking outreach activities with local groups in Leicester designed to promote awareness of National Minimum Wage rights for workers, and support employers and agency partners in Leicester. This includes distributing multi-

lingual advice leaflets for workers, writing directly to both textile workers and employers, and a bespoke webinar for textile sector employers.

**Claudia Webbe:**

[\[128320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what legal steps his Department has taken to (a) compensate workers and (b) ensure minimum wage compliance following the Levitt review of Boohoo wage practices.

**Paul Scully:**

As a result of the allegations of labour exploitation in the textile industry in Leicester, a multi-agency taskforce led by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) has been set up to bring together the enforcement bodies to continue to work together to secure robust intelligence to enable appropriate enforcement activity. HMRC's National Minimum Wage team are active participants in the Leicester Taskforce and are attending visits to textile business in Leicester. They have also set up a new dedicated team to investigate Leicester textile businesses and other potential non-compliance textile hotspots across the UK. HMRC are undertaking outreach activities with local groups in Leicester designed to promote awareness of National Minimum Wage rights for workers, and support employers and agency partners in Leicester. This includes distributing multi-lingual advice leaflets for workers, writing directly to both textile workers and employers, and a bespoke webinar for textile sector employers.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Home Secretary has written to Boohoo setting out her expectation that the company demonstrates long-term commitment to enhancing the protections for workers and preventing exploitation in its supply chains. The Home Secretary has said that she was deeply concerned by the allegations against Boohoo and expects the company to fully cooperate with law enforcement agencies and implement the commitments they have made after the Levitt Review. The GLAA has established a constructive working dialogue with Boohoo to help tackle labour exploitation in the wider textiles industry and they have subsequently begun providing information to help inform enforcement activity.

HMRC have a range of enforcement tools that they can use to tackle minimum wage offences, including issuing notices of underpayment, recovering arrears for workers, issuing penalties to employers and, in the most serious cases, prosecutions. While we cannot comment on individual cases, HMRC have a number of open investigations in the Leicester textiles sector and will take appropriate enforcement action where non-compliance is found. Since 2012/13, HMRC have recovered over £215,000 in wage arrears for 411 textile workers in the UK and issued over £325,000 in corresponding penalties to employers.

## ■ Conditions of Employment

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[127483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help protect workers' rights after the end of the transition period.



**Paul Scully:**

The Government's ambition is for the UK to be the best place in the world to work and grow a business. The Government has already passed legislation to ensure that employment rights are protected at the end of the transition period. The legislation and the explanatory memorandum for each can be read at the following links:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/535/contents/made> and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/536/contents/made>; and for Northern Ireland: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/537/contents/made> and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/538/contents/made>.

More information the continuing availability of workplace rights from 1 January 2021 is available online: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/workplace-rights-from-1-january-2021>.

**■ Consumer Goods: Safety****Dr Matthew Offord:****[128127]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what mechanism will replace the Rapid Alert System for dangerous goods on 1 January 2021.

**Paul Scully:**

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) launched the UK's own Product Safety Database in November 2019. It allows national and local authorities to notify unsafe products and to access and exchange data securely and effectively to ensure swift and appropriate action can be taken to protect consumers. In addition, OPSS publishes alerts on Gov.uk about unsafe consumer products.

**■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Mothers****Alison Thewliss:****[127588]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the appropriateness of the eight week notice period mothers on maternity leave must give employers before returning to work and being placed on the Job Retention Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

Maternity Leave is provided to enable employed pregnant women and new mothers to prepare for and recover from birth and bond with their child.

The eight week notice period for women returning to work before the end of Maternity Leave enables employers to plan around a woman's return to work. This may include consideration of whether the individual should be placed on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), depending on the employer's circumstances. The decision to furlough an employee is something that needs to be agreed between the employer and employee.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[127589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether mothers returning from maternity leave before the 31 Oct 2020 and were made redundant due to the original end date of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will be eligible to be rehired over winter 2020-21.

**Paul Scully:**

Employees that are made redundant or stopped working for an employer on or after 23 September 2020 can be rehired and put back on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), provided that the employee was employed on 23 September 2020 and a PAYE RTI submission was made to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and October 2020.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[127590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the implications of the accrual of annual leave by mothers on maternity leave for women who have been furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government has been clear that employment rights remain unchanged under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Therefore, workers who are both on maternity leave and on furlough will continue to accrue annual leave as they would if they were not on furlough.

## ■ Counterfeit Manufacturing: EU Action

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[128123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what UK mechanism will replace the EU Enforcement Database on 1 January 2021.

**Amanda Solloway:**

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 rights holders will be able to request customs intervention in the UK via the new Application for Action form on the HMRC portal. Customs authorities in the UK will also be able to access information about IP rights in force in the UK via the existing online services provided by the UK IPO.

UK businesses who have IP rights in the EU will continue to be able to use the IP Enforcement Portal to assist in the protection of those rights after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Ministerial Responsibility

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[128111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Minister for Business and Industry's appointment as Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment on 28 November 2020, what the updated ministerial responsibilities in his Department are; and if he will make a statement.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The responsibilities of the Minister for Business and Industry can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/nadhim-zahawi>.

The Minister's previous responsibilities will now be held by other Ministers in the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, for the duration of his new role as Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment. All ministers' portfolios can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy>

**■ Disinfectants: Sales****Stephen Hammond:****[128109]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that disinfectant products sold on the market (a) meet the highest clinical standards and (b) do not make misleading and unsubstantiated claims about their efficacy.

**Paul Scully:**

Disinfectant products must comply with the relevant laws, depending on the products' intended use, function, composition and how they are described and marketed. Consumer law requires traders to provide consumers with information on the main characteristics of goods. This information must be accurate and not mislead.

In May, the Office for Product Safety and Standards worked with the HSE to publish guidance for manufacturers and importers on hand cleaning and sanitising products. In order to ensure effective enforcement, the Office for Products Safety and Standards has provided training for trading standards enforcement officers on hand cleansing products and access to technical and scientific advice.

If consumers believe there has been a breach of the legislation then they should report the matter in the first instance to the Citizens Advice consumer service on 0808 223 1133; [www.citizensadvice.org/](http://www.citizensadvice.org/).

**■ Energy: Billing****Dr Luke Evans:****[128291]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking with Ofgem to help consumers save money on their energy bills.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

In October we extended the Energy Price Cap until at least the end of 2021, which means that 15 million households across the UK will continue to be protected from overcharging on their energy bills. Since its introduction in January 2019, the Cap has saved customers around £1 billion a year.

We have also introduced energy efficiency measures to further reduce bills and tackle fuel poverty. The Green Homes Grant voucher scheme, which opened in September 2020, provides low income homeowners in England up to £10,000 each

to install energy efficiency and low-carbon heating measures in their homes. An additional £640m per year is available through the Energy Company Obligation scheme to help fuel poor and low-income households stay warm while reducing their energy bills.

In addition, the Warm Home Discount provides over 2 million low-income and vulnerable households with a £140 rebate off their winter energy bill.

## ■ Energy: Meters

**Luke Pollard:** [\[127649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to introduce legislative proposals to require all households to have smart meters by June 2021.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Smart meters are replacing traditional gas and electricity meters in Great Britain as part of an essential infrastructure upgrade to make the energy system more efficient and flexible, enabling the cost-effective delivery of net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy suppliers are required by licence conditions to take all reasonable steps to install smart meters in homes and small businesses. This obligation will expire at the end of June 2021 and will be replaced with a new four-year policy framework from 1 July 2021 with fixed annual installation targets for energy suppliers to drive the consistent, long-term investment needed to ensure that everyone can benefit from smart meters.

## ■ Future Fund

**Darren Jones:** [\[128227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how long on average Future Fund applications have taken to process.

**Paul Scully:**

The average time taken to process Future Fund applications is shown in the table below.

The number of days starts when matched funding was approved and finishes when the convertible loan was executed. The elapsed time depends on the actions of companies and investors as well as the managers of the Future Fund. The quickest application to date was completed in 9 days.

MONTH	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	AVERAGE TIME TAKEN (DAYS)
May	464	39
June	229	34
July	145	32

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MONTH	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	AVERAGE TIME TAKEN (DAYS)
August	120	30
September	224	25

To note, averages for October and November are not yet available.

#### ■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[127648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the three-month expiry date on the Green House Grant scheme vouchers.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Homeowners are able to request, at any time before their Green Homes Grant voucher has expired, an extension to their voucher. Several factors such as winter weather conditions, COVID-19 and Christmas may have an impact on the speed at which certain measures may be installed. In order to take account of this, we have instructed the scheme administrator to, on request, extend vouchers by an additional 3 months, or until 31 March 2021 (whichever is earlier).

#### ■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

**Sir David Evennett:**

[\[128084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much financial support has been provided to the hospitality sector in (a) tier 1, (b) tier 2 and (c) tier 3 local covid alert level areas since the introduction of those restrictions.

**Paul Scully:**

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

#### ■ Hydrogen

**John Spellar:**

[\[127465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the UK's role is in the production consortium on green hydrogen.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

We welcome the formation of groups such as the UK Green Hydrogen Catapult, which sees a number of partners coming together to support development of green hydrogen.

In the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and subsequent Energy White Paper, we have set out an ambitious package to grow the UK hydrogen economy. This includes £240m out to 2025 for capital co-investment in new low carbon hydrogen production, intended to support a combination of commercial-scale CCUS-enabled 'blue' hydrogen and smaller scale electrolytic 'green' hydrogen projects. Both these production methods – and other innovative techniques – will be needed to deliver UK hydrogen demand expected by 2050. Working with industry, we are aiming for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030.

We are already supporting a range of innovative hydrogen projects across the value chain, including the ITM Power Gigafactory being built in Sheffield. When complete this will be the largest electrolyser manufacturing facility in the world and would be able to support the scaling up of electrolytic 'green' hydrogen.

**■ Infrastructure: Merseyside****Mick Whitley:**[\[128281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of green infrastructure projects in Merseyside.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Since 2017 the Government has funded the North West Energy Hub, hosted by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The Hub works with LEPs and local authorities in their region to help them to identify a pipeline of low carbon projects and provide practical support for the initial stages of project development.

**■ Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects****Caroline Lucas:**[\[127521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of facilitating biodiversity net gain for energy projects progressed through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime, as part of his Department's plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government was clear in its 25 Year Environment Plan that its commitment to seek to embed a principle of environmental net gain for development applies to energy infrastructure as well as housing. However, it is important that any strengthening of biodiversity net gain requirements for the nationally significant infrastructure regime is done at the right time and in the right way.

There are a number of ways in which this could be implemented and it is important that time is taken to work with stakeholders to develop an appropriate approach. The Government will be consulting on further details in due course.

### ■ **Public Houses and Restaurants: Coronavirus**

**Nicola Richards:**

[\[127703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish details of his Department's support for pubs and restaurants in areas under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions during the Christmas period.

**Paul Scully:**

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

### ■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus**

**Mick Whitley:**

[\[127663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of financial support available to pubs that do not serve food in areas that are under tier 2 local covid alert level restrictions.

**Paul Scully:**

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

**Mick Whitley:**

[\[127664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the level of financial support available to pubs that do not serve food in areas that are under tier 2 local covid alert level restrictions.

**Paul Scully:**

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

**■ Research: Expenditure****Chi Onwurah:** [\[127550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to change its 2.4 per cent of GDP R&D spending target in response to falling GDP.

**Amanda Solloway:**

No, we do not plan to change the 2.4% target and remain committed to increasing UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

**■ Weddings: Coronavirus****Justin Madders:** [\[127580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the evidential basis was for setting capacity at 15 for wedding receptions in covid-19 tier 1 and 2 areas.

**Paul Scully:**

Wedding receptions by their nature are particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. This guidance for wedding receptions and celebrations at tiers 1 and 2 has been drafted on the basis of the scientific evidence available. We keep this guidance under review.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Coronavirus: Death****Stephen Morgan:** [\[128250\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans his Department has to mark remembrance of those who have lost their lives due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

As we have set out previously, the Government's immediate focus is on protecting the lives and livelihoods of the nation, but there is nonetheless the need to mourn those who have died, and to mark and remember this period as one of immense struggle. We will set out the Government's proposed approach to this important matter in due course.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[110731\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office what reason the use of (a) religious and (b) sporting premises in England certified by Public Health England as covid-safe are now assessed as a risk to public health; and if he will make a statement.



**Penny Mordaunt:**

The UK Government's approach to Tiers in England draws on the lessons learned from the range of interventions put in place across the four nations of the UK to date. There is clear evidence that shows the best way to control the virus is to limit opportunities for it to spread between individuals from different households. Although COVID-secure measures can be put in place to help mitigate the risk of transmission in different settings, they are unlikely to eliminate that risk completely. The restrictions on religious, and sports and leisure settings imposed in November were designed to further limit the risk of transmission. Details of rules set by devolved administrations are available on relevant web pages.

The UK Government recognises the significant sacrifices that people of all faiths have made this year; restrictions have been in place over a number of religious celebrations and observances. Communal worship is possible for all faiths in all three tiers in England and faith leaders will continue to play a key role, consulting on how to make religious practice as safe as possible. Relevant guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december>

Gyms, sports facilities and leisure centres are open in all tiers in England. There is specific guidance for each tier. Further information may be found in the 'sport and physical activity' sections of each guidance publication, which are available here:

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

**Helen Hayes:****[128214]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to strengthen cross-government engagement with local authorities on implementing the COVID-19 Winter Plan.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

We continue to engage with local authorities closely on a range of issues, including on their preparedness for the implementing of the COVID-19 winter plan. There has been regular and significant contact between Ministers, regional mayors, council leaders, and the Local Government Association to provide support for local authorities before and during the coronavirus pandemic.

This includes frequent webinars hosted by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Minister for Local Government for all English Council Leaders and Chief Executives.

A daily bulletin of COVID-19 related announcements and guidance is distributed to over 4000 recipients in the local tier to ensure they are kept informed of the latest from central government.

## ■ Elections: Proof of Identity

**Cat Smith:**

[\[128204\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) enabling expired photo ID to be valid as voter ID and (b) the length of expiry for which that ID will be valid as voter ID.

**Julia Lopez:**

Further to the answers to PQs [104752](#) and [100442](#), we will continue to work with the Electoral Commission and other stakeholders including charities and civil society organisations to make sure that reforms are delivered in a way that is inclusive for all voters. The list of approved photographic ID will not be limited to passports and driving licences. For any voter who does not have one of the required forms of photographic ID, a local elector ID will be available, free of charge.

Everyone who is eligible to vote will have the opportunity to do so.

## ■ Killingholme Port

**Christine Jardine:**

[\[122857\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the volume of goods processed at Killingholme port in the event that an agreement is not reached on a future relationship with the EU by the end of the transition period.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

I refer the hon. Member to the [oral statement](#) made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 23 September on HMG's work to prepare the border for the end of the Transition Period.

## ■ Political Parties: Regulation

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[122605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what legislation regulates the establishment of organisations in the UK by overseas political parties.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The government welcomes open and transparent engagement in the UK. Depending on what the established organisation seeks to do, there are different applicable regulations regarding the activities that such an organisation could undertake.

If the organisation is political in nature then a variety of legislation could apply. If it seeks to make political donations then it would need to be compliant with the rules set out in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) 2000 and the Representation of the People Act 1983. Only those with a genuine interest in UK electoral events can donate to candidates, campaigners and political parties.

If the organisation seeks to act as a third-party campaigner at UK elections then it would need to comply with the rules on third-party campaigning set out in the PPERA.

If the organisation engages with financial activities then it would need to comply with the UK financial regulatory framework.

From a security perspective, there are rules around the type of activity that groups set up in the UK may undertake. Organisations set up to conduct illegal activities, for example offences related to spying, sabotage and related crimes, would be subject to a range of enforcement legislation such as the Official Secrets Acts. There are also rules around proscribed terrorist organisations.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[129155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British armed forces personnel have been recruited from the British Overseas Territories in each of the last five years.

**James Heapey:**

The requested information is provided in the following table:

#### **Intake of UK Regulars, British Overseas Territory Citizens, for the last five Financial Years (FY)**

<b>FY</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
Intake	~	10	10	10	~

#### **Notes:**

1. UK Regulars comprise Full time Service personnel, including Nursing Services, but excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel. Figures include trained and untrained personnel.
2. Nationality is as recorded on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) on intake. This does not filter for personnel with dual nationalities, or for personnel whose nationality has changed during the course of their service. British Overseas Territories Citizens include those from Anguilla, Bermuda, British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands.

3. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 in line with disclosure control policy. A figure of 5 or fewer is represented by '~'.

## ■ Mali: Terrorism

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[128185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for the Armed Forces of 9 December 2020, Official Report, column 872, what assessment he has made of the significance of gold mining to the financing of terrorist organisations in (a) Mali and (b) neighbouring countries; what discussions he has had with international counterparts on that matter; and if he will make a statement.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence has made an assessment of the relationship between artisanal gold mining and the funding of Violent Extremist Organisations (VEOs). The level of funding for VEOs, originating from the sale of gold is assessed to be low, with ransom for kidnap activities and their illicit smuggling activities more of a concern. Nonetheless, part of the UN MINUSMA mission is to encourage better governance in Mali which would tackle the funnelling of funds to support VEOs. The UK will also seek to raise the issue with the Economic Community of West African States.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Digital Markets Unit

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[128958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when his Department plans to publish the full powers that will be awarded to the new Digital Markets Unit.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[128959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when his Department plans to publish the code of conduct that will be enforced by the Digital Markets Unit from April 2021.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[128960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Digital Markets Taskforce will advise his Department on the methodology for determining what companies should be designated as having strategic market status.

**Caroline Dinenge:**

Government recently announced it will establish a new, pro-competition regime for digital markets. As part of this, it will set up a new Digital Markets Unit (DMU), housed in the Competition and Markets Authority.

To inform the design and implementation of the new pro-competition regime, we established the Digital Markets Taskforce. On 8 December, the Taskforce published its advice to Government, including on the DMU's powers, the process for

designating firms with strategic market status, and the code of conduct which such firms must follow. Government is carefully considering the Taskforce's advice.

We will consult on the form and function of the DMU in early 2021, and legislate to put it on a statutory footing as soon as parliamentary time allows.

## ■ Digital Technology: Small Businesses

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[128963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of support sessions that have been provided by the Digital Boost Platform since April 2020.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[130068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses that have used the Digital Boost platform since April 2020.

**Caroline Dinenge:**

The Digital Boost platform was launched in June 2020. As of 16th December, 1371 small businesses and charities have signed up to the platform. The platform was rebuilt in late September using more advanced technologies; over 575 mentoring sessions have taken place since this replatforming and 94% of the requests for mentoring sessions are fulfilled within 72 hours. The small businesses and charities that have registered to the platform all have access to Digital Boost's courses, content and workshops.

## ■ Motor Sports: Coronavirus

**James Wild:** [\[127676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support is available to speedway venues under the Sports Winter Survival Package.

**James Wild:** [\[127677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions Sport England has had with speedway venues and promoters on applying for funding from the Sports Winter Survival Package.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Sports Winter Survival Package aims to protect the immediate futures of major spectator sports in England over the winter period. The funding process will be overseen by an independent decision-making board and supported by Sport England.

Sport England will publish details about applying to the Sports Winter Survival Package shortly. Speedway, along with other sports, will then be welcome to apply for support from the Package providing they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

**■ Pornography: Children****Caroline Ansell:**[\[130158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of children's exposure to commercial pornographic material and explicit user generated content on social networks during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Caroline Dinenge:**

The Government recognises that the measures required to tackle COVID-19 mean it is likely that more people are spending more time online, including children and young people. Research published by the British Board of Film Classification in May this year found that 47% of children and teens have seen content that they wished they had not seen during lockdown. We will continue to work with technology companies, civil society and academia to understand the risk and the impact to the safety of children online during this period.

Under our world-leading online harms proposals, we expect companies to use age assurance or age verification technologies to prevent children from accessing services which pose the highest risk of harm to children, such as online pornography, including pornography on social media. We would encourage companies to take steps ahead of the legislation to protect children from harmful and age inappropriate content online. We are working closely with stakeholders across industry to establish the right conditions for the market to deliver age assurance and age verification technical solutions ahead of the legislative requirements coming into force.

**EDUCATION****■ Assessments: Coronavirus****Daisy Cooper:**[\[127671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on students of delaying the release of the examination topics list to the end of January 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is aware of the disruption which many students are experiencing because of the COVID-19 outbreak. In recognition of these challenges, students will be supported with the provision of advance notice of topic areas and with examination support materials such as formulae sheets.

Advance notice of topic areas and details of the examination support materials to be provided will not be made available until the new year, when it is likely that much of the curriculum will already have been covered. This will ensure that students acquire a breadth of knowledge, whilst also giving students support with focusing their revision. Ofqual and the examination boards are undertaking work to determine how

this will look for different qualifications, ensuring that it is applied fairly across subjects.

The unprecedented package of changes that the Department, Ofqual and the examination boards are making will ensure that young people can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and move on to their next stage of education, training or employment.

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

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[127674]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Expert Group established to look at how to make 2021 exams fair includes representatives of (a) school leaders, (b) parents, (c) teachers and (d) unions.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department recognises the challenges currently faced by schools, teachers, and students, and knows that the disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak has been felt differently across the country, between schools and colleges in the same area, and between students within individual institutions. In addition to the package of measures announced to ensure exams are delivered fairly next summer, the Department has also confirmed the launch of an expert advisory group to monitor and advise on lost and differential learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department is working to finalise the membership of this group, and will ensure that membership is representative of the sector, and geographically diverse.

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

## ■ Confucius Institutes

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

**[129054]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the potential (a) merits and (b) risks of Confucius Institutes in the UK.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We work closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and other government departments to continue to support the higher education sector and other related bodies to promote mutually beneficial international partnerships and UK values.

Confucius Institutes promote and teach Chinese culture and language globally. UK providers who host Confucius Institutes are responsible for ensuring that their partnerships are managed appropriately, with the right due diligence in place. The

government will continue to support the sector to promote mutually beneficial international partnerships in line with UK values.

This government takes seriously any concerns regarding the operation of international organisations at UK universities. We encourage providers, if they have any concerns, to contact the department with any queries regarding their international collaborations.

## ■ Pupil Premium

**Ben Bradley:**

[\[128256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to the pupil premium to cover a potential increase in the number of pupils becoming eligible for free school meals in 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

On 17 December, the Government announced that the pupil premium will continue in 2021-22 with the same per pupil funding rates as in 2020-21. The rates are £1,345 per eligible primary pupil, and £955 in secondary.

We will use the October 2020 census to calculate individual school-level allocations. This will ensure that children who have become eligible for free school meals as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak will attract pupil premium funding from April 2021. As a result, pupil premium funding is expected to increase to over £2.5 billion in 2021-22.

We are committed to levelling up opportunities to make sure everyone has a fair chance to realise their potential and no-one is left behind. The pupil premium furthers this objective by helping schools improve the academic attainment and wider outcomes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## ■ Pupils: Bullying

**Peter Gibson:**

[\[127659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle bullying of (a) LGBT and (b) other students in schools.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government has sent a clear message that bullying should never be tolerated, and we are committed to supporting schools to tackle it. All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying, and have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies and monitoring approaches to best suit their environment. The department provides advice for schools, which outlines schools' responsibilities. The advice makes clear that schools should make appropriate provision for a bullied child's social, emotional and mental health needs. It is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>.



We have published a research report which details common strategies that specific schools have found to be effective for combating bullying, including case studies with examples about actions schools have taken to improve preventative practices and support for LGBT pupils. It is available here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/approaches-to-preventing-and-tackling-bullying](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/approaches-to-preventing-and-tackling-bullying).

We have also published 'Respectful School Communities', a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline. This can combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind, including hate-based bullying. It is available here:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/school-leaders/?filter=guidance-and-training-school-leaders>.

On 7 June, we announced more than £750,000 for the Diana Award, the Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Anne Frank Trust - to help hundreds of schools and colleges build relationships between pupils, boost their resilience, and continue to tackle bullying both in person and online. This includes projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those with SEND, those who are victims of hate related bullying and those pupils who identify as LGBT.

We are also making sure that all children in England will learn about respectful relationships, in person and online, as part of new mandatory Relationships, Sex and Health Education. This includes content on the different types of bullying, the impact it has, the responsibility of bystanders, and how to get help.

We are investing £10 million through behaviour hubs. Schools with exemplary positive behaviour cultures can work closely with schools that want to turn around their behaviour, alongside a central offer of support and a taskforce of advisers. The aim is to improve their culture, and spread good practice across the country. The first hubs are planned to launch in spring 2021, and will run for an initial period of 3 years.

The Government Equalities Office invested £4 million over 4 years, from 2016, to support schools in preventing and addressing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, reaching 2250 schools in England. This funding concluded in March 2020, and the Department for Education is currently evaluating next steps, as the department responsible for anti-bullying in schools. The department will confirm what funding is available for the financial year 2021-22, in light of the Spending Review outcome. We will also consider what more the department can do to ensure that schools have the right support to prevent bullying of pupils with protected characteristics.

## ■ Pupils: Coronavirus

**Chris Green:**

[\[128188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many times on average pupils in (a) Bolton, (b) Wigan, (c) the county of Cornwall and (d) Greater London were sent home from school due to covid-19 in (i) September, (ii) October and (iii) November 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department collects data on the number of schools that have indicated they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment on a daily basis, as well as the total number of pupils in attendance and the number of pupils asked to isolate due to potential contact with COVID-19. This data is published from this collection at both national and local authority levels as part of the official statistics series. The publication can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Data is published from 9 September 2020, but prior to 12 October 2020 information on pupils isolating was not collected. This data is collected at school level, not pupil level. Therefore, we cannot estimate the average number of times a pupil has been asked to isolate.

The Department is constantly reviewing the content of its publications. Announcements about future content will be made through the official statistics release page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>.

**■ Schools: Computers****Apsana Begum:****[128304]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many laptops the Government planned to provide to schools in Tower Hamlets (a) prior to 23 October 2020 and (b) after 26 October 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

At the start of autumn term, each school was allocated a number of laptops and tablets based on the estimates of disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 without access to a suitable device. On 23rd October, the Department adjusted school allocations. Adjusting allocations ensured that devices reached as many children as possible when they needed them most, and as a result we have been able to continue delivering laptops and tablets to those young people throughout this term.

Schools, local authorities and academy trusts were able to request additional devices if their original allocation did not meet their needs.

During the period that device allocations have been adjusted, schools that fully close for a sustained period have been able to work with their Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure they receive enough devices to meet the needs of all disadvantaged children in Years 3 to 11 who do not already have one.

Now schools can order the number of devices they were originally allocated, where these have not already been ordered by the school.

The Department does not publish data on the number of devices allocated to schools, given that it is for the school to decide what proportion of their allocation they need.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[126160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional financial support his Department has allocated to schools in Enfield to support (a) cleanliness and hygiene and (b) the recruitment of supply teachers in cases where teachers are having to self-isolate since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The first window for schools to claim funding back for exceptional costs incurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak, between March and July 2020, closed on 21 July.

Payments against claims made within the published scope of the fund were made to schools and academies in September. Schools in Enfield have received the following payments for additional cleaning costs required due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements.

SCHOOL NAME	LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADDITIONAL CLEANING COSTS CLAIM
Eversley Primary School	Enfield	£ 16,394
Russet House School	Enfield	£ 10,061
Durants School	Enfield	£ 8,461
Garfield Primary School	Enfield	£ 8,103
Meridian Angel Primary School	Enfield	£ 4,233
De Bohun Primary School	Enfield	£ 3,534
The Raglan Junior School	Enfield	£ 3,426
Waverley School	Enfield	£ 3,391
Bush Hill Park Primary School	Enfield	£ 2,920
Forty Hill CofE Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,958
Oakthorpe Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,813
Suffolks Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,619
Highfield Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,505
Latymer All Saints CofE Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,488
St John and St James CofE Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,416
West Grove Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,294

SCHOOL NAME	LOCAL AUTHORITY	ADDITIONAL CLEANING COSTS CLAIM
Alma Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,282
St Anne's Catholic High School for Girls	Enfield	£ 1,250
Keys Meadow Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,155
St Andrew's CofE Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,105
Worcesters Primary School	Enfield	£ 1,064
Houndsfield Primary School	Enfield	£ 998
Raynham Primary School	Enfield	£ 790
Wilbury Primary School	Enfield	£ 750
Galliard Primary School	Enfield	£ 750
Fleecefield Primary School	Enfield	£ 750
Brettenham Primary School	Enfield	£ 750
St Andrew's Southgate Primary School (CE)	Enfield	£ 511
St Michael at Bowes CofE Junior School	Enfield	£ 284
Hadley Wood Primary School	Enfield	£ 113

Schools can now claim for any costs that fell between March and July in the same approved categories, for which they did not claim during the first window. Schools can make claims here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19/exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19--2>.

In addition to this, the Department has announced details of a new COVID-19 workforce fund for schools and colleges to help them remain open: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-for-schools/coronavirus-covid-19-workforce-fund-to-support-schools-with-costs-of-staff-absences-from-1-november-2020-to-31-december-2020>. It will fund the costs of teacher absences over a threshold in schools and colleges, and is intended for those with high staff absences that are also facing significant financial pressures. The Department expects schools to be able to claim for workforce costs relating to November and December 2020 in spring 2021. Schools will be able to incur

additional costs, backdated to November, in the knowledge that they will be reimbursed if they meet the relevant criteria.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[126836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the closure of schools in spring 2020 on children's attainment.

**Nick Gibb:**

Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on attainment and progress is a key research priority for the Government, and we have commissioned an independent research and assessment agency to consider catch up needs and monitor progress over the course of the 2020/21 academic year.

The ongoing research is based on a large sample of pupils from Years 1 to 11, and will allow the Department to understand how best to support the sector and which particular groups of pupils have been most affected by time out of school. This research is based on assessments that schools are already choosing to use this academic year, so it adds no additional burden on schools and does not require pupils to sit any additional assessments.

To address the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department has launched a £650 million universal catch-up premium, and a £350 million National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for disadvantaged pupils:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catch-up-premium-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The NTP went live on 2 November 2020 and schools are now able to access tuition to support disadvantaged pupils that need the most help to catch up.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[126838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on pilots of mass testing in schools for covid-19.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government's mass testing approach in schools and colleges aims to support schools and colleges to keep all students and pupils in education unless they are COVID positive. From January, all schools, starting with secondary schools and colleges and including special schools and alternative provision, will be eligible to offer weekly tests to their workforce to identify asymptomatic cases and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Both teachers and pupils will also be eligible for daily tests if they are identified as a close contact of a positive case. This will mean that they can stay in school rather than self-isolating.

## ■ Supply Teachers

**Alex Cunningham:**

[128162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of experienced supply teachers in the last eight months.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department does not hold live data on the number of supply teachers available to schools although officials continue to engage with suppliers on the Department and Crown Commercial Service's supply teacher framework to monitor market capacity.

The Department has published guidance for schools for reopening which gives advice on how they can meet their workforce challenges, including advice on engaging supply teachers. The guidance is available here:

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

**Universities: Coronavirus****Stephen Morgan:****[129099]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish guidance for universities on covid-19 testing at the end of the spring 2021 term.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Guidance regarding testing for universities at the end of the spring term will be published in due course.

Work is ongoing between the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care and the higher education sector to ensure that students are able to travel to and from their places of study over the Christmas break and to get tested before departure and upon return.

The results of this work will inform the guidance for the end of spring, which we will publish with sufficient time for higher education institutions to plan.

**Vocational Education: Assessments****Karen Bradley:****[127947]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional support he will provide to BTEC students (a) sitting examinations over winter 2020-21 and (b) more generally during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

Ofqual's Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (EERF) has been in operation since October for vocational and technical qualifications. This covers all vocational and technical qualifications, including BTECs which are owned by the awarding organisation Pearson. The EERF allows awarding organisations, including Pearson, to adapt qualifications to free up teaching time and respond to public health measures. Given the large numbers of vocational and technical qualifications taken by students and their varying sizes and natures there is not a one-size-fits-all approach that can be applied, and the adaptations will vary by qualification.

Overseen by Ofqual, all awarding organisations have been working with centres over the past few months to make permitted adaptations to qualifications, and students should now be aware of how these adaptations affect their courses, assessments,

and exams. For example, some BTEC students will benefit from additional windows in which to complete their assessments to recognise that adhering to social distancing requirements can increase the time needed to complete some assessments.

The Department has also confirmed that all awarding organisations can reduce the number of optional units that are assessed for vocational and technical qualifications included on performance tables. Internal assessments can take up to 30 hours of teaching time, so this means that for students, including BTEC students, the remaining time available can focus on teaching students the knowledge and skills they need to progress.

## ■ World War II: Genocide

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[128316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that students continue to benefit from the Holocaust Educational Trust's, Lessons from Auschwitz programme during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has remained fully committed to Holocaust education during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Holocaust is the only subject named as a compulsory part of the history curriculum which ensures that young people from every background can continue to learn about the Holocaust and its relevance today.

The Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) has adapted delivery of the Lessons from Auschwitz programme during the COVID-19 outbreak. Although in-person visits to Auschwitz have been suspended, HET has continued to support students and teachers in learning about the Holocaust by delivering resources, continuing professional development and events online.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Chemicals: Regulation

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[128269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has for a consultation on decisions made by the UK's independent chemicals regulator that deviate from controls and restrictions developed under EU REACH.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[128270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what decisions to deviate from EU REACH controls after the transition period will be open to challenge in the event that stakeholders identify risks to society, the economy, human health or the environment.

**Rebecca Pow:**

From 1 January, we will operate UK REACH. It will retain the fundamental approach and core principles of EU REACH and continue to provide high levels of protection for human health and the environment.

We will have the freedom to take our own decisions based on the scientific evidence and tailored to the needs of businesses, but this does not mean taking divergent decisions for the sake of it, nor reducing standards and levels of protection.

The legal framework for UK REACH provides for the input of external scientific advice to the UK Agency, so policy decisions on chemicals are supported by robust evidence and analysis. The UK Agency must then publish its opinions. This will ensure that there is transparency in the UK Agency's opinion-making processes.

We will keep the same level of transparency and stakeholder engagement in the opinion forming processes as our EU equivalent and be able to draw from a pool of scientific experts as required. This will ensure that the regulatory processes can be properly held to account. By ensuring sufficient transparency of scientific discussions we will mirror ECHA's approach to appointing accredited stakeholder organisations to observe ECHA Committee meetings.

**■ Chemicals: Regulation****Ruth Jones:**[\[128267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to maintain current (a) controls and (b) restrictions on chemicals in the first year of the UK's independent chemicals regulatory regime.

**Ruth Jones:**[\[128268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what resources his Department has allocated to the Health and Safety Executive to ensure it has capacity to consider whether (a) decisions and (b) developments in the European Chemicals Agency on hazardous chemicals should be implemented in UK REACH.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Under UK REACH, all existing EU REACH authorisations and restrictions will be carried over into UK law at the end of the transition period. There will therefore be no change in protection from dangerous chemicals that are currently prohibited from use. From 1 January, the processes for the evaluation, authorisation and restriction under UK REACH will mirror the processes under EU REACH and will be used to assess and manage risks from chemicals in the same way. While we will not take divergent decisions for the sake of it, it would not be appropriate to automatically implement decisions that are taken by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) after the end of the transition period. This is because the impact of decisions on the UK will no longer be being considered. We can take ECHA's decisions into account, but we will need to consider, in each case, whether they are right for the UK.



The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will operate as the UK's Regulatory Agency. It is building capacity and capability to ensure that we have a robust and effective regulator in place from the point of transition. Recruitment of 130 additional staff, inclusive of scientists, administrators, occupational hygienists and socio-economists, is taking place in preparation for its expanded regulatory role on REACH and other chemicals regimes. This is the largest recruitment exercise ever undertaken in this area and underlines the importance and priority of chemical regulation to HSE. This recruitment and subsequent training, builds on the existing expertise HSE holds, having worked on some of the most complex dossiers under EU REACH.

### ■ Environmental Impact Assessment: River Thames

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Lambeth Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Kingston Council to conduct their most recent environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Wandsworth Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Hammersmith and Fulham Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Kensington and Chelsea Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Westminster City Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Southwark Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Lewisham Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Tower Hamlets Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Newham Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Greenwich Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Barking and Dagenham Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[128072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to Havering and Bexley Council to conduct an environmental impact analysis of the River Thames on their local communities.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Mayor of London is responsible for air quality and transport strategy in the capital, and through Transport for London, is also responsible for managing the Transport for London Road Network, and for managing traffic on the river.

Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality and to take action where there are high levels of air pollution. Defra provides support for local authorities through statutory guidance, a dedicated helpline and assessment tools. In London the Mayor provides this support.

## ■ Food

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[127651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to encourage (a) growth and (b) production of food in the UK for the domestic market.

**Victoria Prentis:**

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

The Government published 'The Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024' on 30 November. As we set out in this document, by the end of the agricultural transition we want to see a renewed agricultural sector, producing healthy food for consumption at home and abroad, where farms can be profitable and economically sustainable without subsidy.

'The Path to Sustainable Farming' provides detail on our plans to support farmers to increase their productivity in an environmentally sustainable way, including through the Farming Investment Fund. This will provide targeted support to businesses so that they can invest in equipment, technology, and infrastructure that will improve their productivity and deliver environmental and other public benefits.

The document also describes our plan to hugely increase the money available to farmers and land managers to invest in the environment through our Environmental Land Management scheme. These measures will ensure that food production today, does not come at the expense of food production tomorrow and that by having healthier soil, and cleaner and more plentiful water, we will have a more resilient base for food production.

This country has a proud agricultural heritage, and is fortunate to have the climate, landscape, and entrepreneurial farmers and growers to enable production of a diverse and delicious range of fruits and vegetables all year round. We produce 64% of our entire food supply need, and that increases to 77% for indigenous food that we can grow or rear here in the UK for all or part of the year. These figures have been steady over the past 20 years.

Consumers also have access to food products that cannot be produced here, or at least not on a year-round basis, through international trade. This supplements domestic production, and also ensures that any disruption from risks such as adverse weather or disease does not affect the UK's overall security of supply.

## ■ Glass: Recycling

**Ben Lake:**

[\[127620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2020 to Question 118087 on glass recycling, whether his Department plans to undertake an assessment of market shifts in materials as a result of a deposit return scheme before the consultation on the regulations is opened.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We plan to consult on our proposed Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2021. We do not plan to conduct further research ahead of this consultation, but will seek views in our consultation on potential market shifts in materials as a result of the proposed materials to be included in scope of the DRS.

■ **Nitrogen Dioxide: Cheshire****Mike Amesbury:**[\[127635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions from industry and power generation are kept within safe limits in Weaver Vale and Halton constituencies.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency's environmental permitting regime carried out under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 requires operators of "regulated facilities" including industry carrying out certain activities above certain thresholds including chemicals, combustion and energy from waste activities to obtain a permit. In this way the Environmental Permitting Regulations provide for ongoing supervision by the EA of activities which could harm the environment. The aim of the permitting regime is to:

- protect the environment so that statutory and government policy environmental targets and outcomes are achieved;
- deliver permitting, and compliance with permits and certain environmental targets, effectively and efficiently, in a way that provides increased clarity and minimises the administrative burden on both the regulator and operators;
- encourage regulators to promote best practice in the operation of facilities; and
- continue to implement European legislation fully.

The majority of environmental quality and specific permitting standards and other related requirements for environmental and human health protection come from Directives. The Environmental Permitting Regulations ensure that those Directives and national policy requirements, and outcomes that can be delivered through a permitting and compliance system, are delivered by the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

The Environmental Permitting Regulations place duties on regulators to exercise their permit-related functions to deliver the obligations and outcomes required by the relevant Directives and, in some cases, national policy. In practice, this means that the EA will ensure, where a permit is granted, that permit conditions achieve the objectives and intended outcomes of any of the Directives or national policy which apply.

The EA has specialist Industry sector groups set up such as 'Energy from Waste', 'Chemicals' and 'Combustion' with appropriate expertise in ensuring permit

compliance. The EA also has sector plans with periodic review of permits to meet the latest environmental standards. These sector groups also engage with trade bodies and industry sectors to ensure that operators know and understand the requirements, and to implement them in a cost-effective way that also minimises environmental risks.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[127636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions from industry and power generation in Weaver Vale and Halton constituencies.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The information requested for Weaver Vale and Halton constituencies is not held centrally and to obtain it in the time available would incur disproportionate costs. If the hon. Member wishes to write to the Environment Agency it will be able to provide the information.

For the industrial sites the Environment Agency regulates through the permitting regime, it regularly monitors compliance with permit emission limits:

- By regular inspections and audits for compliance assessment, including the regulation of emissions monitoring;
- By requiring a management-systems approach that makes implementation, auditing and compliance assessment straightforward;
- By specifying accredited and certified measurement services and equipment, and auditing to ensure compliance;
- By banding operators according to risk and performance, to ensure a focused, cost-effective application of effective, proportionate and fair regulation;
- By tracking the performance of operators and taking action where appropriate.

In addition to the permitting regime, for each permit the operator must report the amount of emissions of each controlled substance every year to the Environment Agency under the Pollution Inventory (PI). The PI provides information about the releases and transfers of substances from the industrial activities we regulate. This helps:

- Provide the public with easy access to environmental information from industrial activities in their locality;
- Protect the environment by providing information to assist us in developing regulation;
- Government to meet its national and international environmental reporting commitments, such as the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register.

## ■ Palm Oil

**Ben Lake:**

[\[128231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to promote the (a) use and (b) consumption of alternatives to palm oil by UK (i) businesses and (ii) consumers.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Oil Palm is a very efficient crop, producing more oil per hectare than other vegetable oil crops. Substitution with other oils (e.g. soybean, rapeseed, sunflower) which typically require significantly more land to produce may lead to greater deforestation as more land is converted to agricultural use. The Government is therefore committed to reducing the environmental impact of palm oil production while at the same time building demand for sustainable palm oil in the UK.

In 2012 the Government established the UK Roundtable on Sourcing Sustainable Palm Oil which brings together key UK businesses and supports them to transition to fully sustainable palm oil supply chains. Latest reports show that the UK has achieved 70% certified sustainable palm oil in 2019 – up from 16% in 2010.

In addition, the Government recently tabled amendments to the Environment Bill to introduce new legislation to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. The amendments passed in the Commons Committee Stage last month.

## ■ Peat: Imports

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[127685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to ban the import of peat.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is committed to protecting and restoring our vulnerable peatlands in England. As part of this focus, we are committed to phasing out the use of peat in horticulture in England. By reducing demand for peat in horticulture, this not only protects peat bogs in England, but recognises that two thirds of the peat sold in the UK is imported from the rest of Europe. We plan to set out proposals to further reduce the use of peat in horticulture in the forthcoming England Peat Strategy.

## ■ Pet Travel Scheme: EU Countries

**Deidre Brock:**

[\[128192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to implement a grace period before implementation of new rules for pet travel (a) to and (b) from the EU.

**Victoria Prentis:**

On 3 December 2020 the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed of the EU voted in favour of giving the United Kingdom Part 2 listed status for the

purposes of non-commercial pet travel after the transition period. It will be for the EU to decide on any future grace period relating to the regulations governing pet travel.

This status will mean, from 1 January, similar health requirements to travel to the EU as now. However, new documentation will be required for pets and assistance dogs. We intend to publish further guidance shortly on what this development means for travellers, on GOV.UK.

We will continue to press the EU Commission on securing Part 1 listed status as 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.

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.

**Deidre Brock:**

[\[128195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has received information from the EU on the reasoning for its decision to list the UK under part 2 rather than part 1 of the Pet Travel Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra has been in correspondence with the EU Commission on our listed status application for pet travel since its initial submission in 2019, and our re-submission in February 2020. The decision to list the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies as a Part 2 listed third country for pet travel was taken via a vote at the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed.

We have always been clear that we meet all the requirements for a Part 1 listed third country status, and have one of the most rigorous pet checking regimes in Europe to protect our biosecurity. We will continue to press the EU Commission for Part 1 listed status.

**Deidre Brock:**

[\[128196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the UK's applications for listed status under the EU Pet Travel Scheme.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra's initial application to be listed as a Part 1 listed third country for pet travel was submitted to the EU Commission in 2019. This application was updated, but not materially changed in February 2020. We have no plans to publish these applications at this time.

## ■ **Pet Travel Scheme: Guide Dogs**

**Deidre Brock:**

[\[128191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proposals the Government has made to the EU on future pet travel arrangements to address the needs of assistance dog owners.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra has routinely highlighted to the EU Commission the impacts our listed status will have on users of assistance dogs. We are also proactively and positively engaging with the assistance dog community and relevant stakeholders on the impacts on dog movements to the EU after the end of the transition period. We will continue to closely work with assistance dog organisations to share the latest advice and guidance (in accessible formats) with their members on pet travel requirements.

On 3 December 2020 the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed of the EU voted in favour of giving the United Kingdom Part 2 listed status for the purposes of non-commercial pet travel after the transition period.

Part 2 listed status means similar health requirements to travel to the EU as now. However, new documentation will be required for pets and assistance dogs. We intend to publish further guidance shortly on what this development means for travellers, on GOV.UK.

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.

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.

**■ Pet Travel Scheme: Northern Ireland****Deidre Brock:**[\[128193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government has plans to streamline the pet travel arrangements between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland from 1 January 2021 to address the needs of cross-border communities.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Pet travel is a devolved matter. For health and documentary requirements and future plans for pet travel between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, travellers should seek advice from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Marine in the Republic of Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

**Deidre Brock:**[\[128194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether there will be changes to rules on pet travel between Northern Ireland and Great Britain from 1 January 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

On 3 December 2020 the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF) of the EU voted in favour of giving the United Kingdom Part 2 listed status for



the purposes of non-commercial pet travel after the transition period. We intend to publish further guidance shortly on what this development means for travellers from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, on GOV.uk.

## ■ Potatoes: Northern Ireland

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[127622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) the Northern Ireland Executive and (b) other stakeholders on the enabling of importation of seed and ware potatoes from Great Britain to Northern Ireland after the end of the transition period.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra understands the challenging position of businesses that export seed and ware potatoes to the EU and NI and is working together with DAERA and EU officials with the aim of ensuring that both trade and the movement of goods will continue at the end of the Transition Period.

The UK government is engaging with businesses and other stakeholders on this issue and further Government support that could be provided to address the new requirements on sanitary and phytosanitary goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. This includes looking at the inspection fees associated with phytosanitary certification, should ware and seed potato exports be permitted, and the support that could be offered to minimise or eliminate these costs.

Defra has been explaining the transitional provisions to businesses, also suggesting that both the seeds and phytosanitary issues can be mitigated by moving seed and other propagating material and commodities such as ware potatoes before 31 December in anticipation of an equivalence agreement being reached on, or shortly after this date as well as the lifting of plant health import restrictions.

Defra is working with the EU to reach a reciprocal agreement on equivalence and to remove the plant health prohibitions, including those on seed and ware potatoes, as soon as possible. There have been two discussions with EU officials on 11 and 13 November where the EU have been exploring the most suitable legal routes for granting equivalence to the UK, however they have not given an indication of the timeline for this yet.

Defra submitted a response to the EU on 20 November, setting out the UK's legislation for seed marketing and plant health controls together with our evidence dossier which sets out our controls and data for meeting plant health and seed certification requirements. We received a further response on 4 December and we responded on 11 December providing additional information to the EU.

## ■ Veterinary Services: Medical Treatments

**Luke Pollard:** [\[127646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the level of transparency in relation to treatment costs in the veterinary industry.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[130213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has of the effectiveness of the regulation of treatment costs in the veterinary industry.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) is the regulator for the veterinary profession. It provides general advice to members on fees in its Code of Conduct: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/practice-information-and-fees/>.

The fees are generally set by the market between the vet and the client, but the RCVS could intervene if individual vets charged prices which were so disproportionate that they amounted to disgraceful professional conduct.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Afghanistan: Press Freedom

**Imran Ahmad Khan:** [\[128311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Afghani counterpart on supporting freedom of the press in that country following the assassination of Malala Maiwand.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government is deeply concerned by the murder of Afghan journalist Malala Maiwand and her driver on 10 December. The Minister for South Asia publicly condemned the murder of Malala Maiwand and her driver, and noted the UK's condemnation of the murders. Her Majesty's Ambassador to Afghanistan also expressed her public condolences and urged an investigation.

Afghanistan remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. In 2019, the UK provided over £250,000 to projects focused on the safety of journalists, particularly female journalists, and improving access to information. The British Embassy in Kabul regularly raises media freedom with the Afghan government. The UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, discussed human rights issues including media freedom with the Afghan Human Rights Minister, Dr Sima Samar, on 17 November. We also regularly meet with Afghan journalists and media organisations to understand the challenges they face and how they can best be supported.

## ■ China: Overseas Aid

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[127624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to completely end UK aid to China.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Foreign Secretary said to the House on 26 November, there is still a case for some collaboration on development with China. As a major driver of global growth with increasing presence on the global stage China has to be part of finding solutions to global challenges. We offer expertise and skills to help tackle global issues like climate change, where action by China is critical to reaching our global climate goals, as well as using Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fund the ODA eligible portion of the costs of UK diplomatic staff in China, Chinese Chevening scholars and the British Council's ODA eligible activity in China.

## ■ Nigeria: Boko Haram

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[128315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Nigerian counterpart on the operations of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

**James Duddridge:**

For over a decade, Boko Haram has caused immense suffering to communities in North East Nigeria. The UK Government is committed to helping Nigeria tackle the threat posed by the group, and other terrorist groups, in the region. I raised the conflict with the President's Chief of Staff, Ibrahim Gambari, on 29 June. I have also reiterated to Parliament the UK Government's condemnation of all attacks by terrorist groups in North East Nigeria, including Boko Haram. In November, Nick Dyer, UK Special Envoy on Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, met representatives of the Nigerian Government in Abuja and North East Nigeria to push for action on deteriorating food insecurity in the North East. The British High Commissioner in Abuja also regularly raises the conflict at senior levels within the Nigerian Government.

We will continue to provide a comprehensive package of security, humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to Nigeria to help tackle the threat and support affected communities.

## ■ Overseas Aid: Gulf States

**Andy Slaughter:**

[\[128101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how many projects his Department applied for under the Integrated Activity Fund (IAF) in each financial year since 2016-17; and what the (a) allocated budget and (b) actual spending was for each project.

**James Cleverly:**

We do not disclose information related to Integrated Activity Fund projects to maintain the confidence and confidentiality of our Gulf partners.

■ **Palm Oil****Ben Lake:**[\[128230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to end environmental and ecological destruction arising from the production of palm oil.

**James Duddridge:**

The Government is using a combination of diplomatic engagement, policy measures and development assistance to work towards ensuring all palm oil is being produced sustainably. Through the Partnerships for Forests programme, we provide support to develop industry standards for deforestation-free palm oil production, and work with companies, civil society groups and governments to develop and test new ways of growing palm oil, which provides sustainable jobs and livelihoods and protects forests. FCDO also funds the Tropical Forest Alliance, which brings together over 160 companies, governments and civil society group, working to end deforestation associated with palm oil and other agriculture commodities.

The Government recently set out a legislative proposal for a Due Diligence Obligation, which would prohibit larger UK companies from using commodities that have not been produced in line with national laws in the countries of origin. This follows recommendations made by the independent Global Resource Initiative Task Force. Building on this, for the COP26 climate change meeting in Glasgow in 2021, we are working to bring together countries that produce and that buy palm oil, to forge a stronger partnership that will lead to more international action to tackle deforestation associated with palm oil and other agricultural commodities, and support sustainable trade and production.

■ **Press Freedom****Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[128312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support freedom of the press in countries listed in the lowest category of the World Press Freedom Index, as compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are working to support media around the world to find sustainable models to work in challenging environments. As the Foreign Secretary affirmed at the World Press Freedom Day Conference on 9 December, the UK will use its G7 presidency to promote media freedom. The Foreign Secretary, along with the Minister of State responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, also represented the UK at the virtual Global Conference on Media Freedom in November, where we

recommitted members of the Media Freedom Coalition to working together to improve media freedom and the safety of journalists at home and abroad.

Our Overseas Development assistance programmes have included support to independent media in countries listed in the lowest category, such as in Iraq, where the Al-Mirbad radio station provides a vital public service, and Egypt, where we have funded capacity-building activities for local journalists. In Sudan, we are supporting journalists to report on the Covid-19 pandemic accurately and responsibly and are helping senior media leaders to find new models to help media business viability. We have also helped establish the Media Freedom Coalition, jointly co-chaired with Canada, to defend media freedom. The Coalition, whose membership has expanded, has issued statements on situations of concern including Egypt and Belarus. We are supporting the UNESCO Global Media Defence Fund who are providing support to journalists working in challenging situations.

#### ■ **Taiwan: World Health Organisation**

**Paul Girvan:**

[127625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government supports the Republic of China (Taiwan) becoming a full member of World Health Organisation.

**Nigel Adams:**

Membership of the World Health Organisation is open only to states recognised by the UN. However, the UK supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations where statehood is not a prerequisite for their participation.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ **Care Homes: Coronavirus**

**Bill Esterson:**

[98955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average time taken for care homes to receive covid-19 test results in (a) Sefton, (b) North West England, (c) England and (d) the UK.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 October 2020]:* We do not hold the data in the format requested. Test turnaround data is available at the following link:

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

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Jon Trickett:** [\[100296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on and (b) assessment he has made of the potential merits of devolving Public Health covid-19 responsibilities to city-region areas in England.

**Helen Whately:**

Local government has a vital role in delivering most of the strands of our plan for controlling the virus and returning to normality including:

- rapidly upscaling community testing and using local knowledge to trace the hardest to reach contacts;
- playing a key role in the deployment of the vaccine; and
- co-ordinating multi-agency outbreak management response including through local resilience forums.

**Steve McCabe:** [\[118488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance has been issued to hospitals on discharging covid-19 positive patients back home who live with another vulnerable person.

**Steve McCabe:** [\[118489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance has been issued to hospitals on discharging covid-19 patients back home when they require care and support with daily living from another member of their household.

**Helen Whately:**

National Health Service providers are expected to begin planning for discharge at the point of admission, which should include practical arrangements, care requirements and the nature of home environment the person is being discharged to. This is particularly important for patients who have tested positive for COVID-19. The Hospital Discharge Service Requirements last published August 2020 provides further guidance on the discharge process, including to support conversations with patients, relatives and carers during their hospital stay. The Requirements are available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/912199/Hospital\\_Discharge\\_Policy\\_1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/912199/Hospital_Discharge_Policy_1.pdf)

Public Health England have provided additional guidance on stepdown of infection control precautions when discharging COVID-19 patients.

**■ DNACPR Decisions: Care Homes****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[128889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an estimate of how many Do Not Attempt CPR forms unlawfully applied to the files of older

care home residents between 1 March and 1 June 2020 (a) have been reviewed in consultation with the individual or their representative and (b) remain in place.

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[128890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will instruct care providers to review all Do Not Attempt CPR notices applied on older care home residents' files since 1 March 2020 in consultation with the individuals or their representative.

**Helen Whately:**

The Adult Social Care Winter Plan reinforces that any advance care decision, including Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions, should be fully discussed with the individual and their family where possible and appropriate, and signed by the clinician responsible for their care.

The Department has asked the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to review how DNACPR decisions were used during the COVID-19 pandemic. This work is ongoing. The review will take a national view of how these decisions were made and will inform national learning and good practice development as the nation continues to respond to the pandemic. The CQC is working closely with stakeholders, users of services and providers. Interim findings were published on 3 December, with a final report due in early 2021.

## ■ Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[128745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on negotiations for an equivalent scheme to replace EHIC cards when they expire on 31 December 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

From January 2021, people protected under the Withdrawal Agreement will continue to be entitled to a United Kingdom-issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). For those not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, their EHIC may not be valid from January 2021.

For people not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, the future of reciprocal healthcare arrangements between the UK and European Union are subject to negotiations, which are ongoing.

## ■ Joint Biosecurity Centre: Contracts

**Andy Slaughter:**

[\[97479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department included key performance indicators in its contracts with (a) Deloitte and (b) Boston Consulting Group for those companies' work in the Joint Biosecurity Centre.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 5 October 2020]:* The Joint Biosecurity Centre does not currently employ any consultant from Deloitte or Boston Consulting Group.

## ■ Learning Disability and Mental Health Services: Nurses

**Jeremy Hunt:**

[\[91856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) mental health and (b) learning disability nurses were employed in the NHS in each year from 2010 to 2020.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 11 November 2020]:* NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups but not staff working in primary care, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the number of mental health and learning disability nurses, full time equivalent (FTE) employed in the National Health Service as at September each year along with the latest figure as of July 2020.

	MENTAL HEALTH NURSES (FTE)	LEARNING DISABILITIES NURSES (FTE)
September 2010	40,247	5,137
September 2011	39,024	4,667
September 2012	38,135	4,311
September 2013	37,397	4,035
September 2014	36,581	3,776
September 2015	35,671	3,577
September 2016	35,488	3,442
September 2017	35,390	3,305
September 2018	35,835	3,234
September 2019	36,696	3,186
July 2020	37,421	3,217

Source: NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics, NHS Digital - July 2020

Notes:

Mental health and learning disability service provision is also commissioned by the NHS from private sector providers. The figures do not reflect staffing in the private sector.

Further information, including on different methodologies for counting the mental health workforce, is published by NHS Digital at the following link:



<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/december-2018>

## ■ Urology, Neurology and Dermatology

**Robert Halfon:** [115609]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when hospitals will resume face-to-face consultations within urology, neurology and dermatology departments during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

The resumption of face-to-face appointments for different specialities is dependent on clinical necessity, local circumstances and capacity.

The importance of providing face-to-face appointments for those who need them has been clearly communicated. Virtual consultations have been invaluable in protecting staff and patients from avoidable risk of infection during the pandemic. However, we appreciate that they are not appropriate in all cases and around two-thirds of outpatients are now being seen face-to-face.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

**Caroline Nokes:** [128144]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding she has allocated for a temporary asylum accommodation centre in Barton Stacey.

**Caroline Nokes:** [128145]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for how long she plans to use the proposed temporary asylum accommodation centre in Barton Stacey.

**Caroline Nokes:** [128146]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what lessons her Department has learned from the use of Napier and Penally barracks as temporary asylum accommodation centres.

**Caroline Nokes:** [128147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what health care services will be provided on site at future temporary asylum accommodation centres established by her Department.

**Chris Philp:**

The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation. During these unprecedented times the Home Office has acted quickly to source contingency accommodation to create additional capacity to ensure that our obligations can be met in full.

The length of time such sites remain in use is dependent on future demand for asylum accommodation, however we are clear contingency accommodation will only be used for as long as absolutely necessary.

The Napier Barracks and Penally training camp sites have been in operation for almost three months. They are fit for purpose, safe and equipped in line with existing contractual requirements for asylum accommodation. We continue to work closely with our provider and partners to identify opportunities for improvement, as we do across our entire accommodation estate.

We work with local stakeholders, including the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group and health boards, to ensure access to healthcare services for service users in asylum support accommodation.

### ■ Immigrants: Employment

**Paul Blomfield:** [\[127533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time is for the Home Office Employers Checking Service to respond to requests by employers for confirmation of an employee's eligibility to work.

**Kevin Foster:**

The information is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

### ■ Internet: Weapons

**Stephen Timms:** [\[117932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to tackle the online sale of illegal weapons in the forthcoming legislation on online harms; and if she will make a statement.

**James Brokenshire:**

The Online Harms White Paper set out an indicative list of harms that would be included in the scope of the legislation, which included the online sale of illegal weapons. While the list isn't exhaustive or fixed it provided the starting point for our policy development.

We have published the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation, which sets out the new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online.

The new regulatory framework will establish a duty of care on companies to improve the safety of their users online, overseen and enforced by an independent regulator, and will take particularly strong action against the most egregious illegal harms.

We will follow the Full Government Response by introducing Online Harms legislation when parliamentary time allows.

The government will set out in secondary legislation the priority harms for three types of harms: illegal harms, harms to children, and legal but harmful content.

This sits alongside the Government's continuing action to tackle serious violence, including the use of weapons such as knives. The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 strengthens the law in relation to knives and we have in place some of the toughest firearms controls in the world to prevent criminals gaining access to dangerous and illegal weapons.

## ■ Offences against Children

**Daisy Cooper:**

[127665]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish her Department's paper on group-based child sexual exploitation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Child sexual abuse is a despicable crime and the Government is committed to keeping children and young people safe from all forms of abuse.

On 15 December 2020 the Home Secretary published a paper titled 'Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation: Characteristics of Offending', which draws together insights from multiple strands of work conducted by the Home Office to better understand this type of offending.

The paper sets out the best available evidence on the nature of group-based child sexual exploitation, the characteristics of offenders, their networks and the context in which these crimes are committed. The paper can be found online at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-characteristics-of-offending](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-characteristics-of-offending) .

Further action and commitments to tackle this and other forms of child sexual abuse will be set out in the soon-to-be-published Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy.

This paper has been scrutinised by an External Reference Group, who provided constructive challenge on this complex issue. The Group was comprised of experts from academia and research, victims' groups, third sector organisations, parliamentarians and representatives of the criminal justice system.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[127666]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has established an external reference group of experts to review the Government's research on group-based child sexual exploitation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

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**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[127667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date she plans to publish the child sexual abuse strategy.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government will soon publish a first of its kind national strategy on tackling all forms of child sexual abuse. This will follow on from publication of the paper on group-based child sexual exploitation, and backed by the Government's commitment to continue to provide the additional £30m for child sexual abuse and exploitation provided at SR19, will set out clear actions and outline our long-term ambition to ensure all government departments, frontline agencies and wider partners, continue to improve our response to tackle this heinous crime. At the same time, it remains our top priority to respond to additional risks and challenges raised by COVID-19 to ensure we are tackling offending, protecting children and supporting victims and survivors during this difficult time.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

**Rehman Chishti:**

[\[128121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her French counterpart on the regulatory framework on the registration of small vessels and the enforcement of those regulations in the context of preventing small vessels being used in illegal Channel crossings.

**Chris Philp:**

Small boats used by migrants to cross the Channel are varied in type, origin and seaworthiness. While there is attraction in any enterprise which offers to reduce the supply of craft for these dangerous, illegally-facilitated and unnecessary crossings, we are not of the view that these proposals would materially affect the threat. This is because many of these vessels are insubstantial; a good number are stolen or otherwise misappropriated from legitimate owners; and the origin of these vessels is

not confined to France. Therefore, any adoption of such an increased regulatory posture is viewed as a disproportionate and less effective approach to reducing supply of boats and opportunity for crossings.

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

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Biodiversity: Property Development

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[127522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of facilitating biodiversity net gain on a non-mandatory basis for projects progressed through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The 25 Year Environment Plan seeks to embed the principle of 'environmental net gain' for development. As part of this there are a number of ways in which biodiversity net gain could be implemented through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime and we will be consulting on further details.

### ■ Building Safety Fund

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to extend the deadline for the submission of claims forms to the Building Safety Fund for the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has been working at pace and with building owners to process the registrations to the Building Safety Fund and to ensure that as many buildings as possible can benefit from 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, we announced on 17 December 2020 that building owners will now have until 30 June 2021 to complete their applications.

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to allocate additional funding to the Building Safety Fund to support leaseholders with the costs of remediation work in cases where they have been unable to secure an EWS1 form.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government has made £1.6 billion of public funding available for the remediation of unsafe cladding on high rise residential buildings to make homes safer, quicker. In addition to funding the removal of unsafe cladding, Government is also providing expert technical and pre-tender financial support for successful fund applicants.

**■ Building Safety Fund: Portsmouth**

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[127629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to make a decision on the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of the three buildings at Eastside Plaza, PO1.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[127630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to make a decision on the application to the Building Safety Fund in respect of the three buildings at Admiralty Quarter, PO1.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund. Application progress is communicated to registrants whom we expect will ensure that their residents are kept fully informed.

**■ Buildings: Fire Prevention**

**Mr David Davis:** [\[127466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to criminalise the behaviour of developers who (a) falsify information and (b) are dishonest about their compliance with fire safety standards.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Where a developer dishonestly falsifies information of any kind with a view to profiting from it, that would be likely to constitute an offence of fraud by false representation under the Fraud Act 2006.

**■ Buildings: Insulation**

**Afzal Khan:** [\[128257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the delivery of funding to support the remediation of private buildings with ACM cladding.

**Afzal Khan:** [\[128258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will accelerate the speed at which funding for the remediation of private buildings with ACM cladding is delivered.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[128260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the level of funding available for the remediation of residential dwellings with ACM cladding.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[128261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) increasing and (b) accelerating the availability of funding for the remediation of residential buildings with ACM cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Leaseholders are protected from the cost of removing unsafe aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding on high rise residential buildings. The remediation of over 50 per cent of privately owned high-rise residential buildings with unsafe ACM cladding is being paid for by building owners and developers, or through warranty or insurance claims, without passing the cost to residents. The Government has committed to fund the remediation of all unsafe ACM on private sector high rise residential buildings, except where a warranty claim has been accepted.

Where funding alone has not been enough to increase the pace of remediation we have provided direct expert support to projects. We have also appointed construction experts who are reviewing remediation timescales and identifying what can be done to increase pace. Where building owners have failed to act, despite Government support, the Government has supported enforcement action by Fire and Rescue Services and local authorities. From December, those responsible for buildings where remediation is not forecast to start on site by the end of 2020 will be publicly named, and we are clear that works to remove unsafe ACM cladding must be completed by the end of 2021. Information on the progress and pace of ACM remediation and fund allocation is available in the Building Safety Data Release at:

[www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data)

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many additional professionals able to undertake external wall surveys have been trained from 13 October and 1 December 2020.

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has allocated funding to support professional bodies to increase the number of skilled professionals who can undertake external wall assessments.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The department is working with professional bodies to scale up capacity to carry out external wall system assessments. To speed up valuations where EWS1 forms are justified, the Government is providing nearly £700,000 funding to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors to train up to 2,000 more assessors in 2021. The department

is also considering ways to ensure technical experts can continue to take on more challenging work.

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of remediation work for buildings deemed not to be fire-safe.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The programme has prioritised remediation of combustible cladding – and particularly ACM cladding – because it acts as a fire accelerant and poses the greatest risk of fire spread. We have made £1.6 billion available to support the remediation of unsafe cladding.

## ■ Evictions: Coronavirus

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[128249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the moratorium on evictions due to the covid-19 outbreak beyond 31 December 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

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

The Government has recently announced that the measures previously put in place to protect commercial tenants from eviction if they are unable to pay their rent during the pandemic are being extended to 31 March 2021. The measure is enacted via Section 82 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 which provides for a moratorium on forfeitures of commercial leases due to the non-payment of rent.

Many commercial landlords have shown flexibility, understanding and commitment to protect businesses during an exceptionally challenging time. The Government is clear that where businesses can pay any or all of their rent, they should do so.

The merit of this final extension is that it will give landlords and tenants a further three months to come to an agreement on unpaid rent. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor levels of rent payment and the health of both tenants and landlords. The move will also support businesses worst affected by the pandemic, such as bars and restaurants, helping them to rebuild over the winter period. This is in addition to putting in place one of the world's most comprehensive economic responses to protect jobs, incomes, and business throughout and beyond this pandemic.



## ■ Housing Associations: Energy

**Esther McVey:**

[\[128155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has in place to support housing associations in retrofitting their older housing stock with energy efficient measures.

**Christopher Pincher:**

In the Charter for Social Housing Residents – Social Housing White Paper published on 17 November 2020, we committed to review the Decent Homes Standard. We will consider if it should be updated, including how it can better support the decarbonisation and energy efficiency of social homes.

At the Chancellor's summer economic update, the Government announced a £50 million demonstrator project to start the decarbonisation of social housing during 2020/21. At the Spending Review 2020, The Chancellor announced £60 million of further funding for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, to continue upgrading the least efficient social housing.

The Prime Minister announced an extension to the Green Homes Grant which social landlords are eligible to bid for. This will fund up to two thirds of the cost of hiring tradespeople to upgrade the energy performance of homes.

## ■ Housing: Building Alterations

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[127494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will make an assessment of the efficacy of the rules on permitted development in respect of loft conversions to ensure that such conversions which overlook other properties do not infringe on rights to privacy.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The householder permitted development rights seek to strike a balance between allowing individual freedom to carry out development while protecting the interests of neighbours. They are therefore subject to certain conditions and limitations to minimise their effects. For example, any loft extension cannot increase the volume of the original roof space by more than 50m<sup>3</sup>, or in the case of terraced houses by more than 40m<sup>3</sup>, and any window installed in a wall or roof slope forming a side elevation of a house must be obscure-glazed and non-opening. We have no plans to review the rights.

## ■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

**Esther McVey:**

[\[128153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to set zero carbon standards for new housing.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it. We must ensure that the energy efficiency standards we set through the Building Regulations for new homes put us on track to meet the 2050 target.

In October 2019, we launched the first stage of a two-part consultation on Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations, which proposed an ambitious uplift in the energy efficiency of new homes through the introduction of a Future Homes Standard from 2025. We expect that homes built to the Future Homes Standard will have carbon dioxide emissions 75-80 per cent lower than those built to current Building Regulations standards, which means they will be fit for the future, with low carbon heating and very high fabric standards. These homes will be 'zero carbon ready', with the ability to become fully zero carbon homes over time as the electricity grid decarbonises, without the need for further costly retrofitting work.

We will be publishing the Government response to the Future Homes Standard interim uplift consultation as soon as possible. This will set out a roadmap to the Future Homes Standard.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Afzal Khan:**[\[128259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Second Report of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee: Cladding: progress of remediation, HC 172, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the conclusion that £15 billion may be required to address all fire safety defects in every high-rise or high-risk residential building.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government has made £1.6 billion of public funding available for the remediation of unsafe cladding on high rise residential buildings to make homes safer, quicker. In addition to funding the removal of unsafe cladding, Government is also providing expert technical and pre-tender financial support for successful fund applicants. The Government's focus on unsafe cladding on high rise residential buildings reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height, and funding will remove the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding. Government funding should not be the only means of remediating high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding and both the Social and Private sector are expected to play a part in ensuring that their buildings are made safe. The remediation of over 50 per cent of privately owned high-rise residential buildings with unsafe ACM cladding will be paid for by building owners and developers, or through warranty or insurance claims - without passing the cost to residents and leaseholders. We expect building owners and developers to step up in a similar way for other kinds of unsafe cladding.

It is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the costs of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause. The Government has asked Michael Wade to accelerate work with leaseholders and the financial sector to develop proposals which help to protect leaseholders, whilst also helping to protect the taxpayer, on which will be providing an update.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[128262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to make funding available for (a) waking watch or (b) other interim measures for residential dwellings undertaking remediation work to remove ACM cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The most effective way to make buildings with unsafe cladding safe and eliminate the need for interim measures and associated costs is to have the unsafe cladding removed as quickly as possible. That is why we have prioritised £1.6 billion of public subsidy on remediation of unsafe cladding. However, we recognise residents' concerns about the cost of waking watch measures. The Government has therefore announced a new £30 million fund to pay for the costs of installing an alarm system in buildings with unsafe cladding. Common alarm systems will enable costly waking watch measures to be replaced in buildings waiting to have unsafe cladding removed.

## ■ Tenancy Deposit Schemes

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[128295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information his Department holds on the proportion of private landlords using a deposit protection scheme who make use of the (a) insurance and (b) custodian options; and how many tenancies where those options have been used have lead to disputes over deposit repayments.

**Christopher Pincher:**

All landlords must protect any deposit taken in connection with an assured shorthold tenancy in a Government-approved Tenancy Deposit Protection scheme. The most recent data received from the Tenancy Deposit Protection schemes showed 2,185,270 (52 per cent) deposits protected in an insurance scheme and 1,989,718 (48 per cent) within a custodial scheme on 30 September 2020. In the 6 months to 30 September 2020, there were 6,667 disputes adjudicated upon by insurance schemes and 6,465 disputes adjudicated upon by custodial schemes.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Data Protection: Japan****Bill Esterson:**[\[128149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the exemptions for public procurement in (a) Article 8.84 3(a), (b) Article 8.85 3(a), (c) Article 8.73 3(a), (d) Article 8.73 3(b) and (e) footnote [2] in the Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Japan for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership include the processing of (i) data, (ii) data flows, (iii) data transfer, (iv) access to data, (v) source code and (vi) algorithms in (A) present and (B) future forms of public data created by (I) artificial intelligence, (II) automated decision-making and (III) digital technology; and if she will make a statement.

**Greg Hands:**

Articles 8.73 (Source Code), 8.84 (Cross-border transfer of information by electronic means) and 8.85 (Location of computing facilities) of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) contain exemptions for government procurement. These exemptions create a derogation from some or all the obligations contained in Articles 8.73, 8.84 and 8.85 for government procurement activities falling within the scope of these Articles. This derogation would apply to government procurement activities regarding artificial intelligence, automated decision-making and digital technologies to the extent such activities would otherwise be prohibited by these Articles.

**■ Drugs: New Zealand****Gareth Thomas:**[\[127462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had, as part of trade negotiations, with her New Zealand counterpart on pharmaceutical patent extensions; and if she will make a statement.

**Greg Hands:**

The Secretary of State for International Trade has not had any discussions, as part of trade negotiations, with her New Zealand counterpart on pharmaceutical patent extensions.

**■ Eggs: Import Duties****Sarah Champion:**[\[127566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department plans to reduce or remove any tariffs in the egg industry for non-EU countries in 2021.

**Greg Hands:**

The agricultural products that are protected by tariffs have been selected according to the principles set out in the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act 2018. Where tariff lines have been retained in sectors such as agriculture, this has been done to tailor

the policy to the needs of the UK economy and to balance the interest of both producers and consumers.

Analysis showed that some production would be significantly impacted in an adverse manner by liberalisation. Therefore, tariffs on certain products, such as eggs, are being retained but simplified.

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[127567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to research published by Wageningen University in its report The Competitiveness of the UK Egg Sector, an international comparison of production costs, base year 2018, published in 2019, whether her Department has carried out an assessment of the effect on the British egg industry in the event that tariffs are reduced or removed across different tariff lines.

**Greg Hands:**

The Government has followed an evidence -based approach throughout the development of the UK Global Tariff (UKGT).

The Government used a range of analytical tools and evidence to develop the UKGT, including responses to the public consultation and analysis of international trade flows. This evidence was carefully considered along with a range of factors, such as the five principles set out in the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act 2018.

■ **Palm Oil: Imports**

**Ben Lake:**

[\[128228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of banning the import of palm oil into the UK.

**Ben Lake:**

[\[128229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to prevent the import of unsustainably produced palm oil into the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not propose to ban the import of palm oil. 70% of the UK's palm oil imports were from sustainable sources in 2019. An import ban on unsustainable palm oil risks substitution with other oils which typically require significantly more land to produce and may lead to greater deforestation. We continue to work with producer countries to tackle the underlying issues of deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change. Last month, the Government tabled a new 'due diligence' requirement under the Environment Bill to tackle illegal deforestation.

■ **Postal Services: Japan**

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[127463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the UK-Japan Comprehensive Partnership Agreement, what assessment she has made of the

implications of that agreement for the organisation of postal services; and if she will make a statement.

**Greg Hands:**

The UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement ensures that both parties have the right to operate a universal postal service and to define the Universal Service Obligation they wish to maintain.

The agreement also safeguards opportunities for UK and Japanese postal and courier service suppliers to operate in each other's market on a fair basis, through reciprocal obligations on transparency, independence of the regulator and prevention of cross-subsidisation.

These rights and obligations are standard practice for UK Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and mirror the approach taken in the FTAs the UK has been party to whilst a member of the European Union.

■ **Sustainable Development: Canada**

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[127460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government will honour its commitment in the joint interpretive instrument in the UK-Canada trade agreement to review the sustainable development commitments in that agreement in consultation with civil society including trade unions to ensure that those commitments are effectively enforceable; and if she will make a statement.

**Greg Hands:**

As set out in the Joint Interpretative Instrument, the UK and Canada are committed to an early review of the sustainable development provisions in the UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement (TCA), including with a view to the effective enforceability of the TCA provisions on labour and the environment.

The Joint Interpretative Instrument sets out that both Parties are committed to seeking the advice of stakeholders, including employers and business organisations, in the implementation of these provisions.

This replicates the commitment that was set out in the Joint Interpretative Instrument to the EU and Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

■ **Trade Agreements: USA**

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[128314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has had with the transition team for President-Elect Joseph Biden on a future trade deal between the UK and the US.

**Greg Hands:**

The Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and British Embassy Washington (BEW) are responsible for the relationship with the Biden/Harris

transition team. The Department for International Trade (DIT), works closely with the FCDO and BEW in advancing UK national objectives, including on trade.

The incoming US administration is currently in the process of nominating members of its Cabinet and appointing senior staff. In line with previous practice, the transition team is limiting foreign government contact with the President-elect's appointees and nominees ahead of the inauguration and (where applicable) Senate confirmation process. We look forward to working closely with the new team once this process has concluded.

DIT Ministers continue to engage senior US political figures on a bipartisan basis, including positive discussions on UK-US trade negotiations held between the Secretary of State and Senator Wyden (Dem) and Senator Portman (Rep) since 2 December.

UK and US negotiators continue to be in regular contact during the Presidential transition period.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Criminal Proceedings

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[128083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to tackle delays in court proceedings in the criminal justice system.

**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.

As one of the first among other comparable jurisdictions globally to resume jury trials, our Crown Courts currently list thousands of cases each week, including the listing of over 230 jury trials. We have invested a record £142m to improve court and tribunal buildings – the biggest single investment in court estate maintenance for more than 20 years – and are spending £110m on a range of emergency measures to tackle the impact of COVID-19, including the recruitment of 1,600 additional staff. The opening of 17 Nightingale Courts has unlocked vital additional capacity, and we have plans to open a further 40 Nightingale court rooms.

We continue to build on these steps and are working closely with criminal justice partners to further improve performance. We have piloted temporary 'COVID operating hours' at seven Crown Court sites and a targeted consultation is underway on the potential further roll out of COVID operating hours.

## ■ Criminal Proceedings: Coronavirus

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[127513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings in the report entitled, The impact of Covid-19 on the voluntary sector in criminal justice, published by Clinks on 7 December 2020.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Clinks is the primary voluntary sector infrastructure body representing organisations working with offenders and their families. It is grant funded by the Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service. Throughout the period of the pandemic, I have asked Clinks to provide regular information on the status and experience of their members and the wider sector. Many of the findings of the Clinks' report have already been considered and, where possible, acted upon. The report will be used as part of the work to oversee recovery from the pandemic for prison and probation services, and as part of the exercise to learn lessons from the exceptional measures that continue to be needed to prevent the transmission of the virus.

## ■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Staff

**Mr David Lammy:** [\[128862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff employed by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service have been employed in courts and tribunals in each of the last five years.

**Chris Philp:**

Total number of HMCTS staff who work in operational roles in Courts and Tribunal locations using Court and Tribunal jurisdictions.

### COURTS & TRIBS HEADCOUNT

	HMCTS staff	Agency staff	Total
as at 31 Dec 19	11772	1579	13351
as at 31 Dec 18	12343	1284	13627
as at 31 Dec 17	11998	1684	13682
as at 31 Dec 16	12916	1229	14145
as at 31 Dec 15	13870	881	14751

This excludes staff who are based in Courts and Tribunals who do not work directly in a Court and Tribunal such as some HR colleagues that work out of a Court location but are not working in a Court.

We have also excluded staff who would not be covered by selecting the jurisdictional split such as Enforcement, Frontline Support, HQ, Multi jurisdiction, Probate staff and



NBC staff. This does not include contractor details because we do not hold this data in our HR data.

## ■ Judicial Review

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[127495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to any published criteria or guidance including, but not limited to, the Administrative Court Judicial Review Guide 2020 and Practice Direction 54E (Planning Court Claims), what the process is for the allocation of cases identified as Aarhus Convention claims in Form N461 to judges in the Planning and Administrative Courts; and if he will make a statement.

**Chris Philp:**

Judges dealing with Planning Court cases are authorised to do so by the President of the Queen's Bench Division, based on their experience and expertise in dealing with such matters. Cases requiring planning expertise are allocated to an available Planning Court Judge.

## ■ Wakefield Prison

**Imran Ahmad Khan:**

[\[127695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the cost per prisoner was of operating HMP Wakefield in (a) the 2019-20 financial year and (b) the 2020 financial year to date.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The cost per prisoner at HMP Wakefield in 2019/20 was £35,538 in direct unit costs and £52,402 in overall unit costs (this figure includes apportionment of overheads etc.). The direct cost per prisoner for 2020/21 on year to date is £21,094. The 2020/21 figure is to the end of October only.

We've invested in our prisons to make them safer and more effective at delivering the rehabilitation that will cut reoffending and crime.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) routinely publishes direct and overall resource expenditure for each private and public sector prison in England and Wales on an annual basis after the end of each financial year. The information can be accessed in the Prison and Probation Performance Statistics pages for each relevant financial year on the website <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-performance-statistics-2019-to-2020>

## ■ Young Offenders: Restraint Techniques

**Christian Wakeford:**

[\[127704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what data his Department collects on the practice of (a) handcuffing and (b) restraining children in the criminal justice system.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Government is clear that the use of restraint on children needs to be proportionate and reasonable.

The Home Office publishes annual statistics on the use of force by police in England and Wales including a breakdown by age -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-use-of-force-statistics>.

Data on the use of force and restraint on children in the youth custodial estate is recorded and collated locally in incident reports at each custodial establishment and this is aggregated annually in the "Youth Justice Statistics" report -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2018-to-2019>.

(current published data details incidents up to March 2019; the next data sets are due to be published in January 2021, for the period of April 2019 to March 2020).

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Aviation: EU Law

**Justin Madders:**

[\[127583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he is having with stakeholders on EU Aviation Safety Agency regulations and licensing; and how he plans to communicate those decisions to the aviation sector.

**Robert Courts:**

The Secretary of State, Ministers and officials have regular engagement with aviation and aerospace stakeholders to discuss the UK's preparations for leaving the EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) system. We will continue to engage with the sector to communicate the changes that will come into effect at the end of the year.

### ■ Aviation: Safety

**Damian Hinds:**

[\[128119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to amend the Air Navigation Directions 2017 to require the Civil Aviation Authority when considering airspace change proposals to undertake an assessment of the available safety data regarding all airspace users and publish a statement on how proposals satisfy the requirements of the operators and owners of all aircraft; and whether the post-implementation review of the airspace change proposal that came into force at Farnborough Airport in February 2020 will include an analysis of safety data.

**Robert Courts:**

The Air Navigation Directions 2017 are kept under review but there are no immediate plans to amend them.

When undertaking the post-implementation review of the Farnborough Airport airspace change, the Civil Aviation Authority will consider the safety and operational characteristics of this proposal, including available flight data, and then determine whether the proposal has met its regulatory requirements.

## ■ Buses: Renewable Fuels

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[\[130102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of buses in regular operation are powered solely by renewable fuels.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The table below shows the percentage of buses used as Public Service Vehicles by fuel consumption type, by metropolitan area status and country in 2019/20.

FUEL CONSUMPTION TYPE	LONDON	ENGLISH METROPOLITAN AREAS	ENGLISH NON-METROPOLITAN AREAS	ENGLAND	SCOTLAND	WALES	GREAT BRITAIN	ENGLAND OUTSIDE LONDON
Hydrogen	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Electric (not hybrid)	4%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Diesel-Hybrid	40%	5%	1%	14%	6%	0%	12%	3%
Methane/Biomethane	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Diesel	56%	94%	96%	84%	94%	100%	85%	95%
Other (including Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO))	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: DfT Annual Bus Statistics (BUS0609b)

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[128200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to publish the outcome of its consultation on Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential and Non-residential Buildings that closed in October 2019.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We are analysing the feedback from respondents and aim to make an announcement early next year.

**Jonathan Gullis:**

[\[129131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the On-Street Residential Scheme continues to be available; and whether (a) Stoke-on-Trent City Council and (b) Staffordshire County Council has (i) applied for and (ii) been allocated funding under that scheme.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) continues to be available to help Local Authorities with the up-front cost of installing chargepoints to encourage drivers without off-street parking to make the switch to zero emission vehicles. The Government doubled funding this year to £20 million, to ensure that more local authorities and residents can benefit from the scheme.

Neither Stoke-on-Trent City Council nor Staffordshire County Council have applied to the Scheme thus far. With funding still available for this financial year we would encourage all authorities to get in touch with the Scheme's delivery partner, the Energy Saving Trust, at the earliest opportunity.

**Large Goods Vehicle Drivers****Joy Morrissey:**[\[129117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to introduce (a) programmes for people to retrain as qualified HGV drivers and (b) other schemes to tackle the shortage of those drivers.

**Rachel Maclean:**

We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that HGV drivers who are out of work can find employment as quickly as possible. The Flexible Support Fund is available for unemployed drivers who need to renew their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC).

In addition, we are working with the sector to develop a suite of Trailblazer Apprenticeships to help them make the most of the apprenticeship levy. We have also provided a grant to Road to Logistics, a non-profit organisation, seeking to train ex-service personnel, the long term unemployed and ex-offenders to drive lorries.

**Off-payroll Working: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers****Matt Vickers:**[\[130261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of changes to IR35 tax status on the shortage of HGV drivers.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The introduction of changes to the off-payroll working rules announced by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs have been delayed until April 2021 to help businesses and individuals deal with the economic impact of COVID-19.

We will maintain a dialogue with the road haulage sector on this issue to assess whether the introduction has an impact on the HGV driver shortage.

**Railway Network****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[129136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to connect more towns to the railway network.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

As part of the levelling-up agenda, the Government announced the £500 million Restoring Your Railway fund in January to deliver its manifesto commitment and start reopening lines and stations, including connecting towns to the railway network. This year we have announced development funding for 25 proposals. This Restoring Your Railways expenditure is included as part of our continued significant investment in the rail network.

**Railways: Denton****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[127506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will ask Network Rail to remove the graffiti from the parapet of the Windmill Lane railway bridge in Denton, first reported to them by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish in September 2019.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

My officials have been in contact with colleagues in Network Rail who, in turn, I understand, have been in touch with your office. Network Rail apologise that this issue took so long to rectify.

I can confirm that the local maintenance team visited the site and cleaned the graffiti over the weekend of 12/13 December 2020.

Network Rail colleagues have confirmed they have updated your office of actions taken.

**Shipping: Exhaust Emissions****Bob Blackman:**[\[128660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the UK maritime industry on his Department's support for clean maritime.

**Robert Courts:**

My officials and I regularly engage the maritime industry on all matters that concern them, including reducing the sector's emissions, as decarbonising shipping is essential to achieve the target of net zero greenhouse gases across the economy by 2050.

The Clean Maritime Council recently discussed the Prime Minister's announcement of a £20m Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition to develop clean maritime technology.

Before this initiative, the Department funded a £1.5m competition for innovation in clean maritime and provided £193,897 in grant support through the Department's Transport Technology Research Innovation Grant Programme to early stage research projects related to clean maritime. Details of the grant winners are available, respectively, on the MarRI-UK website <sup>[1]</sup> and on GOV.UK <sup>[2]</sup>.

<sup>[1]</sup><https://www.marri-uk.org/funding-opportunities/clean-maritime-call/clean-maritime-call-winners>

<sup>[2]</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/879162/transport-technology-research-innovation-grants-t-trig-funding-winners.csv/preview](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879162/transport-technology-research-innovation-grants-t-trig-funding-winners.csv/preview)

## ■ Transport: Biofuels

**Marco Longhi:** **[130244]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment has he made of the effect on transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 of the introduction of biofuels in the (a) automotive sector and (b) rail sector.

**Marco Longhi:** **[130245]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using ethanol as a substitute for petrol in the automotive sector.

### **Rachel Maclean:**

Low carbon fuels, including biofuels, play a significant role in decarbonising road transport. The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), a certificate trading scheme, has been successful since 2008 in supporting a UK market for renewable fuels. In 2019, biofuel supplied under the RTFO saved 5,368kt of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; the equivalent of taking 2.3 million vehicles off the road for a full year.

Low carbon fuels will continue to contribute to meeting UK carbon budgets for decades to come, initially from conventional road vehicles but gradually shifting to heavier sectors such as aviation.

Biofuels are currently used in rail and are supported under the RTFO. In future assessments of long-term biofuel use in rail, we will consider the likely need for biofuels in other sectors, their potentially limited supply, and the existence of other viable low-carbon options available for powering trains.

In March 2020 the Department launched the consultation 'Introducing E10 Petrol' which proposed introducing petrol that contains up to 10% bioethanol, an increase from the current level of up to 5%. We are working hard to publish the Government Response as quickly as possible, and anticipate that any requirement to provide E10 would come into force in 2021. If combined with an increase in RTFO targets, the introduction of E10 could reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from road transport by a further 750,000 tonnes per year. This would be the equivalent of taking around 350,000 cars off the road.

**TREASURY**■ **Business: Greater London****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[129994\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide further financial support to business in Greater London required to close under covid-19 tier 3 restrictions.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to support businesses, jobs and public services up and down the UK. The Government has spent over £280 billion to do so this year. Through our Winter Economy Plan, businesses have received billions in wage support, loans, tax deferrals and Business Rate reliefs.

In addition to benefiting from these measures, businesses in Greater London forced to close due to restrictions in Tier-3 will also be eligible to receive up to £3,000 per month through the Local Restrictions Support Grant for closed businesses.

This unprecedented package will support businesses through the Winter months, even as regions enter different Tiers and restrictions change to prevent the spread of the virus.

■ **Clothing: Manufacturing Industries****Claudia Webbe:**[\[128318\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to tackle (a) illegal levels of pay, (b) furlough fraud, (c) double record keeping and (d) VAT fraud in Leicester's garment Industry.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC enforce the National Minimum and National Living Wage (NMW) in line with the law and policy set out by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

All businesses, irrespective of size or sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff. Consequences for not complying with paying NMW can include penalties of 200% of the arrears, public naming and, for the worst offences, criminal prosecution.

Breaches of NMW legislation are normally a civil matter, but the most serious cases involving obstruction, falsifying of documents by, for example, creating a second set of 'compliant records' or wilful failure to pay workers the minimum wage that form part of a pattern of wider criminality may be referred to HMRC's Fraud Investigation Service and subsequently to the Crown Prosecution Service who decide whether or not to prosecute.

Since 2012-13, HMRC's NMW team has investigated 150 textile trade employers (59 employers in Leicester), recovering over £215,000 in wage arrears for over 400 workers and issued over £325,000 of penalties to employers.

As a result of the widespread allegations about labour exploitation in Leicester this year, a new multi-agency taskforce (Operation Tacit) led by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) has been set up to bring together the enforcement bodies (HMRC, Employment Agencies Standards Inspectorate (BEIS), Leicestershire Police, National Crime Agency, Leicester City Council, Department for Work and Pensions and Home Office Immigration Enforcement).

Across tax and the NMW, HMRC have a significant number of live investigations involving businesses in the textile sector (over 90 NMW investigations and over 30 tax investigations), a large majority of which relate to Leicester. In 2019/20 HMRC completed 25 separate investigations into the VAT affairs of businesses in the textile trade in Leicester alone and in doing so recovered more than £2 million of tax that would otherwise have been lost and facilitated 21 director disqualifications relating to the textile sector.

HMRC are also taking steps to counteract those seeking to abuse the COVID-19 support schemes. In line with other “payment-out” regimes, HMRC undertake pre-payment authentication and risking to identify and block fraudulent claims. HMRC also carry out proportionate risk-based post-payment compliance checks to test the accuracy of claims they receive. HMRC are able to retrospectively audit all aspects of the COVID-19 schemes, with scope to claw back fraudulent or inaccurate claims, applying their existing compliance approaches.

HMRC take seriously and review all complaints from workers referred by the Acas helpline, or received via the online complaints form, and investigate as appropriate. If anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact Acas, in confidence, on 0300 123 1100 or submit a query online using the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-and-work-rights-complaints>.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Pregnancy

**Alison Thewliss:**

**[127591]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to enable employers to reclaim 100 per cent of the cost of a maternity suspension on full pay of a woman (a) who is 28 weeks pregnant or beyond and (b) pregnant and clinically extremely vulnerable or otherwise medically advised to shield.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is available to all employers and employees providing they meet the eligibility criteria, and this includes the clinically extremely vulnerable.

In those cases where appropriate control measures or working from home cannot be put in place for pregnant employees, and so they are placed on a maternity suspension due to their personal health and safety risk, the employer should continue to pay the employees their full pay. It is up to employers to decide whether to furlough those employees who are at the highest risk of severe illness from coronavirus, and if



they do, employers can use the CJRS grant to cover 80% of furloughed employees' salaries, up to £2,500 per month.

Throughout the pandemic the Government's economic priority has been to protect jobs and livelihoods. Since March, the Government has provided support for people, businesses and public services totalling an estimated £280 billion. In particular, businesses have received billions in loans, tax deferrals, business rate reliefs, and general and sector-specific grants. This support can be used by businesses to top up the CJRS grant, ensuring that they can suspend pregnant employees on full pay.

### ■ Counterfeit Manufacturing: EU Action

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[128122\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what UK system will replace the EU's Anti-Counterfeit and Anti-Piracy System on 1 January 2021.

**Jesse Norman:**

Protect Intellectual Property Rights is the UK system which will replace the EU's Anti-Counterfeit and Anti-Piracy system on 1 January 2021.

### ■ Employment: Coronavirus

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[127579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 20 November 2020 to Question 114262 on Coronavirus Job Retention Incentive, what discussions he has had with (a) trade unions (b) representatives of SMEs and (c) the devolved Administrations on the details of the fund.

**Jesse Norman:**

Treasury ministers and officials have had meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors (including MPs, businesses, professional representative bodies, and the unions) throughout the development of the COVID-19 support package.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>.

### ■ Employment: Females

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[127479\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what long term support he plans to make available to women who leave the workforce to (a) have children and (b) carry out other caring duties.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Government is committed to supporting women who want to leave to the workforce in order to carry out childcare or other caring duties. Women who take

leave from work to look after children are entitled to up to 52 weeks of leave are available, 39 weeks of which are paid – this is the longest maternity leave among all the OECD countries.

In order to support mothers in the longer term, the Government provides significant support for parents to help with the costs of childcare. This includes 15 hours of free childcare for disadvantaged 2 year olds; 15 hours for all 3-4 year olds; and a further 15 hours free for eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. Tax Free Childcare provides eligible working parents with support worth 20% of their childcare costs, up to a cap of £2000 per child aged under 12 per year (or £4000 per child aged under 17 per year for disabled children). Parents are also entitled to claim Child Benefit.

The Government recognises and is committed to supporting people who give up the opportunity of full-time employment in order to provide regular and substantial care through Carer's Allowance. The rate of Carer's Allowance was increased in early April as part of the annual uprating process. Carers may be able to receive other support from the benefit system, including through Universal Credit, which includes an additional amount for carers at the rate of £162.92 per monthly assessment period. Carers receiving Universal Credit may also benefit from the extra £1040 that has been added to the standard allowance in Universal Credit this financial year.

#### ■ Energy: VAT

**Esther McVey:**

[\[128154\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will remove VAT on energy efficient measures retro-fitted to older homes; and what assessment he has made of the effect of leaving the EU on the UK's ability to undertake that removal.

**Jesse Norman:**

Applying VAT relief to the retrofitting of residential buildings would come at a significant cost to the Exchequer.

The Government keeps all taxes under review and assesses them against a range of fiscal and environmental considerations. Any future decisions on VAT will continue to be taken in line with the normal Budget process.

#### ■ English Language: Education

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[130209\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to provide the English Language Teaching sector with (a) tourism sector status or (b) business rates relief during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Government has provided enhanced support through business rates relief to businesses occupying properties used for retail, hospitality and leisure given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has published guidance for local authorities on eligible properties. As set out in the guidance, support is targeted at premises that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues; for assembly and leisure; or as hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation. It is for local authorities to determine eligibility for reliefs, having regard to guidance issued by the Government.

As announced at the Spending Review, to support businesses the Government will freeze the business rates multipliers for one year and will announce any decisions on future rate reliefs in the New Year.

A range of further measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for the business rates holiday, such as language schools, has also been made available.

## ■ Free Zones

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[128128\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that customs controls are proportionate to the volume and risk of activities in Freeports.

**Steve Barclay:**

Freeports will provide customs benefits including simplified processes and access to a range of customs duty benefits, alongside wider advantages.

Operators of Freeport customs sites will need to be authorised. Part of the authorisation process includes demonstrating to HMRC that the operator has control over the movement of goods and access of people in and out of the customs site.

This is to ensure the UK's customs controls are in place over goods within a Freeport customs site or under a Freeports customs procedure.

## ■ Free Zones: Crime

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[128129\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to publish (a) seizures and (b) other law enforcement statistics relating to free ports on an annual basis.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Government will ensure Freeports will be secure. The Bidding Prospectus makes clear operators of Freeport customs sites must adhere to the OECD Code of Conduct for Clean Free Trade Zones.

We have also been clear rigorous monitoring and evaluation will be key to the success of Freeports. Hm Treasury is working with HMRC and Border Force to further define the customs model set out in the Prospectus and will provide additional details through 2021.

## ■ Free Zones: Crime Prevention

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[128130\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to prevent (a) organised criminal activity, (b) money laundering, (c) smuggling, (d) illegal immigration and (e) other illicit activity at freeports.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Freeports Consultation Response (7 October 2020) committed that Freeports will adhere to the OECD Code of Conduct for Clean Free Trade Zones and the specific anti-illicit trade and security measures therein, and that the current obligations set out in the UK's Money Laundering Regulations 2017 will be maintained.

The Freeports Bidding Prospectus (16 November 2020) set out that customs sites for successful bidders will need to go through HMRC and Border Force authorisation, and these bodies will be able to withhold or withdraw authorisation if individual sites have not met the required standards.

It also set out that the Freeport Governance Body will need to maintain a record of all the businesses operating, or applying to operate, within the tax site. This record will need to be readily accessible by HMRC, the NCA, and Border Force operatives.

The Freeport Governance Body will also be required to actively manage security risks across physical, personnel, and cyber domains, and to work with MHCLG, HMRC, Border Force, the NCA, Home Office and other relevant agencies to conduct an annual audit of the security measures in place and any breaches.

As part of bids, bidders have been asked to set out what steps they will take to ensure that the customs sites and tax sites in their proposed Freeport will be secure against illicit activity, including organised criminal activity, money laundering, smuggling and illegal immigration. Bidders that do not show adequate consideration of steps to prevent illicit activity will not be considered for Freeport status.

## ■ Loans and Mortgages: Coronavirus

**Justin Madders:**

[\[129029\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of the banking sector on payment holidays for loans and mortgages.

**John Glen:**

My officials and I have regular discussions with lenders and industry trade bodies concerning payment holidays on loans and mortgages.

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, I set up the Consumer Finance Forum to discuss consumer finance issues with industry as the crisis evolved. The Forum has met several times since March to consider the full range of effects on consumer finances arising from the pandemic.

We understand this remains an uncertain time, and to reassure homeowners we have extended the period that borrowers can apply for up to 6 months of mortgage

holidays until 31 March 2021. The FCA's guidance from 17 November also confirms the lender ban on repossessions is in place until 31 January 2021, meaning no one will lose their home during this time.

## ■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

**Stuart Anderson:**

[\[128275\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on confidence among high street businesses and shoppers of extending business rates relief for the hospitality, retail, and leisure sector for an additional year.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has taken the unprecedented step of providing over £10 billion in business rates relief this year for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties.

As announced at the Spending Review, to support businesses the Government will freeze the business rates multipliers for one year and will announce any decisions on future rate reliefs in the New Year.

## ■ Off-payroll Working

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[128285\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of IR35 on tax revenue from legitimately self-employed contractors who are unable to secure work.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[128286\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of IR35 on levels of employment.

**Jesse Norman:**

The estimated Exchequer impact of extending the reform to the private sector has been certified by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), and reflects an expected increase in compliance with the off-payroll working rules. The methodology and assumptions are aligned with those used to estimate the financial impact of implementing the reform in the public sector. The public sector reform is estimated to have increased overall Exchequer revenues by £250 million in the first 12 months.

The April 2021 private and voluntary sector reform does not introduce a new tax; the reform will improve compliance with existing rules by moving the responsibility for determining whether the off-payroll working rules apply from the individual's company to the client engaging them.

The Government has not seen any evidence that indicates an overall change in demand for the services and skills that contractors offer. Many organisations will still choose to engage contractors using PSCs, where this suits their business model. Others may choose to change how they engage contractors who are working like employees. The Government will continue to monitor the effect of this reform on the

labour market, including by commissioning independent research six months after the reform has taken effect. This research will be presented to Parliament.

Independent research on the impacts of the reform in the public sector showed that it did not reduce market flexibility or affect their use of contingent labour. Furthermore, at Budget 2018 the independent Office for Budget Responsibility did not judge the forthcoming reform to have any specific macroeconomic impacts.

#### ■ **Off-payroll Working: Mental Health**

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[128284\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ensure that all HMRC officials dealing with people affected by IR35 have received mental health first aid training.

**Jesse Norman:**

All HMRC staff receive the relevant training required to perform their duties. This includes training for staff working with taxpayers who require extra support, including supporting those with mental health conditions.

HMRC have teams dedicated to supporting customers who require additional support. This includes Customer Service staff who operate the customer helplines, and teams within the directorates that conduct compliance activity.

#### ■ **Personal Income**

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[128074\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing a universal basic income.

**Steve Barclay:**

There are fundamental problems with the realities of a Universal Basic Income. Providing sufficient support through a UBI would require both a significant reduction in other public spending and an increase in taxation. A flat rate UBI would also not account for the additional needs and costs faced by some and could markedly increase inequality.

We are focussed on helping people get into work, making up to £30 billion available through our Plan for Jobs and have supported those on the lowest incomes through the pandemic by investing an additional £7.4 billion in the welfare system this year.

#### ■ **Revenue and Customs: Stratford**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[128647\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 29 November 2017 to Question 115096 on Revenue and Customs: Disability, what recent assessment has he made of whether HMRC's Regional Centre at 14 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London E20 (a) meets and (b) exceeds the 2009 British Standard 8300.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[128648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 29 November 2017 to Question 115096 on Revenue and Customs: Disability, what steps HMRC to to help ensure the design of its Regional Centre at 14 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London E20 met the 2009 British Standard 8300 in full.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[128649\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 29 November 2017 to Question 115096 on Revenue and Customs: Disability, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of evacuation lifts at HMRC's Regional Centre at 14 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London E20 in providing for evacuation of staff and visitors in accordance with the 2009 British Standard 8300.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[128650\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 29 November 2017 to Question 115096 on Revenue and Customs: Disability, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision of accessible car parking for disabled staff and visitors at HMRC's Regional Centre at 14 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London E20 in meeting the requirements of the 2009 British Standard 8300.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[128651\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 29 November 2017 to Question 115096 on Revenue and Customs: Disability, whether HMRC's Regional Centre at 14 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London E20 will have a covered setting-down point in accordance with clause 4 of the 2009 British Standard 8300.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC's Stratford Regional Centre meets building regulations required by law. However, HMRC have decided to go further than this and have additional reasonable work planned beyond BS8300 2009, in relation to the updated 2018 edition of BS8300.

In addition to this HMRC are working with the Construction Industry Council to ensure its inclusive design approach is further recognised at a project level.

HMRC are working closely with their colleagues and specialist consultants in order to ensure any specific requirements in terms of parking, drop off and building evacuation support are met, in line with both legal requirements and those of BS8300 2009. HMRC have arranged for sufficient car parking which meets their obligation under BS8300 2009.

BS8300 2009 notes that "lifts not designed for evacuation can be used for evacuation in certain circumstances, provided that a fire risk assessment has evaluated that the lift is able to function as an evacuation lift". HMRC have obtained the London Fire Brigade and the Building Control Officer's agreement to use both firefighting lifts for evacuation on the above basis.

BS8300 2009 also notes that a drop off point should be covered “where feasible”. HMRC have arranged for the provision of a drop off/setting down point at the front of the building.

Assessments are being undertaken by HMRC for the delivery of inclusive designs including relating to BS8300 2009. A final assessment of the fit out will be completed in line with standard Practical Completion protocols in advance of HMRC taking on the lease agreement.

## ■ Sanitary Protection

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[128076\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing free access to (a) tampons and (b) sanitary pads in England.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Government is committed to tackling period poverty, and DHSC ministers are working with officials to develop a women’s health strategy.

Vital sexual and reproductive healthcare services have been maintained during the pandemic, including via online services, and NHS England announced in March 2019 that it will offer period products to every hospital patient who needs them. Last year we introduced the period product scheme to provide free period products for all learners who need them. This scheme will continue into 2021.

At Budget 2020 the Government announced that from January 2021, there will be no VAT charged on women’s sanitary products. And in the meantime, the £15m Tampon Tax Fund allocates the funds generated from the VAT on sanitary products to front line projects that directly improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls.

## ■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[127482\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing support to newly self-employed individuals who have been ineligible for covid-19 support to date.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has looked carefully at ways to support groups such as the newly self-employed, and acknowledges that it has not been possible to support everyone as they might want. The practical issues that prevented the Government from being able to include the newly self-employed in 2019-20 in the original Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), namely that HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will not have access to their self-assessment returns in order to verify their eligibility, still remain.

The Government continues to work closely with stakeholders to explore how it can support different groups. The Government has engaged with various proposals but



has not yet found a way to overcome the fundamental issue of safeguarding against fraud and abuse.

However, newly self-employed individuals who are ineligible for SEISS may still be eligible for other elements of the support available. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020/21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, they may also have access to other elements of the support package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

### ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[127481\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that employees on the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme are paid the national minimum wage.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) is available to self-employed individuals who have been affected by reduced demand or have been unable to trade due to COVID-19, which they believe will lead to a significant reduction in their trading profits. Those receiving the SEISS cannot receive the national minimum wage as minimum wages do not apply to the self-employed.

The SEISS has provided and will continue to provide substantial support to those self-employed people who meet the eligibility criteria. 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.

The third SEISS grant will cover the three-month period from November 2020 until January 2021. This will be 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.

Moreover, the SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support for the self-employed. The Universal Credit standard allowance has been temporarily increased for 2020-21 and the Minimum Income Floor relaxed for the duration of the crisis, so that where self-employed claimants' earnings have fallen significantly, their Universal Credit award will have increased to reflect their lower earnings. In addition to this, the self-employed may also have access to other elements of the package, including Bounce Back loans, tax deferrals, rental support, mortgage holidays, self-isolation support payments and other business support grants.

**■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Armed Forces****Stephen Morgan:** [\[128248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of self-employed armed forces reservists that have been able to access the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC published information on the Self Employment Income Support Scheme on 25 November 2020. This provided information on claims received by 31 October 2020 and included a breakdown by sector.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus****Naz Shah:** [\[127577\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate funding to the Department for Work and Pensions to (a) make the £20 uplift to universal credit permanent and (b) extend that uplift to legacy benefits.

**Steve Barclay:**

The £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element is specifically aimed at providing significant temporary support to low income families who have seen their income fall as a result of the immediate impact of the crisis, and will run until March. It is right that we wait for more clarity on the economic and health context before making any further decisions, particularly given how quickly things can move, as demonstrated by recent developments on a vaccine.

The increase is just one part of wide-ranging Government measures to support people through the Covid-19 crisis, which are worth £280bn this year. Low income families are also benefiting from higher Local Housing Allowance rates, mortgage holidays, a temporary suspension of the UC Minimum Income Floor, a £500m local authority Hardship Fund, a £170m local authority Covid Winter Grant scheme, and £500 payments to help people self-isolate under NHS Test and Trace.

In recent years the Government has invested significantly in UC, including by raising work allowances by £1,000 from April 2019, benefitting working parents and people with disabilities by up to £630 per year.

**■ Stamp Duty Land Tax****Darren Jones:** [\[127618\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans in place to support sellers who miss the deadline for stamp duty relief as a result of buyers unexpectedly withdrawing from a property transaction.

**Jesse Norman:**

The temporary relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-

19 lockdown in March. This momentum in the property market will also support the jobs of people whose employment relies on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

The Government will continue to monitor the market. As the relief was designed to provide an immediate stimulus to the property market, the Government does not plan to extend this relief.

## ■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[128307\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to allocate funding to maintain the £20 per week uplift to universal credit beyond spring 2021.

**Steve Barclay:**

The £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element is specifically aimed at providing significant temporary support to low income families who have seen their income fall as a result of the immediate impact of the crisis, and will run until the beginning of April. It is right that we wait for more clarity on the economic and health context before making any further decisions, particularly given how quickly things can move, as demonstrated by recent developments on a vaccine.

The increase is just one part of wide-ranging Government measures to support people through the Covid-19 crisis, which are worth £280bn this year. Low income families are also benefiting from higher Local Housing Allowance rates, mortgage holidays, a temporary suspension of the UC Minimum Income Floor, a £500m local authority Hardship Fund, a £170m local authority Covid Winter Grant scheme, and £500 payments to help people self-isolate under NHS Test and Trace.

In recent years the Government has invested significantly in UC, including by raising work allowances by £1,000 from April 2019, benefitting working parents and people with disabilities by up to £630 per year.

While social security policy is devolved to Northern Ireland, the Executive will continue to be appropriately funded to deliver in NI any changes to GB benefits such as UC.

## ■ Working Hours

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[128075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of adopting a four-day working week.

**Steve Barclay:**

Enforcing a four-day working week would likely increase business costs at a time where we should be supporting businesses. We need to help businesses by creating and protecting jobs, not adding to their costs. This is why the Government has

extended a number of Covid support schemes, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, through the winter.

The UK's flexible labour market allows employers to independently agree working arrangements with their workers. Enforcing a four-day working week would take that choice away from both workers and employers.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Personal Independence Payment: Appeals

**Karin Smyth:** [\[130133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the proportion of personal independence claim awards of the standard rate of care to an applicant previously in receipt of the enhanced rate of care that are increased following a mandatory reconsideration.

**Karin Smyth:** [\[130134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on the proportion of personal independence claim awards of the standard rate of care to an applicant previously in receipt of the enhanced rate of care that are increased following an appeal to HM Courts and Tribunal Service.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The specific information requested on PIP claims moving from an enhanced daily living award to a standard daily living award, and then being awarded an enhanced daily living award again at Mandatory Reconsideration (MRs) or appeal is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

**Jonathan Gullis:** [\[129144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to improve health and disability assessments.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Government is committed to assessing people with health conditions and disabilities fairly and accurately, which is why we keep our processes under review. Over the course of seven Independent Reviews of our disability assessments, over 100 recommendations have been made, with the vast majority accepted. To this end, we have made significant improvements to both the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment since their introduction.

We are also expanding the range of assessment channels, including the introduction of telephone assessments in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, and are currently evaluating the different channels to inform the future strategy.

In terms of future reform, the Health Transformation Programme will deliver a new integrated Health Assessment Service covering all health and disability benefits, providing a simpler, more efficient and joined-up experience for claimants.

We know there is more we can do to improve the current system. That is why the Department will be bringing forward a Green Paper in 2021 on how to improve our services for disabled people and people with health conditions. The Green Paper will explore assessment reform options and seek views on future changes.

The Green Paper will be strongly influenced by the views of disabled people and representatives from disability organisations, drawing on the significant engagement we have conducted, and plan to continue in the future.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Skills Toolkit

**Anneliese Dodds:**

[\[102155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much money from the public purse has been spent on The Skills Toolkit online learning platform in each year since the beginning of that platform.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 19 October 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Skills Toolkit was announced in April 2020 and the cost of developing the platform in this financial year is £798,700. This includes the launch and the two subsequent expansions of the platform. A further £325,700 has been spent on communications activities to promote the platform.

~~As of 4 October there have been a total of 118,011 starts of the courses on the platform and 19,564 course completions. As of 11 October, the platform had 1.2 million page views.~~

**As of 1 November 2020 there have been an estimated 119,000 course registrations. As of 1 November 2020 there have been 1,323,450 page views. These are experimental statistics and further information can be found in the official statistical release of 27 November 2020 in the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>.**