



Daily Report

Wednesday, 30 December 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 December 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:51 P.M., 30 December 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Domestic Abuse

Jessica Morden:

[\[128906\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps she is taking to support the criminal justice system's ability to prosecute perpetrators of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Michael Ellis:

This Government and the Crown Prosecution Service take cases of domestic abuse extremely seriously.

Since the introduction of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which created an offence of coercive and controlling behaviour, the number of domestic abuse prosecutions have increased.

The CPS has developed an ambitious twelve-month programme of work to help narrow the disparity between domestic abuse reporting and criminal justice outcomes, including, sharing best practice and revising guidance to support effective case handling of coercive and controlling behaviour crimes.

It is essential that perpetrators, victims and their families know and understand that the criminal justice system remains open and is prioritising cases with high risk domestic abuse victims.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Aircraft: Decommissioning

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[130117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to encourage the decommissioning of older aircraft.

Paul Scully:

The Government remains in dialogue with industry and overseas governments about the potential benefits, practicalities and implications of an aircraft scrappage scheme.

■ Billing: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[129030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's news story, Advice for people struggling to pay essential bills because of coronavirus, published on 11 September 2020, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of requiring payment holidays to be extended.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the Coronavirus crisis, Government and regulators have worked with regulated industries to support consumers who are struggling financially. The decision to extend support measures is taken in each sector to meet the varying needs of the consumers in those markets.

For instance, FCA advises that consumers can until the end of March apply for payment deferrals including on mortgages, loans, credit cards, overdrafts, and motor finance. Ofcom recently asked telecoms providers to bring in further support, including proactively engaging with those in debt, and waiving penalty charges.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[129016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions (a) he and (b) his Department has had with officials from banks on extending the eligibility criteria for support from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government continues to enhance its engagement with a broad range of trade and representative bodies, in particular SME networks, to continue to understand the impact of Covid-19 on businesses and the concerns they have.

The Bounce Back Loan Scheme is open to most businesses, regardless of turnover, who meet the eligibility criteria and who were established on or before 1 March 2020.

The Scheme is targeted at supporting those businesses who need access to finance quickly and, therefore, requires lenders to offer a standard product. It is therefore the case that the Bounce Back Loan Scheme is not suitable for all businesses.

There are a wide range of other Government measures to support public services, people and businesses through this disruption. Full details on the support available for businesses can be found on the GOV.UK website, or through contacting our business support helpline.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[129017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of businesses that can access support from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government continues to enhance its engagement with a broad range of trade and representative bodies, in particular SME networks, to continue to understand the impact of Covid-19 on businesses and the concerns they have.

The Bounce Back Loan Scheme is open to most businesses, regardless of turnover, who meet the eligibility criteria and who were established on or before 1 March 2020.

The Scheme is targeted at supporting those businesses who need access to finance quickly and, therefore, requires lenders to offer a standard product. It is therefore the case that the Bounce Back Loan Scheme is not suitable for all businesses.

There are a wide range of other Government measures to support public services, people and businesses through this disruption. Full details on the support available for businesses can be found on the GOV.UK website, or through contacting our business support helpline.

Ruth Cadbury:

[129018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of businesses in England who have applied unsuccessfully to the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

As of 15 November, 1,397,475 loans have been approved under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, with a total value of £42.18 billion.

In total, the Bounce Bank Loan Scheme has received 1,766,768 applications. The applications figure includes: approved applications; applications that are still to be processed; applications that have been declined; and applications that may turn out not to be eligible or cases where customers have decided not to proceed.

Ruth Cadbury:

[129019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to encourage banks to allow non-existing customers to access support from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government have always made clear to lenders that they should open to applications from new customers as soon as it is operationally possible for them to do so.

Businesses are free to approach any accredited lender for a Bounce Back Loan.

You can find a full list of accredited lenders on the British Business Bank website:

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

Ruth Cadbury:

[129020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps (a) he and (b) his Department is taking to increase the number of accredited financial institutions taking part in the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

Accrediting lenders for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme has been a priority for the British Business Bank. The Bank therefore put in place substantial additional

resources to support new lender accreditation as well as creating a streamlined process within the Bank to help onboard new lenders as quickly as possible.

The Bank has expanded the pool of delivery partners from seven at launch to 29 accredited lenders currently, substantially increasing access to the scheme for small businesses. The scheme remains open to new lenders to apply for accreditation and the Bank will continue to assess new applications while the scheme remains open.

■ **Britishvolt: Blyth**

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[128707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to provide financial support to the planned new Britishvolt factory in Blyth.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[128708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with representatives of Britishvolt on its planned factory in Blyth.

Nadhim Zahawi:

I welcome Britishvolt's announcement. As my Rt hon Friend the Prime Minister set out recently in his 10 Point Plan, manufacturing electric vehicles and developing the required supply chain right here in the UK is a key part of building back better and greener. A Gigafactory will support industry, provide high quality jobs and help the automotive sector transform over the coming decade - as we make strides towards our world-beating net zero goals.

The Government has announced nearly £500m of support through the Automotive Transformation Fund to drive the electrification of the UK automotive sector. This is part of the up to £1 billion that this government previously committed to these efforts. The application process is managed by the Advanced Propulsion Centre on behalf of BEIS and funding will be allocated on a competitive basis, dependent on a full assessment of the relative value for money of any request received.

■ **Buildings: Ventilation**

Sir Graham Brady: [\[128626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make a comparative assessment of the ventilation standards in buildings in the UK and (a) the United States, (b) Vietnam and (c) South Korea in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

Paul Scully:

The Department has no plans to make a comparative assessment of the ventilation standards in buildings in the UK and other countries.

■ Business: Christmas

Jim Shannon:

[\[128973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to encourage people to support local businesses in the run up to Christmas.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to supporting local businesses during this crucial trading period.

To support retailers in tiers 1-3, we have eased planning rules to allow shops to be open for longer Monday to Saturday from 2 December, giving consumers greater flexibility to choose when they shop. These measures will run through the January sales.

Retailers in tier 4 can continue to offer click and collect, and delivery services which will help businesses keep trading.

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

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

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

■ Business: Coronavirus

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[129021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what alternative methods of financial support are available to businesses who are unable to access support from the Bounce Back Loan Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods across the UK, support businesses, and public services. The Government has spent over £280 billion to do so this year.

If a business is not able to access the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, the British Business Bank offers a range of other support including:

- Individuals who are starting a new business or who have been trading for less than two years can apply for a Start Up Loan, which offers loans (from £500 to £25,000, at 6% interest) alongside free mentoring and support.

- Businesses with a turnover of less than £45 million, and looking for up to £5 million in finance, can apply for a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.
- Larger businesses with a group turnover of more than £45 million, looking for up to £200 million in finance, can apply for a Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme.
- The Future Fund issues convertible loans to innovative UK companies with good potential that typically rely on equity investment and are currently affected by Covid-19.
- To help small businesses understand and identify suitable finance options available, the British Business Bank's website and Finance Hub offer a wide range of information on finance options.

The support available through the British Business Bank is one part of an unprecedented range of measures to back business. Full details on the support available for businesses can be found on the GOV.UK website, or through contacting our business support helpline.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Caroline Ansell:

[130160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the supply of the Pfizer vaccine in the event that the transition period ends without a deal on the future relationship with the EU; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK has put in place a number of measures to facilitate trade with the EU beyond the end of the transition period and to avoid any adverse impact to vaccine supply beyond 1 January 2021.

The Government has worked with COVID-19 vaccine suppliers to support them with robust contingency plans.

If necessary, we will use alternative supply routes and Government procured freight capacity, in line with current Government advice.

■ **Counterfeit Manufacturing: Internet**

Chi Onwurah:

[128971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to recognise the European Commission Memorandum of Understanding on the sale of counterfeit goods on the internet after the end of the transition period.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government takes the infringement of IP rights seriously, and delivers a range of work through the UK IPO and other agencies to tackle the sale of counterfeit goods.

Following the publication of the 2017 Industrial Strategy the IPO has facilitated a series of roundtables which have been working towards agreements with many of the same sales platforms and rights holder bodies who are signatories to the European Commission MoU. Given this work, and other ongoing domestic interventions, we have no current plans to adopt or formally recognise the European Commission MoU.

■ Digital Technology

Pete Wishart:

[\[129991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to implement recommendation 13b in Annex G of the Digital Market's Taskforce's report entitled A new pro-competition regime for digital markets.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring digital markets remain competitive and deliver positive outcomes for consumers, small businesses, and society. That is why we have announced funding to establish a new Digital Markets Unit within the Competition and Markets Authority from 2021-22.

We set up the Digital Markets Taskforce in March to offer expert advice. We will now consider the recommendations, including 13b and consult on proposals for a new pro-competition regime for digital markets in early 2021.

■ Digital Technology: Carbon Emissions

Chi Onwurah:

[\[128970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for (a) his policies, (b) research funding frameworks and (c) Industrial Strategy Challenge Funds of the findings of the report entitled Digital technology and the planet, Harnessing computing to achieve net zero, published by the Royal Society on 3 December 2020 on the net zero imperative.

Amanda Solloway:

The BEIS Energy Innovation Programme supports smart energy by driving innovation in digital and data-enabled technologies for energy management and flexibility, including managing energy demand and creating platforms for trading energy resources. The new £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, outlined in the Energy White Paper, will build on this with a theme focussed on disruptive technologies aimed at improving efficiency and optimisation across the energy sector

The R&D Roadmap set out the Government's vision for research and development. Our goal is to further strengthen science, research and innovation across the UK, making them central to tackling the major challenges we face, including achieving net zero carbon emissions.

The Government has set out plans at Spending Review to cement the UK's status as a global leader in science and innovation by investing £14.6 billion in R&D in 2021/22. As the custodian of the R&D system, BEIS has been allocated £11.1bn for R&D in 2021/22.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will drive the creation of a Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) with enhanced environmental sustainability that contributes to the UK government's commitment to Net Zero. DRI comprises the ecosystem of data, computers, software and skills that are necessary for research and innovation. UKRI is developing a coherent national strategy for DRI that meets the requirements of UKRI's research and innovation communities across disciplines and that will enable UKRI to take account of the environmental impact of its investments and make decisions that are environmentally sustainable in the long term.

Alongside this strategy, UKRI promotes the AREA framework for responsible innovation, prompting researchers and innovators to Anticipate, Reflect, Engage and Act and so consider aspects such as impact of their work on net zero. Other examples of research related responses include:

- EPSRC has been working with DCMS on a combined telecoms strategy and input into digital standards and with DIT on the global market for UK digital technologies.
- Continued work with the Royce Institute, Faraday Institute, Turing Institute and centre for research in energy demand solutions will ensure materials, batteries, AI and energy demand research is incorporated into solutions.
- A priority research area that continues to feature in research investment plans such as the recently closed UKRI Digital Economy call 'Sustainable Digital Society'.

The Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund has ten challenges that directly support the goal of achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 – from reaching net zero in food production, to pioneering greener ways of flying, to developing the world's first net-zero carbon industrial cluster by 2040. These represent a total of £1.16 billion in government investment. Prior to Covid-19, industry committed to co-invest £1.32 billion across these challenges.

■ Employment: Fathers

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[129970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that expectant fathers may attend all antenatal appointments.

Paul Scully:

Since October 2014, expectant fathers and partners of pregnant woman have been able to take time off work to attend up to two antenatal appointments with their partner. This is a 'day 1' right which means that fathers and partners will be eligible for time off work even if they have recently changed jobs.

We recognise that restrictions in place due to the pandemic have made it difficult for some fathers and partners to accompany expectant mothers to antenatal appointments. On 5 June, the NHS's suspension on hospital visiting was lifted. Since then, NHS Trusts have been using guidance published by NHS England and NHS

Improvement when exercising their discretion on whether or not to allow fathers/partners to accompany their partner to antenatal appointments.

On 14 December, NHS England and NHS Improvement issued new guidance on supporting pregnant women using maternity services during the coronavirus pandemic. It sets out the expectation for all NHS maternity services to take steps to enable women to have access to support from a person of her choosing at all stages of her maternity journey and to prevent and control COVID-19 infection and keep women and staff safe.

■ **Energy: Prices**

Colleen Fletcher:

[130108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the real terms increase in household energy bills since 2010.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Energy White Paper, which has affordability at its heart and includes measures we are bringing forward to keep bills affordable, was published earlier this month, and sets out the historic context for consumer energy bills. The average household dual fuel bill in 2019 was similar to 2010. However, the underlying costs have changed. Over the past decade, electricity prices have risen because of policy and network costs, while gas prices have fluctuated, reflecting movements in the wholesale gas price. However, consumers have used less energy, which has balanced out the cost increase.

■ **Hydrogen**

John Spellar:

[128870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department is making with industry on developing the production of hydrogen by electrolysis.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

My Rt hon Friend the Prime Minister's recent Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution set out that the Government, working with industry, is aiming for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity in the UK by 2030. In support of this we have also announced a £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund for capital co-investment in new low carbon hydrogen production, to bring forward a combination of CCUS-enabled 'blue' hydrogen and electrolytic 'green' hydrogen projects. Both production methods – and other innovative techniques – will be needed to deliver hydrogen demand expected by 2050. Further details on hydrogen business models and a revenue mechanism to stimulate private sector investment in both green and blue hydrogen will be brought forward in 2021.

■ Innovation

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the recommendations on regional innovation made in the Core Cities UK Universities Declaration.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government announced we will publish a new ambitious Places Strategy for R&D in the R&D Roadmap. The Places Strategy will ensure that our research and development system delivers real economic and societal benefits in cities, towns, regions, and devolved nations right across the UK.

We will be stepping up our efforts to foster greater collaboration and co-creation between decision-makers at national, devolved, regional and local levels. We will also be factoring the needs and opportunities of places into our decisions about the R&D system.

Building on strengths and ensuring that all areas experience the benefits of a R&D intensive economy is an important part of the government's ambition to increase R&D investment across the economy to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

BEIS and UKRI are engaging widely with industry, civic organisations and the scientific community including universities from across the country to help develop a strategy that responds to the needs of areas and communities across the UK. As part of this we will be considering the recommendations on regional innovation made in the Core Cities UK Universities Declaration.

Looking at innovation more broadly, we have convened an innovation expert group, Chaired by Dr Hayaatun Sillem CBE of the Royal Academy of Engineering, to provide advice to government on the priority actions and opportunities that need to be taken to boost innovation and drive up the UK's productivity.

■ Intellectual Property: Compensation

Pete Wishart:

[\[129990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of raising the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court Small Claims Track Cap to £25,000 in line with a Fast-Track claim.

Amanda Solloway:

As part of its work on IP enforcement issues the IPO has facilitated a series of working groups over the last year looking at the enforcement framework. The cost and accessibility of court processes for IP disputes was considered as part of this review, and questions on these topics were included in the call for views which closed in November this year. The IPO is currently considering the responses received from that exercise and will carry out further assessment as necessary before any recommendations are taken forwards.

Pete Wishart:

[\[129992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing an online system to submit claims to the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court Small Claims Track.

Amanda Solloway:

As part of its work on IP enforcement issues the IPO has facilitated a series of working groups over the last year looking at the enforcement framework. The cost and accessibility of court processes for IP disputes was considered as part of this review, and questions on these topics were included in the call for views which closed in November this year. The IPO is currently considering the responses received from that exercise and will carry out further assessment and consult other departments as necessary before any recommendations are taken forwards.

Pete Wishart:

[\[129993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with the Ministry of Justice on the publication of judgments from the Intellectual Property Enterprise Court Small Claims Track.

Amanda Solloway:

As part of its work on IP enforcement issues the IPO has facilitated a series of working groups over the last year looking at the enforcement framework. The cost and accessibility of court processes for IP disputes was considered as part of this review, and questions on these topics were discussed with Ministry of Justice officials before being included in the call for views which closed in November this year. The IPO is currently considering the responses received from that exercise and will discuss any potential recommendations with other departments and the Judiciary as appropriate.

■ Iron and Steel: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[129969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what fiscal steps he is taking to support the recovery of steel supply chains affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have been working with companies across the steel sector and its supply chains to ensure that they can access the unprecedented package of support measures the Government have made available during this challenging time. This includes Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme to help firms keep operating. We have also provided support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended to March 2021 to protect people's wages and manufacturing jobs across the UK.

In addition, the Government provided, as a lender of last resort, a £30m loan on commercial terms to Celsa, in line with EU State Aid rules.

We will continue to engage regularly with the steel industry and their suppliers.

■ Life Sciences: Innovation

Lee Anderson:

[\[128730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to promote the UK as a destination for life sciences innovation, in the context of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) becoming the first regulator to approve the mRNA vaccine for covid-19 on 2 December 2020.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The flexibility and pragmatism of the MHRA has been instrumental to our COVID response, including enabling us to approve the COVID-19 vaccine before any other country. The MHRA will continue to pioneer innovative regulatory approaches to the most ground-breaking treatments, from the latest AI-enabled technologies to the best new precision therapies, benefiting both patients and the sector.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Made Smarter scheme has been rolled-out across the country.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Since January 2019, BEIS has piloted support to help manufacturing SMEs adopt industrial digital technology to increase their productivity, efficiency and resilience through the Made Smarter North West Pilot, which to date has engaged with more than 1,100 SME manufacturers and more than 150 are receiving intensive support with grant funding. This support is currently only available in the North West of England. Roll out to other parts of England remains under discussion informed by learning from the pilot exercise.

We welcome the strong interest we have seen from local partners in delivering Made Smarter support for adoption of technology in their regions. BEIS has held productive conversations with local partners on their expressions of interest, including in the North East, and I look forward to the continuation of these discussions.

Alongside this support, we are also investing £147m through the Manufacturing Made Smarter Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. This is accessible to manufacturers of all sizes right across the UK and aims to drive innovation in industrial digital technology solutions. A £20m Challenge Fund competition to support increased digitalisation of supply chains was concluded in October, and Innovation Hubs to help manufacturers explore and test digital technology are being piloted across the country, including through the Centre for Process Innovation at both Darlington and Sedgfield.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Alexander Stafford:

[\[130263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to make an assessment of the merits of the UK Miners Pension Scheme provision that 50 per cent of any surplus made after 1994 will be paid to the Government.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government has reconsidered the surplus sharing arrangements of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme (MPS) and concluded that they remain appropriate.

We have agreed to scheme changes proposed by the MPS Trustees which guarantee that bonus pensions already accrued will not be lost in the event of a future deficit. These changes have been implemented.

■ OneWeb

Chi Onwurah:

[\[128968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 83800 on OneWeb and with reference to the Spending Review 2020, from which area of his Departmental budget will the funding for the acquisition of OneWeb be allocated from; and what plans he has for future investment in the OneWeb satellite system.

Amanda Solloway:

The budget for OneWeb is being allocated to the Department through the supplementary estimates and considered as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 process.

The Government is investing \$500m into OneWeb, and the Department through UKGI, will work closely with the company and other partners to raise additional private investment.

■ Oxford University: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[128884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the finding of interim analysis of data from Phase III trials that the Oxford covid-19 vaccine is 70 per cent effective, for what reason his Department has ordered 100 million doses of that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The preliminary efficacy data is positive and indicates that the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine is 70.4% effective across two different dosage regimens. One of these dose regimens could be up to 90% effective.

To beat this pandemic, it has always been likely that we would need more than one vaccine. We have now seen excellent results with multiple vaccine candidates. There

will be variations between the vaccines in how well they work for different population subgroups and how long the protection lasts, alongside other factors.

The University of Oxford / AstraZeneca vaccine has the distinct advantage that it can be stored at fridge temperature, making it easier to transport and distribute globally than other Covid-19 vaccines. The fact that the vaccine has been manufactured by AstraZeneca at cost also means it is affordable, potentially making this UK-developed vaccine a vaccine for the world.

The Vaccine TaskForce's portfolio includes different types of vaccine and we continue to keep the portfolio under review.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[129041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the National Hair and Beauty Federation's December 2020 State of Industry survey; and what plans the Government has for specific support for that sector.

Paul Scully:

From 2 December, close contact services have been allowed to open in Tiers 1-3. Unfortunately, due to the very rapid rise of infections in Tier 4 areas, close contact services are closed. The Government has put in place a wide-ranging package of [financial support](#) for sectors impacted by Covid-19, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Kickstart Scheme grants.

■ Ports: Renewable Energy

Bob Blackman:

[\[128659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is providing to UK ports to deploy the green infrastructure necessary for increasing the UK's offshore wind capacity.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The expected rapid deployment of offshore wind across the UK, Europe and globally over the next decade, together with the increasing size of turbines, means that there is a need for a major expansion in manufacturing capacity in the coming years.

My rt hon Friend the Prime Minister recently announced £160 million of new funding for coastal manufacturing infrastructure. The 'Offshore wind manufacturing investment support scheme' aims to accelerate the development of large-scale manufacturing portside hubs, which could strengthen the UK's offshore wind manufacturing capability, creating employment and investment in both coastal communities and the wider supply chain.

Following a Request for Information in October, earlier this month my Department launched a competitive process to support a large coastal manufacturing site for the

offshore wind industry. This would create manufacturing clusters where several large-scale producers can co-locate.

■ Redundancy

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[128617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2020 to Question 98870, how many proposed redundancies were indicated on HR1 forms received by the Redundancy Payments Service in (a) October and (b) November 2020.

Paul Scully:

The table below sets out the number of HR 1 forms received in October and November 2020, and the number of proposed dismissals indicated on those forms:

MONTH	NUMBER OF HR1 FORMS RECEIVED	NUMBER OF PROPOSED DISMISSALS ON HR1S
Oct 20	844	51,351
Nov 20	552	36,686

Employers are only required to file a Form HR1 where they are “proposing” to dismiss 20 or more employees at a single “establishment”.

“Propose” and “establishment” have distinct meanings in this context.

The aggregate number could include proposed dismissals due to insolvency, restructuring of a solvent/continuing business, or proposed relocation of employees, for example.

It should be noted that a proposal to make a given number of dismissals does not necessarily result in all or any of the proposed dismissals occurring.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[128964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to section 5.18 of the Spending Review 2020, published in November 2020, CP330, what his Department's timescale is for announcing the Government's research and innovation priorities for the disbursement of the £450 in 2021-22.

Amanda Solloway:

This ambitious £450 million fund will support strategic government priorities, build new science capability and support the whole research and innovation ecosystem. This includes the first £50 million towards an £800 million investment by 2024/25 in high-risk, high-payoff research. Further details of how funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

Chi Onwurah:[\[128967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2020 to Question 124750 on Research: Public Expenditure, whether the Government has targets for increasing R&D investment year on year to meet its target of spending 2.4 per cent of GDP on R&D by 2027.

Amanda Solloway:

In the Spending Review last month, my Rt hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer said that to cement the UK's future as a scientific superpower and drive economic growth, the government is investing £14.6 billion in R&D in 2021/22. It will be important to stimulate private sector investment and support public services to get the most out of our excellent research base and to achieve the 2.4% target.

Chi Onwurah:[\[128969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he had has with the Minister for the Cabinet office on proposals for a new UK research funding agency broadly modelled on the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of that agency being established (a) being within the UKRI umbrella and (b) as an independent body.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government continues to progress plans to establish a new research funding agency as soon as possible. Discussions are ongoing across Government at both official and Ministerial levels to develop and deliver the new agency.

The Government has a high level of ambition for this new blue-skies research funding body, demonstrated by backing it with at least £800 million in funding over its first five years. There has been consideration of various options for how, and where, the body should be established to best meet that ambition.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:[\[128943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the Government made the decision to close specialist shops classified as non-essential retail and allow mixed retailers deemed essential to continue to sell the same non-essential retail items during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown; and what assessment his Department has made of the equity of that decision.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the national restrictions, we sought to keep as much of the retail sector open as possible, whilst balancing the need to reduce our day-to-day contact. All shops could continue offering click and collect and delivery services.

The decision to close non-essential retail was part of a wider package of measures to ensure that people stayed at home except for a limited set of exemptions.

We were clear that a business selling a significant amount of essential retail may also continue to sell goods typically sold at non-essential retail. For example, a supermarket that sells food was not required to close off or cordon off aisles selling homeware.

■ **Retail Trade: Digital Technology**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the implications of Amazon's decision to pass the Digital Services Tax onto its retail customers for the level of competition in digital retail; and whether he has had discussions with Amazon on that issue.

Paul Scully:

The Digital Services Tax is a proportionate tax addressing widely held concerns with the tax paid by digital businesses. The Government cannot comment on individual taxpayers, whose pricing strategies reflect a range of factors and are a matter for businesses.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Civil Servants: Pay**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[129157\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average pay is of civil servants in Wakefield constituency.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[129158\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Department has the largest number of staff working in (a) Wakefield constituency and (b) West Yorkshire.

Julia Lopez:

The Cabinet Office does not hold the data requested by constituency.

As at 31 March 2020, HM Revenue & Customs was the largest employer of civil servants in West Yorkshire.

■ **Civil Servants: Staffordshire**

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[129140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to increase the proportion of civil service jobs based outside London in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has committed to ensuring that the administration of Government is less London-centric by relocating 22,000 Civil Service roles out of central London and into the regions and nations of the United Kingdom by the end of the decade.

The Cabinet Office, through the Places for Growth programme, will make further announcements on this programme in the usual way.

■ Coronavirus: Death**Sir John Hayes:**[\[129958\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the average age of covid-19 deaths compared to average UK life expectancy.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Letter from the UKSA [PQ129958_.pdf]

■ Cybercrime**Sir John Hayes:**[\[129953\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to help protect the UK from emerging cyber security threats.

Colleen Fletcher:[\[130109\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) funding he is making available and (b) other steps he is taking to help support the protection of businesses from future cyber threats.

Chloe Smith:

The National Cyber Security Strategy (2016 to 2021) sets out the government's plan to make Britain secure and resilient in cyberspace. We also published a [progress report](#): "National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021 - Progress Report", this includes details of the steps being taken to help protect business from cyber threats.

The Cabinet Office is leading work across Government to develop the UK's strategic direction and funding for cyber security beyond 2021 and will set out the approach next year, building on the Government's Integrated Review. This will respond to the evolving cyber threat and ensure the UK remains a leader on cyber security into the next decade.

■ Equality: Impact Assessments

Claire Hanna:

[129151]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he will publish her Department's equalities impact assessments on the effect of the UK leaving the EU on women.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. An equality analysis was completed for the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/629244/European_Union_Withdrawal_Bill_equality_analysis.pdf

■ Health

Chi Onwurah:

[130064]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will introduce a quarterly report on gross domestic wellbeing as proposed by the CarnegieUK Trust in its 2020 report entitled Gross Domestic Wellbeing (GDWe): an alternative measure of social progress.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Letter from the UKSA [PQ130064.pdf]

■ Medical Equipment

Stephen Farry:

[129165]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Draft unilateral declarations by the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee on human and veterinary medicines cover medical devices.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Unilateral Declaration on Medicines (available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)) allows for the phased implementation in Northern Ireland of relevant medicines regulation, and in particular the Falsified Medicines Directive. Medical devices are not subject to the Falsified Medicines Directive and are not in scope of the declaration. Businesses and authorities moving medical devices can make use of the Trade Support Service and the UK Trader Scheme. Full guidance on the regulatory requirements for medical devices are set out on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). Medical devices will be able to be moved smoothly between Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 1 January 2021.

■ Trade: Northern Ireland**Simon Hoare:**[\[130152\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 33 of The Northern Ireland Protocol, CP346, published on 10 December 2020, which categories of trader (a) can and (b) cannot benefit from a grace period to 1 April 2021 from official certification for products of (i) animal origin, (ii) composite products, (iii) food and feed of non-animal origin and (iv) plants and plant products.

Penny Mordaunt:

As the Command Paper underlines, the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will engage in a rapid exercise to identify the authorised traders able to draw on the grace period from official certification for products of animal origin, composite products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants and plant products. The Government will not discriminate against smaller suppliers or between different companies in implementing these practical measures. This list will be in place by the end of the year.

■ Veterans: Commonwealth**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[128882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assistance the Government provides to veterans from the Commonwealth at risk of deportation from the UK.

Johnny Mercer:

There are long-standing arrangements in place for non-UK personnel, including those from the Commonwealth, who have served in the Armed Forces to apply for citizenship and settlement either during or at the end of their service. These are set out in the Armed Forces Appendix to the immigration regulations and the Government is currently exploring how to further improve these systems.

The Government is unaware of any deportation action in progress against any veterans of Her Majesty's Armed Forces at this time and any such action would require authorisation by Ministers. However, any former member of the Armed Forces who have not previously applied for settlement, who wishes to change their immigration status in the UK or who wishes to have their case re-examined is entitled to make an application to the Home Office to have their case looked at.

Veterans UK's provide the same level of support to Foreign and Commonwealth veterans as they do to any other veteran. They provide relevant advice, information and support to meet veterans individual needs and requirements, including immigration and naturalisation issues. This support continues for as long as required as part of our commitment to providing 'through-life support' to veterans

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: Finance****Colleen Fletcher:****[130100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on future funding to support the arts in (a) Coventry and (b) the UK.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the huge contribution the arts and culture sector makes, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. It is for this reason that we have invested an unprecedented £1.57 billion, the biggest ever one-off cash injection, into UK culture to tackle the crisis facing our most loved arts organisations and heritage sites across the country including Coventry, which is to be our next City of Culture.

The Arts Council has allocated over £500k from its Emergency Response Fund to Coventry including £68k to individuals. The Culture Recovery Fund has awarded over £6 million in funding (as of 17 December) to arts and heritage organisations in Coventry to help support them through the current Covid-19 outbreak.

In addition ACE allocated £3.4m, to Coventry City of Culture Trust (delivery body) to ensure Coventry's success as City of Culture. The arts and cultural sector is instrumental to Coventry's success and the Trust have; employed local art/cultural freelancers, invested in cultural infrastructure and during the first lockdown initiated a resilience fund for the local arts community. Coventry will be one of the first to host major events post Covid and, whilst challenges have been posed by the pandemic, their activity and programming has provided a much needed injection of cash into the sector and supported artists in the region, nationally and internationally.

Throughout this crisis, the government's priority has been to protect people's jobs and livelihoods. At this year's Spending Review, we confirmed that the government has now spent over £280 billion this year.

■ Bingo**Justin Madders:****[129172]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the role that bingo halls play in combating social isolation and loneliness.

Nigel Huddleston:

A report by GambleAware in 2016 found that 94% of bingo players played because it was fun, and 85% to socialise, while 58% found it provided intellectual stimulation. As well as an opportunity to socialise, players reported it was a chance to be around other people (69%) and somewhere patrons could feel safe even when they are on their own (76%).

This government is committed to tackling loneliness, having provided around £25 million of funding as part of the £750 million charity funding package to organisations which deliver activities that tackle social isolation and loneliness. We have inspired organisations to take action, establishing the Tackling Loneliness Network in June 2020 and encouraged people to reach out to others through our campaign 'Let's Talk Loneliness'.

■ **Broadband: Dwyfor Meirionnydd**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[130167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many broadband cabinets in the constituency of Dwyfor Meirionnydd are not enabled for fibre or their locations.

Matt Warman:

The release of information regarding cabinets is a matter for Openreach due to commercial sensitivity. However, Open Market Review data suggests that in Dwyfor Meirionnydd there are 38,285 properties which can either access superfast broadband speeds or are in plans to receive it within the next two years. These may be commercial or public sector plans. There are 4,439 properties which both cannot receive superfast broadband speeds and are not in any plans to receive it. Although not a devolved matter, this specific data is captured by Welsh Government and can be found at <https://gov.wales/next-generation-access-broadband-2019>.

For queries about coverage, please refer to Ofcom Connected Nations data. Ofcom published the Connected Nations 2020 data on 17 December, which includes a table of data aggregated to parliamentary constituency level - Dwyfor Meirionnydd: 82.9% of premises have at least Superfast, of which 16.4% have full fibre. Constituency data is available from the HoC library, that does some constituency level aggregations: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-broadband-coverage-and-speeds/>

We would also draw your attention to this web site. Whilst the “official data” is the Ofcom Connected Nations report, the ThinkBroadband data tends to be slightly more up to date and is easier to search at National or Constituency level. <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/W07000061>

It also has a useful map facility so you can see geographical information about speeds and not-spots in your area. We have centered this map over your constituency and turned on the layers for BT Openreach connectivity <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/broadband-map#10/52.8152/-3.9970/openreach/adsl/geaftp/virgin/gfast/>

■ **Broadband: Wales**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[130168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many broadband cabinets in Wales are not enabled for fibre or their locations.

Matt Warman:

Around 95% of properties in Wales can receive a superfast broadband service. The UK and Welsh Governments have invested over £200 million of public funding to roll out fast, reliable broadband to around 733,000 properties under the Superfast Cymru programme. This included funding from UK Government, Welsh Government, and the EU. There are now around 79,000 properties in Wales which cannot currently access superfast broadband speeds and are not in any commercial or public sector plans to receive it. Although not a devolved matter, this specific data is captured by Welsh

Government and can be found at <https://gov.wales/next-generation-access-broadband-2019>.

For queries about coverage, please refer to Ofcom Connected Nations data. Constituency data is available from the HoC library, that does some constituency level aggregations: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/constituency-data-broadband-coverage-and-speeds/>

We would also draw your attention to this web site. Whilst the “official data” is the Ofcom Connected Nations report, the ThinkBroadband data tends to be slightly more up to date and is easier to search. <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/wales>

■ Culture Recovery Fund**Sir John Hayes:****[129954]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on delivering support for the culture and heritage sector through the Culture Recovery Fund.

Caroline Dinenage:

We have now reached a critical milestone - £1 billion worth of funding from the Culture Recovery Fund has been allocated across all four nations of the UK. That includes:

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

The £1 billion already committed has supported over 3000 organisations to weather this storm, supporting more than 75,000 jobs, with many more freelancers and jobs in vital supply chain industries also benefitting.

An additional £400m of grants and loan funding was announced on 11 December, which will support significant cultural organisations who now face financial distress as

a result of closure, as well as helping them transition back to fuller opening in the spring.

■ Digital Technology

Pete Wishart:

[\[129989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the Government's new Digital Strategy.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government is committed to driving growth in the digital sector and wider economy, and to ensuring that we maximise the benefits of a digital-led economic recovery. We will ensure that the Digital Strategy supports these objectives, both in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and into the future.

We are continuing to consider the best timeframe for delivering the strategy, in light of the broader national context including the Covid-19 pandemic. We are currently working towards publishing in 2021.

■ Digital Technology: Carbon Emissions

Chi Onwurah:

[\[128962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Royal Society's report entitled, Digital Technology and the Planet, published on 3 December 2020, what plans he has to establish (a) frameworks for collecting, sharing and using data for net zero applications and (b) a taskforce for digitalisation of the net zero transition.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As set out in the Prime Minister's recent Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, now is the time to take bold steps to tackle climate change, and officials are working across Government to ensure we are delivering on this in a coordinated fashion. We welcome the Royal Society's contribution and are currently considering the recommendations in their report.

The National Data Strategy, published this September, recognises the potential for better data use to contribute towards finding solutions to the climate crisis, including by supporting the UK's net zero target for 2050. The consultation on the strategy included a question on Government's role in ensuring data does not negatively contribute to carbon usage.

We are currently in the process of analysing consultation responses and will update on next steps in due course.

■ Ericsson: 5G

John Spellar:

[\[128868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with Ericsson on production capacity in the UK for the roll-out of 5G.

Matt Warman:

DCMS, as the lead department for digital infrastructure, has regular discussions with Ericsson about many aspects of 5G roll out.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Stuart Anderson:****[130219]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support businesses in the events and conference sector which have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government remains committed to working towards achieving football stadiums' maximum socially distanced capacity as soon as it is safe to do so.

From Wednesday 2 December, it has been possible for fans to be readmitted to sports grounds where local COVID alert levels allow. The Government continues to be in close contact with the Sports Technology Innovation Group, formed of sporting bodies and health experts, and the Sports Grounds Safety Authority to assess the latest thinking and high-tech solutions that could enable further spectators to return.

We will continue to work with both bodies, alongside the football authorities, to determine the next steps in viably increasing spectator capacities without compromising public safety.

■ Gambling: Departmental Coordination**Carolyn Harris:****[130145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many times he or his officials have had discussions with (a) the Department of Health and Social Care and (b) HM Treasury on gambling policy in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019 and (iii) 2020.

Carolyn Harris:**[130146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many times he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Justice on (a) gambling policy and (b) money laundering associated with gambling in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019 and (iii) 2020.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, HM Treasury, and wider government on matters related to gambling policy. Since 2018, DCMS officials have met regularly with their counterparts across government to discuss a wide range of gambling-related issues.

Details of ministerial meetings are publicly available. They are published quarterly on the government's website at: https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport.

■ Gambling: Internet**Rosie Cooper:** [128903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support is available for vulnerable gamblers to protect them from excessive online gambling during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rosie Cooper: [128904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulations in place to support problem gamblers.

Nigel Huddleston:

Gambling operators providing facilities to customers in Great Britain must be licensed by the Gambling Commission and must abide by its player protection requirements. In response to the Covid outbreak, the Commission issued additional guidance for online operators to mandate increased customer interactions, a ban on direct marketing of bonus offers or promotions to customers showing signs of vulnerability, and a ban on operators allowing customers to reverse decisions to withdraw winnings. Data published by the Gambling Commission in November found that since the first national lockdown began, the majority (86%) of those surveyed had gambled the same amount or less than they had previously.

Support and treatment services for people experiencing gambling problems have remained available throughout the Covid 19 period. These include the National Gambling Helpline and counselling services delivered by GamCare and other third sector providers, the NHS specialist gambling clinic in London and the NHS Northern Gambling Service. In April the Gambling Commission directed £8.8 million of regulatory settlement funds to commissioning charity GambleAware to support third sector treatment provision during Covid 19. Other avenues for support such as gambling self exclusion tools and opt-in gambling transaction blocks with banks have also remained available throughout the pandemic.

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. The Review will be wide-ranging and evidence led, and aims to make sure that the regulation of gambling is fit for the digital age. The Call for Evidence will be open for 16 weeks until 31 March 2021, and further detail, including how to make a contribution, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-gambling-act-2005-terms-of-reference-and-call-for-evidence/review-of-the-gambling-act-2005-terms-of-reference-and-call-for-evidence>.

■ Gambling: Licensing**Carolyn Harris:** [130147]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate the Gambling Commission has made of the number of Commission-licensed operators that operate in the UK and are blacklisted as an operator in an overseas jurisdiction.

Nigel Huddleston:

Operators providing gambling facilities to customers in Great Britain must be licensed by the Commission and comply with the conditions of their operating licences. Operators are expected to obey the laws of all other jurisdictions in which they operate, and must report any regulatory or criminal investigation into their activities in any jurisdiction to the Commission. These requirements, along with the international cooperation the Commission enjoys with other gambling regulators, enable the Commission to make the necessary ongoing assessments of an operator's suitability to hold a GB licence.

Further information on what the Gambling Commission expects from its licensed operators regarding their operations in other jurisdictions can be found in the Gambling Commission's [Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice](#).

Internet: Older People**Chi Onwurah:****[128957]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 10 December 2020 to Question 126026 on Digital Technology, how many people over the age of 50 with earnings below £20,000 a year are internet users; and what plans his Department has to introduce targets for digital inclusion.

Caroline Dinenage:

Data from the 2019 Oxford Internet Survey (<https://oxis.oii.ox.ac.uk/reports/>) shows that 40 percent of those aged 50 and over, and with household earnings below £20,000 per year, are internet users. My department is not currently planning to introduce targets for digital inclusion.

Kidsgrove Sports Centre**Jonathan Gullis:****[129145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help Kidsgrove Sports Centre to reopen.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity facilities are crucial for adults and children to stay active. Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants and employee wage support, which many sport clubs have benefited from. On 22 October, the Government announced a £100m support fund for local authority leisure centres. In addition, Sport England has also provided over £220 million directly to support the sector through this pandemic with the Community Emergency Fund of £35m specifically to support community sport clubs and exercise centres.

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

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

I know that Sport England are continuing to work with Newcastle Under Lyme borough council and the charity on the development of Kidsgrove Sports Centre project.

■ National Lottery

Carolyn Harris:

[\[130144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason the National Lottery age limit increase to 18 will not take effect until April 2021 for online play and October 2021 for all other lottery products.

Nigel Huddleston:

The legislative change for the increase in the National Lottery age limit will come into force on 1st October 2021. However, this date is the final backstop at which changes can be introduced and I expect the operator to make changes sooner where possible. In this regard, I am pleased that the operator is planning to introduce changes for online channels by early April 2021, and in the retail sector over the course of the summer.

The National Lottery is a hugely complex operation. This change will affect over 44,000 retailers across the UK and as a result it is important that we strike a balance between making this change quickly and giving businesses the time they need to ensure a smooth transition.

■ Nokia: 5G

John Spellar:

[\[128867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with Nokia on production capacity in the UK for the roll-out of 5G.

Matt Warman:

DCMS, as the lead department for digital infrastructure, has regular discussions with Ericsson about many aspects of 5G roll out.

■ Showmen's Guild of Great Britain: Scotland

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[130118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of allocating financial support to members of the Scottish Section of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain who are based in northern England and therefore ineligible for Scottish Government grants for showpeople.

Nigel Huddleston:

DCMS officials continue to meet with representatives of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain to assess how we can most effectively support the fairground industry through this period. Any further support will need to be considered in the wider context of existing support for the tourism industry, and the effectiveness of measures already in place.

The Government has introduced a number of support measures to support businesses and individuals through COVID-19, which travelling showpeople can access. These include various government-backed loans, as well as the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes. We also introduced a substantial, UK-wide cut in VAT for many tourism and hospitality activities, including admission to circuses and fairs, until the end of March.

Further to this, the Additional Restrictions Grant discretionary fund will allow Local Authorities to help businesses more broadly during this period. It supports businesses that are not covered by other grant schemes, such as the Local Restrictions Support Grant, or where additional funding is needed.

As tourism is devolved, the Devolved Administrations are responsible for any targeted financial initiatives to support the sector in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Since 2 December, we have returned to a tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions in England. Funfairs and fairgrounds - which are permitted to reopen in all three tiers as they were prior to this period of national restrictions - will need to go through the normal process of requesting permission and any relevant licences from the relevant authority and have the relevant health and safety protocols in place, including a Covid-19 risk assessment.

■ Sports: Coronavirus**Sir John Hayes:****[129952]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department is providing to spectator sports during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government has been working closely with sport governing bodies and clubs across the country to fully assess what support is needed, as a result of the restrictions many sports have faced around the return of fans.

As a result of this work, on 19 November 2020 we announced a £300 million Sports Winter Survival Package to protect their immediate futures over the winter period.

These interventions were on top of the multi-billion pound package of business support from the Treasury that has enabled many sports clubs and leisure businesses to survive, including the furlough scheme and business interruption loan scheme. Sports have accessed many hundreds of millions of pounds of support through this.

We have also now enabled the return of fans to sports events in tiers one and two, which will provide a vital boost to the sector on the road to recovery.

■ **Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[130210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department in ensuring equity in the opening up of sport (a) venues and (b) events following changing covid-19 restrictions.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government's approach to reopening venues and events has been based on safety and wider public health concerns. All stakeholders are subject to the same regulations and covid secure guidance whilst the relevant governing bodies and local authorities have the power to make appropriate decisions.

The £300m Sports Winter Survival Package, announced by the Secretary of State in November, is providing emergency funding to protect the immediate future of major spectator sports in England that have been the most severely impacted by covid restrictions over the winter.

■ **Video Games: Prices**

Douglas Chapman:

[\[129026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to prevent the (a) use of automated bots to bulk purchase new releases of gaming consoles and computer components and (b) resale of such products at inflated prices.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[130123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will bring forward legislative proposals to prevent the use of automated bots to bulk purchase new releases of gaming consoles and computer components and to prevent their resale at inflated prices.

Caroline Dinanage:

Officials are discussing this issue with the trade association for the video games industry, Ukie. We know that bulk purchasing through automated bots is a concern for some of their members who we understand are currently looking at any further actions they can take to prevent these behaviours, and are working with their retailers to improve experiences for customers.

EDUCATION**■ Academies****Apsana Begum:**[\[128303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary and (b) secondary schools have newly attained Academy status since 16 March 2020.

Nick Gibb:

Since 16 March 2020, 212 primary schools and 30 secondary schools have converted to academy status. In September, a further 23 primary and 13 secondary schools newly opened as Free Schools and University Technical Colleges (UTCs). Table 1 shows the breakdown of primary and secondary academy conversions (excluding Free Schools and UTCs) in the months following 16 March 2020.

Table 1: Breakdown of primary and secondary academy openers by month since 16 March 2020 (excluding Free Schools and UTCs)

MONTH	PRIMARY OPENERS	SECONDARY OPENERS
April	43	5
May	15	2
June	10	2
July	16	1
August	2	1
September	45	8
October	15	2
November	24	5
December	42	4
Total	212	30

Source: Get Information About Schools, taken from 1 December 2020.

■ Children: Day Care**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[130099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average monthly cost was of a childcare place in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each year since 2010.

Vicky Ford:

For a child taking up the universal 15 hours entitlement, the costs to the government are as follows:

- in Coventry local authority for 2020-21: £2,565 a year (or £4.50 an hour);
- in the West Midlands for 2020-21: average £2,582 a year (or £4.53 an hour); and
- in England for 2020-21: average £2,764 a year (or £4.85 an hour).

Early years funding rates from the introduction of the early years national funding formula in 2017-18 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-national-funding-formula-allocations-and-guidance>.

Early years funding allocations are published as part of the dedicated schools grant here:

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

Ellie Reeves:**[130187]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to tackle funding deficit between the hourly costs of delivering a funded childcare place for a two-year-old and the rate paid to providers compared to places for three and four-year-olds.

Ellie Reeves:**[130188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made the financial losses sustained by childcare providers due to the covid-19 outbreak; and what plans he has to prevent mass closures in that sector.

Ellie Reeves:**[130189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the minimum wage increase on the childcare sector; and if he will make it his policy to increase the per child funding rate for the (a) 16 and (b) 30 hours childcare entitlement.

Ellie Reeves:**[130190]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what specific steps he is taking to allocate funds to improve the affordability of childcare.

Vicky Ford:

The government continues to support families with their childcare costs. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 25 November a further £44 million investment in 2021-22.

We can now also confirm that in 2021-22 we will increase the hourly funding rates for all local authorities by 8p an hour for the 2 year old entitlement and, for the vast majority of areas, by 6p an hour for the 3 and 4 year old entitlement. This will pay for a rate increase that is higher than the costs nurseries may face from the uplift to the national living wage in April.

We are also increasing the minimum funding floor - meaning no council can receive less than £4.44 per hour for the 3 and 4 year old entitlements.

The small number of local authorities who have been protected from large drops to their funding rate as a result of the 'loss cap' will have their 2020-21 hourly funding rates for 3 and 4 year olds maintained in 2021-22. 2 of these authorities will see an increase to their hourly rate as they come off the loss cap in 2021-22.

In 2021-22, the average hourly funding rate for a 3-4 year old for the 15 hours universal entitlement in England will be £4.91 and the average hourly funding rate for a 2 year old in England will be £5.56.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we have monitored the health of the early years market through continual contact with early years sector organisations through regular meetings and working groups. We have ensured that early years providers have been able to access all the support available by continuing to fund the free childcare entitlements and via the package of additional support provided by the government, which includes Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS,) business rates relief, income support and job retention schemes.

We have also updated the CJRS guidance, so that all providers who have seen a drop in their overall income are able to furlough any staff, so long as they were on payroll on or before 30 October, and aren't required for delivering the government's funded entitlements. Providers should consult the full guidance on the CJRS scheme before submitting a claim. Childminders may use the Self Employment Income Support Scheme. The sector has also benefitted from business rates holidays and business loans.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi:

[130234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help safeguard (a) staff and (b) pupils from rising cases of covid-19 infection in schools and colleges.

Nick Gibb:

At each stage of its response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government has listened to and acted on the latest medical and scientific advice. As the prevalence of COVID-19 across the country and our communities changes, the Government has always been clear that it will not hesitate to take swift and decisive action to control the COVID-19 outbreak and save lives.

The Department has worked closely with Public Health England to publish comprehensive guidance based on a 'system of controls' which, when implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, create an inherently safer environment for staff, pupils and students where the risk of transmission of the infection is substantially reduced. This provides a framework for schools and colleges to put in place proportionate protective measures to manage risk effectively. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care/safe-working-in-education-childcare->

[and-childrens-social-care-settings-including-the-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe.](#)

To safeguard the health of the teaching workforce and keep as many staff and pupils in school and college as possible, we will be making rapid-result COVID-19 tests available to schools and colleges in the new year. This will help identify asymptomatic cases, which make up a third of all cases, limiting the spread of the virus. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges>.

In addition to the asymptomatic testing programme, from 4 January 2021, all secondary schools and colleges will also be able to offer staff and pupils a round of free COVID-19 testing, helping deliver the national priority of keeping as many staff and pupils as possible in school and college and fighting the spread of COVID-19.

We continue to provide information to schools and colleges on our guidance, and any changes to it, through regular departmental communications.

■ Financial Services: Primary Education

Bob Blackman:

[\[128663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of Kickstart Money's live virtual financial education sessions delivered by MyBnk to help ensure financial education continues in schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

Bob Blackman:

[\[128664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to recommendation made in April 2016 by the APPG on Financial Education for Young People, what progress his Department has made on developing the delivery of financial education at a primary level; and if he will make a statement.

Bob Blackman:

[\[128665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of early intervention financial education at a primary level; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Education on financial matters ensures that pupils are well prepared to manage their money, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information if required. In 2014, for the first time, financial literacy was made statutory within the National Curriculum as part of the citizenship curriculum for 11 to 16 year olds.

The Department also introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides pupils with the knowledge and skills to make important financial decisions. The Department has published statutory programmes of study for mathematics and

citizenship that outline what pupils should be taught about financial education from Key Stages 1 to 4.

In the primary mathematics curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the arithmetic that pupils should have. This knowledge is vital, as a strong understanding of numeracy and numbers will underpin the pupils' ability to manage budgets and money. There is also some specific content about financial education such as calculations with money.

The Department does not monitor or assess the resources that schools use and we trust schools to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for their particular school, drawing on the expertise of subject associations. We will continue to work closely with the Money and Pensions Service, and other stakeholders such as Her Majesty's Treasury, to consider what can be learned from other sector initiatives and how to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

Schools should have resumed teaching an ambitious and broad curriculum in all subjects from the start of the autumn term. This means that all pupils will be taught a wide range of subjects so they can maintain their choices for further study and employment. The Department's latest guidance on teaching to support children is set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

■ Foster Care

Damian Hinds:

[128931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of trends in the number of people (a) expressing an interest in foster parenting and (b) completing the foster parent application process in the last five years.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education does not collect this data. This data is currently captured by Ofsted.

Ofsted have seen an increase in enquires to independent fostering agencies (IFA) between the financial year 2015-2019, but in the same period enquiries have decreased for local authorities. At the end of March 2020, we have seen an increase in applications compared to 2015. However, application rates have remained fairly static over the past 2 years.

Ofsted estimate that there were around 137,200 initial enquiries from prospective fostering households in the year ending 31 March 2020. This was an increase of around 7% compared to the financial year 2018 to 2019. The reported figure of 135,075, from the data provided by 94% of all eligible agencies, was itself an increase on the previous year (127,850).

Ofsted estimate that around 76% enquiries received were within the IFA sector, up from 72% in 2018 to 2019. This results from a 14% increase in enquiries to the IFA sector, and a 10% decrease for local authorities, compared with last year.

A breakdown of enquiries received over the past 5 years are as follows:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES RECEIVED
2015/16	101,795
2016/17	114,425
2017/18	117,335
2018/19	127,850
2019/20	135,080

In relation to applications approved, across the sectors, the conversion rate of applications received to applications approved was very similar. Around 1 in 4 applications were approved in both sectors. However, IFAs accounted for both more applications and approvals than local authorities.

A breakdown of applications received and approved by local authorities are as follows:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED
2015/16	4,525	1,150
2016/17	4,940	1,140
2017/18	4,710	985
2018/19	4,390	1,020
2019/20	3,570	905

A breakdown of applications received and approved by IFAs are as follows:

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED
2015/16	4,060	1,140
2016/17	4,405	1,260
2017/18	5,830	1,455
2018/19	5,350	1,395

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED
2019/20	5,235	1,230

Among local authorities, 43% of completed applications were approved, while 35% were approved among IFAs. The difference is mostly accounted for by a higher proportion of withdrawals by applicants among IFAs (49% compared to 36% for local authorities).

■ Free Schools

Jonathan Gullis:

[129139]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to prepare for the wave 15 announcement from the free schools programme.

Nick Gibb:

The free schools programme was established to deliver choice, innovation and higher standards for parents. Free schools have delivered tens of thousands of high quality school places across the country. We will announce the outcome of wave 14 soon, to enable successful applications to begin work towards opening these much needed schools. Funding for further free school approvals will be considered at the next Spending Review.

■ Further Education: Expenditure

Colleen Fletcher:

[130107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the Government's (a) planned and (b) actual expenditure on 16 to 19 education provision was in each of the last five years in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England.

Gillian Keegan:

16 to 19 funding is not allocated to specific geographic locations. The department allocates the funding through a national funding formula to individual institutions, who are able to use their funds as appropriate to support students in line with the funding rules we set each year.

We publish our allocations by institution and these can be found at the link below.

This covers the last 5 academic years: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-funding-allocations#published-allocations>.

It should be noted that this data relates to institutions and is therefore not a measure of allocations to residents within Coventry or the West Midlands.

■ GCSE: Assessments**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[129974]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that the GCSE exams are (a) fair and (b) accessible to students in 2021 in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

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

In recognition of the challenges faced by students, the Department has announced a package of measures that will ensure students have a fair chance of demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of a subject in exams. A link to this package of measures can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-support-the-summer-2021-exams>. These include grading that is more generous than previous years and adaptations to exams (for example, giving students advance notice of topic areas and exam support materials). These adaptations will allow students to use the remaining time before the exams more effectively, which will be of particular benefit to those most affected by learning loss.

The Department has also confirmed the launch of an expert advisory group to consider the differential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on students and to recommend mitigations for these impacts, in support of the measures already announced. To ensure a successful delivery of the 2021 exams, and to ensure exams are accessible to all pupils, we are consulting with key stakeholders such as unions, schools and exam centres to discuss the logistics around this series and we will provide additional detail in the New Year.

■ LocatED: Newham**Ms Lyn Brown:****[128920]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's property company LocatED's plans to develop 259 Plaistow Road in Newham, London, how many and what proportion of the homes proposed to be built will be for (a) social rent, (b) 80 per cent of market rent, (c) market rent, (d) shared ownership, (e) leasehold sale and (f) other forms of sale or rent.

Nick Gibb:

The Department and LocatED are consulting with the London Borough of Newham and the Local Planning Authority on the delivery of School 21 Plaistow, a secondary free school project. The number of new homes and housing mix is currently under review and will be finalised during the planning determination period.

■ Pre-school Education

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[129975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help support an increase in the number of early-years childcare providers in England.

Vicky Ford:

Data from Ofsted, shows that the number of providers on the early years register has remained broadly stable since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak until the end of November 2020 and that current parental demand for childcare places is being met by the market. The government recognises the importance of supporting the early years sector financially during the COVID-19 outbreak and recognises the risk to providers' financial viability caused by changing levels of use of childcare.

Early years settings will continue to benefit from a planned £3.6 billion funding in the 2020-21 financial year to create free early education and childcare places. On 25 November, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £44 million investment in 2021-22. We can now also confirm that in 2021-22 we will increase the hourly funding rates for all local authorities by 8p an hour for the 2 year old entitlement and, for the vast majority of areas, by 6p an hour for the 3 and 4 year old entitlement. This will pay for a rate increase that is higher than the costs nurseries may face from the uplift to the national living wage in April. Funding beyond 2021-22 will be considered in the round at future spending reviews.

In addition to this, the government has provided a package of support for individuals and businesses which are directly benefitting providers of childcare. This includes business rates relief and grants, the extended Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which will remain open until April 2021, with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500.

We continue to work with local authorities and the early years sector to monitor the childcare market, including sufficiency of provision, and to understand how they can best be supported.

■ Private Education: Scholarships

Royston Smith:

[130143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure more children from disadvantaged and care backgrounds have access to private school scholarships to support their charitable status.

Nick Gibb:

In May 2018, the Department for Education and the Independent Schools Council (ISC) agreed a joint understanding designed to expand the participation of independent schools in various initiatives across the system. In particular, it encourages independent schools to offer a greater number of full bursary places,

targeted at children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We continue to work constructively with the ISC on this.

The Department is working to increase the involvement of independent schools alongside boarding schools to open up more educational opportunities for children in need. We recently appointed the Royal National Children's Springboard Foundation to deliver a project that will establish hubs in which independent schools, local authorities, social workers and Virtual School Heads, will work in partnership to promote school placements for children in need.

The Department continues to encourage and support new partnerships between independent and state funded schools. This programme aims to harness the resources and expertise found across sectors through the development of partnership activities, many of which are specifically tailored for pupils from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. In line with the Department's joint understanding with the ISC, we want to see more schools forming impactful and mutually beneficial collaborations across the areas of curriculum development, teaching quality, governance and leadership, and other targeted forms of school improvement to maximise the social benefits that can be generated for their communities.

■ Remote Education: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi: **[130237]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has assessed the effect of remote schooling during the covid-19 outbreak on levels of student learning.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is continuing to do everything in its power to ensure that children and young people can continue to attend school and college safely, as this is the best place for them to be for their education, development, and wellbeing. However, we recognise that for some pupils and students, remote education will be an essential component in the delivery of the school curriculum this year, alongside on-site teaching. The Department's guide to remote education good practice is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-good-practice/remote-education-good-practice>.

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 disruption 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 this academic year. The ongoing research is based on a large sample of pupils from Years 1-11, and will allow the Department to understand how best to support the sector and identify which groups of pupils have been most affected by time out of school – including the most disadvantaged. This research is based on assessments that schools are already choosing to use this year, so adds no additional burden on schools and does not require pupils to sit any additional assessments.

The Department has also commissioned a mixed-methods research study that will examine schools' recovery approaches to lost time in education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ School Meals

Colleen Fletcher:

[130103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department issues on nutrition in packed lunches.

Vicky Ford:

We encourage schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating. Schools may use the School Food Standards as a guide, when writing their packed lunch policies. For example, confectionery is banned throughout the school day and foods high in salt, sugar and fat are restricted.

We want to make it easier for parents to feel confident that they are preparing healthy balanced, lunches for their children. Further information such as recipes, tips and swap suggestions that are practical and affordable for parents are available on the Change4Life website at: <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life-beta/healthier-lunchboxes>.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[128886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of recommending that schools in (a) Havering and (b) other London boroughs with high number of covid-19 cases should move to virtual teaching in order to prevent children and families from potentially having to self-isolate over the Christmas period.

Nick Gibb:

Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. The leaders and staff of schools have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open, keep schools safe and provide education. Schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise risk of transmission. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. Senior clinicians, including the Chief Medical Officers of all four nations, still advise that school is the very best place for children to be.

Our approach, including advising schools to consider making Friday 18 December a non teaching day, has been informed by advice from Public Health England and seeks to balance the asks on schools to help in the national effort to limit the spread of the virus with the important need for staff to rest and recharge over the Christmas break.

Secondary schools will operate a staggered return in January, while testing is offered to minimise cases and transmission of the virus. Pupils in exam year groups, vulnerable children and children of critical workers will attend in person from the start

of term and will be offered the first testing dates, whilst other year groups are educated remotely and return on 11 January.

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[130235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the evidential basis is for keeping schools open a week before they break up for the Christmas period; and what the basis is for potential Government legal action against schools that wish to resume remote learning for the final week of term.

Nick Gibb:

Returning to school full time has been vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. The leaders and staff of schools have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open, keep schools safe and provide education. Schools have implemented a range of protective measures to minimise risk of transmission. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. Senior clinicians, including the Chief Medical Officers of all four nations, still advise that school is the very best place for children to be.

Our approach, including advising schools to consider making Friday 18 December a non-teaching day, has been informed by advice from Public Health England and seeks to balance the asks on schools to help in the national effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 with the important need for staff need to rest and recharge over the Christmas break.

Under Schedule 17 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 the Secretary of State may make a direction to require schools to enable all pupils to attend full time. If a school fails to comply with a direction the Act enables the Secretary of State to seek an injunction from the court in order to enforce the direction.

■ Teachers: Pay

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[126150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, since the Spending Review 2020, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor on a potential pay-rise for teachers in college, primary and secondary School settings.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education and Her Majesty's Treasury have had ongoing discussions regarding teacher pay as part of the spending review process. These discussions have also informed the remit to the School Teachers' Review Body, asking for recommendations on school teachers' pay and conditions in maintained schools for the 2021/22 academic year, which was published on Tuesday 15 December.

Although my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced a temporary pause on pay rises for the majority of public sector workers, workers earning less than median earnings of £24,000 will receive an increase of at least

£250: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents/spending-review-2020>. School teachers will also continue to be eligible for performance related pay progression and pay rises from promotion. Academies will retain the freedom to set their own pay policies. Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges are independent organisations and, as such, are responsible for setting their own pay and conditions.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan:

[129097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the staggered return of students to universities after the Christmas 2020 break on learning for qualifications that require (a) face-to-face contact and (b) practical training; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan:

[129098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department will provide to universities who have been instructed to stagger the return of students following the Christmas 2020 break.

Michelle Donelan:

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

The government is committed to prioritising education and wants to enable all students who have travelled home for the winter break to return to their universities and resume their studies. On 2 December 2020, we published guidance on students returning to higher education for the spring term, which sets out our plans for staggering the return of students over a 5-week period. This guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/students-returning-to-higher-education-from-spring-term>.

Practical and placement students should return first, in line with their planned start dates, from 4 January to the week commencing 18 January 2021. HE providers will need to make an assessment of the courses and students that should be allowed to return first, based on the requirements of the curriculum and the need for practical face-to-face learning and equipment. Students on all remaining courses should be offered online learning from the beginning of term so they can continue their studies at home, and should be asked to return to their university over a 2-week period from 25 January.

Testing students on return to campus is a key part of the plan for January and all students should be tested in order to protect themselves, others on campus and the wider community. The Department for Education is actively working with the Department for Health and Social Care to ensure that all HE providers can deliver

government supported asymptomatic test sites utilising lateral flow devices, which will help to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission during the staggered return.

Personal protective equipment and kits will be provided to HE providers at no cost, along with access to digital solutions, training and clinical guidance to support testing. A cost recovery model is also in place for providers to recover costs for workforce, site set up and site furnishings.

We recognise that this year has been incredibly difficult for students and that, in these exceptional circumstances, some may face financial hardship. I have announced that we are making available up to £20 million on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students.

■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

Sir John Hayes: [\[129963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support and encourage diversity of thought amongst academics in UK universities.

Sir John Hayes: [\[129964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure UK universities protect free speech.

Sir John Hayes: [\[129965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to prohibit no platform policies in universities; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

This government has been clear in its commitment to strengthen academic freedom and ensure that our universities are places where free speech can thrive. Without action to counter attempts to discourage or even silence unpopular views, intellectual life on campus for both staff and students may be unfairly narrowed and diminished. That is why there is a commitment in the 2019 manifesto to strengthen academic freedom and free speech at universities.

Academic freedom is a fundamental principle in the English higher education sector, as recognised in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and other legislation, allowing academic staff to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges.

Free speech is protected in universities by law. Under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, universities have a duty to “take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers”.

Higher education providers registered with the Office for Students must also comply with the ongoing registration condition to meet Public Interest Governance Principles. Principles I and VII relate to academic freedom and free speech.

There have been some examples of attempts to restrict free speech under the banner of no-platforming or safe spaces, and it is important that this does not become commonplace. The government does not support blanket no-platforming of individuals or organisations.

Individual providers have the autonomy to take their own decisions about which individuals are invited to speak on campus. However, in all circumstances, higher education providers must ensure they are complying with their freedom of speech duty obligations.

To further strengthen academic freedom and free speech, a range of legislative and non-legislative options are being considered, and ministers will be looking at these carefully, working closely with regulatory bodies to assess next steps.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products: Import Duties

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on UK meat and dairy exporters of the implementation of tariffs on agri-food goods in the event of the UK reaching the end of the transition period without a deal on the future relationship with the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of tariffs on agri-food goods in the event of no deal on UK-EU trade relations on the British (a) pork industry, (b) beef, (c) poultry, (d) dairy and (e) egg industry.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Government has always been clear that we seek a free trade agreement with the EU.

At the end of 2020 the UK will transition to Most Favoured Nation (MFN) terms with all those nations that it does not have a free trade agreement with. The UK's new MFN schedule, the UK Global Tariff has been designed to protect UK sensitive tariff lines and certain domestic industries, with tariffs retained for products such as pork, lamb, beef and poultry.

In a non-negotiated outcome implementing the UK's tariff schedule will most likely mean that agricultural prices for our domestic producers will increase for many livestock sectors (such as beef, pork and poultry meat).

In making any decision on tariffs the Government must regard the five principles set out in the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Act 2018 which includes the interests of producers and the desire to maintain and promote trade and productivity.

The Government will publish more detail of the economic analysis in the Tax Information and Impact Note in due course, as is standard practice to support tax policy decisions.

■ Agriculture: Import Duties

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the economic effect on the British farming sector of the implementation of tariffs on (a) fertilisers, (b) pharmaceutical goods and (c) other agricultural inputs in the event of no deal on UK-EU trade relations.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Government has always been clear that we seek a Free Trade Agreement with the EU similar to the one that they have with Canada.

At the end of 2020 the UK will transition to Most Favoured Nation terms with all those nations that it does not have a free trade agreement with.

The Government will publish more detail of the economic analysis in the Tax Information and Impact Note in due course, as is standard practice to support tax policy decisions.

■ Drinking Water

Daisy Cooper:

[\[128737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what funds he will make available for local authorities to invest in public water fountains and refill stations.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises the importance of making drinking water more readily available in public places, as a means of reducing single-use plastic bottles. As laid out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, and our Resource and Waste Strategy we are already taking action in this area.

The Government is committed to supporting water companies, high street retailers, coffee shops and transport hubs to offer new refill points for people to top-up water bottles for free in every major city and town in England. The water industry is developing a network of refill points through its Refill app, managed by City to Sea. The app signposts to over 30,000 free refill points and was estimated to have saved over 100 million single use bottles from entering our waste stream in 2019.

There are examples of water companies working with cities and communities across the country: the Mayor of London has partnered with Thames Water to install a network of more than 100 drinking water fountains in London, Yorkshire Water has installed fountains in Hull and Wessex Water is installing fountains in Wiltshire, United Utilities have helped install fountains in Manchester, and South West Water have also supported the installation of drinking water fountains on beaches.

While Covid-19 has held up some of this work more recently given the complexities of having open drinking water fountains in the midst of a pandemic, the investment in water fountains fits with Water UK's wider commitment to prevent the equivalent of 4 billion plastic water bottles ending up as waste by 2030.

■ Drinking Water: Plastics

Daisy Cooper:

[\[128738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the provision of drinking water fountains on reducing the use of single-use plastic water bottles in the last 10 years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has not conducted a specific assessment of the effect of the provision of drinking water fountains on reducing the use of single-use plastic water bottles.

The Government recognises the importance of making drinking water more readily available in public places, as a means of reducing single-use plastic bottles. The Resources and Waste Strategy for England, published in December 2018, sets out the Government's plans to reduce, reuse, and recycle more plastic than we do now. Our target is to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the life of the 25 Year Environment Plan, but for the most problematic plastics we are going faster - which is why we commit to work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.

To help combat the improper disposal and littering of drinks containers, including single-use plastic water bottles, the Government committed, in its 2019 manifesto, to introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers subject to further evidence and analysis. The aim of a DRS for drinks containers is to increase recycling and reduce the littering of such containers.

The Government is committed to supporting water companies, high street retailers, coffee shops and transport hubs to offer new refill points for people to top-up water bottles for free in every major city and town in England. The water industry is developing a network of refill points through its Refill app, managed by City to Sea. The app signposts to over 30,000 free refill points and is estimated to have saved over 100 million single use bottles from entering our waste stream in 2019.

■ Export Health Certificates

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the increase in export health certificates that will be required to allow the continuation of UK meat and dairy exports to the EU after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The number of Export Health Certificates (EHCs) required for exports of products of animal origin to the EU at the end of the transition period will vary depending on a

number of factors. Our best estimate is the additional need will be five times the 57,000 EHCs issued in 2017 for third country trade, with up to half of these relating to exports of fish. The other half will be split across different product categories, including meat and dairy.

■ **Export Health Certificates: Veterinary Medicine**

Daniel Zeichner: [\[128680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of vets that will be required to manage the potential increase in export health certificates after the transition period.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[128681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many UK vets are qualified to approve export health certificates; and what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the number of vets to meet demand after the transition period.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[128682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of a shortage of vets for signing export health certificates on UK meat and dairy exports to the EU after the transition period.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[128683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to (a) increase certification resource and (b) simplify the export process to help ensure an adequate number of vets to certify exports of meat and dairy to the EU after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

We are working hard to increase the number of Official Veterinarians to meet demand for certification post transition period, to ensure that the food industry can take advantage of the opportunities and changes that the UK's new chapter will bring. There are a range of challenges in estimating the number of OV's that will be needed but, based on our modelling of a central scenario, we expect numbers to be sufficient.

The number of Official Veterinarians qualified to sign Export Health Certificates (EHCs) for animal products has grown from approximately 600 to approximately 1300 since February 2019. The training required has been available free of charge since October 2020 and 468 vets are currently enrolled on the relevant training course via this scheme. In addition to this we are providing funding for surge capacity veterinarians as short-term support for the end of the transition period should localised shortages arise.

We have put in place a range of mitigations to simplify processes, including the development of EHC Online and the launch of the Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme for products packaged for the final consumer from stable supply chains.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the (a) number of Certification Support Officers (CSO) and (b) volume of work undertaken by CSOs in order to support Official Veterinarians with a potential increase in export health certificates after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is facilitating the employment of Certification Support Officers by both Official Veterinarians and local authorities to assist with export health certification ahead of the end of the transition period. Since October 2020 the training that is needed for an individual to qualify as a CSO has been available free of charge and CSO numbers GB wide have grown by over 50%. My officials have made webinars available to certifiers where the value of CSO role in assisting OVs and LA certifiers in their work is emphasised. Follow up Q&A sessions are being held this week.

■ Flood Control

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[130105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of flood defences in (a) the West Midlands and (b) England.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) visually inspect all flood risk assets using trained and accredited inspectors. The frequency of visual inspection is risk based, taking account of factors such as the status, nature and significance of the flood defence. They also carry out additional inspections following flooding.

Based on the inspection, they assign a condition grade to each asset:

a) In the West Midlands: As of 11 December 2020, 94.12 % of all flood risk assets on Main River are at their required condition.

b) In England: as of 1 December 2020, 94% of flood risk assets on Main Rivers and the coast are at their required condition.

If an asset is below its required condition it is identified as requiring work. This does not necessarily mean the asset has structurally failed, or that its performance in a flood will be compromised. If the performance of an EA flood risk asset is reduced, action will be taken to ensure that flood risk continues to be effectively managed until the asset is fully repaired or replaced and has met the required condition.

■ Food Supply

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has been made of the potential effect on the UK's food and drink

industry of the UK and the EU failing to agree a deal on the future relationship before the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

We believe it is still possible to reach an agreement with the EU and that this can be done quickly. However, if this cannot be achieved, we are prepared for the effects of a non-negotiated outcome. The food supply chain has demonstrated its resilience, responding to unprecedented challenges over the last year. The Government is confident that it will continue to be resilient after 31 December.

The economic impacts of no Free Trade Agreement with the EU have been much debated in the last four years and there are many economic studies on this issue. The Prime Minister has been clear that we will embrace our new future and prosper as an independent free trading nation, controlling our own borders, and setting our own laws.

From January, we will be able to design our own rules in ways that best support UK businesses to recover from the pandemic. We can benefit from new free trade deals, and open up new markets with other like-minded trading partners. We'll also be able to target our support in the UK to where it is needed most, to level up our economy.

Defra continues to engage productively with food and drink businesses from across the industry as they prepare for the end of the transition period. As part of this, Defra regularly holds numerous forums and bilateral meetings with trade associations, manufacturers, processors, wholesalers and retailers and SMEs.

We continue to work with the industry to understand their readiness and to address concerns. In this, we have provided tailored guidance and support outlining what action businesses should consider taking regardless of the outcome of negotiations. Guidance continues to be updated and shared through the GOV.UK website and digital resources. Defra also works across Government to support businesses through initiatives such as the Trader Support Service, industry days and webinars.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the equity of the distribution of additional costs in the UK food supply chain in the event of no deal on UK-EU trade relations at the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain and the food industry is well-equipped to respond to disruption as was seen during the initial Covid-19 response earlier this year.

Defra Ministers and officials meet regularly with the Agri-food industry to support contingency planning by the industry. This includes working closely with those sectors who may be particularly affected by concurrent impacts of end transition disruption and Covid-19 impacts.

There are a number of factors which can affect consumer food prices, including agri-food import prices, domestic manufacturing costs and currency exchange rates.

Many of these factors will continue to apply at the end of the transition period whatever the outcome of trade negotiations with the EU. Most food industry sectors are accustomed to fluctuations in supply chain costs, and this does not necessarily translate into consumer price rises.

Justin Madders:

[\[129032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 110165, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) representatives from the food supply sector and (c) the devolved Administrations on when the plan for food supply after the transition period will be published.

Victoria Prentis:

Our thorough preparations for leaving the EU in 2019, alongside the lessons we have learned during the Covid-19 response provide a robust foundation for end of transition period planning on food supply.

The Government contingency planning documents such as the plan for food supply are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect engagement with industry and across government including the Devolved Administrations. Given their sensitive nature these plans are not published as they provide the basis of discussions between Ministers and officials on the development of security and resilience policy.

■ Food Supply: Brexit

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of potential (a) increased haulage costs and (b) disruption at the port of Felixstowe on UK food supplies after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Haulage firms operate on a commercial basis with the food industry. The haulage business model approaches pricing with consideration from a supply versus demand position. Changes in operation from 1 January may increase road haulage costs in the short-term for the food industry.

Current disruption at the port of Felixstowe is due to global supply chain pressures rather than our trading relationship with the EU. The food industry is resilient and alternative routes are available. Although there may be some impact to shelf-life of ambient food products, there has not been any evidence to suggest shortages as a result of this global shipping situation. We will continue to monitor impact on food supply as a result of disruption.

■ Food Supply: Supermarkets

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) discussions his Department has had and (b) preparations have been made with

supermarkets on food shortages in the event of the transition period ending without a trade deal.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain and the food industry is well-equipped to respond to disruption as was seen during the initial Covid-19 response earlier this year.

Defra has well established ways of working with the food industry on preparedness for and response to potential food supply chain disruptions. Defra Ministers and officials meet regularly with the food industry, including the retailers, to support contingency planning by the industry.

Our thorough preparations for leaving the EU in 2019, alongside the lessons we have learned from, and the range of interventions deployed during the Covid-19 response provide a robust foundation for planning on food supply at the end of the transition period.

The Government made a new temporary relaxation of UK competition law for groceries-chain suppliers on 17 December 2020 - the Competition Act 1998 (Groceries) (Public Policy Exclusion) Order 2020. This relaxation will help grocery retailers and their suppliers to collaborate effectively to prepare for, and if required, respond to potential disruption.

■ **Food: Exports**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the six working day time period after the meeting of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed on 18 December 2020 for UK companies exporting food to the EU to implement new systems and IT upgrades in preparation for the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Scheduling for that Committee is a matter for the EU.

EHC Online is a new digitised service which supports exports from Great Britain. The 126 new Export Health Certificates required for exporting goods to the EU at the end of the transition period are already available within the system. To help prepare businesses for the changes in how they trade with the EU, EHC Online has been open for registration to EU exporters since 8 October 2020 and this has been supported by webinars to more than 1000 businesses, in which EHC Online and the new EU forms have been demonstrated.

■ **Food: Northern Ireland**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the unresolved UK-EU trade negotiations on the quantity and

variety of food to be supplied to Northern Ireland from Great Britain in the first three months of 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

We have always acknowledged that there would need to be some additional controls on agri-food movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland to reflect the island of Ireland's existing status as a Single Epidemiological Unit. But we have also been clear that these new processes could never be allowed to put food supplies to Northern Ireland at risk. That is why the deal we have reached with the EU and the support that we have put in place do what is necessary to protect and preserve GB-NI agri-food trade from 1 January 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the grace periods for food safety checks on goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK for supermarkets also apply to independent retailers, wholesalers and suppliers.

Victoria Prentis:

Authorised traders, such as supermarkets and their trusted suppliers, will benefit from a grace period, through to 1 April 2021, from official certification for products of animal origin, composite products, and food. The UK Government and Northern Ireland Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will engage in a rapid exercise to ensure these traders are identified prior to 31 December so they can benefit from the grace period. We will not discriminate against small suppliers or between different companies in implementing these practical measures.

■ **Food: Packaging**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[128736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the amount of fresh food sold in the UK (a) with and (b) without plastic packaging.

Rebecca Pow:

We do not collect data on the specific packaging used for certain product types.

We estimate that in total roughly 2.3m tonnes of plastic packaging was placed on the market in 2019.

We are currently developing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging. Through this, we want to encourage producers to move to more recyclable packaging, where this is appropriate and practicable. EPR for packaging will see producers paying for the waste management costs associated with the packaging that they place on the market. In using more easily recyclable packaging, producers will pay less. Costs will be modulated (varied) to take account of various criteria, such as recyclability.

■ Food: Ports

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on UK meat and dairy exporters of not prioritising perishable food at ports after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra consulted with industry stakeholders on which commodities should be prioritised in the event of severe traffic disruption for those travelling via the Short Straits.

Three criteria were identified to inform that decision, two of which had to be met for prioritisation of any commodity to be agreed:

- i) The goods are highly perishable and will lose most of or all their value within five days or less;
- ii) The 'perishable' goods concerned are live animals and would give rise to animal welfare concerns if not moved in a timely manner and;
- iii) The goods would give rise to a disproportionate economic impact on a geographical area of the UK.

Meat and dairy products did not meet two out of the three criteria set out above and were therefore not identified as prioritised commodities. We did consider whether a number of perishable commodities beyond those identified could be added to the list of those being prioritised. However, there is an additional capacity issue with respect to the numbers of vehicles and the overall traffic management in Kent, which if exceeded would put at risk the feasibility of the wider prioritisation contingency plan.

On the issue of prioritising goods at ports, the prioritisation contingency described above focuses on the journey to port within the Kent strategic road network, specifically the M20. Defra and other Government departments are working intensively with the relevant ports to minimise further delays at those locations.

■ Food: Prices

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the price of (a) meat, (b) dairy products, (c) eggs, (d) cereals and (e) fruit and vegetables of the UK reaching the end of the transition period without a deal on its future relationship with the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has been clear that it seeks a free trade agreement with the EU, based on friendly cooperation and maintaining tariff and quota free access.

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain. We have carried out extensive planning with industry and the Devolved Administrations to prepare for the end of the year, and we are committed to ensuring the continued supply of agri-food goods

across the UK. We are equally committed to minimising disruption to movement of goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

There are a number of factors which can affect consumer food prices, including agri-food import prices, domestic manufacturing costs and currency exchange rates. Many of these factors will continue to apply at the end of the transition period whatever the outcome of trade negotiations with the EU. Most food sectors are accustomed to fluctuations in supply chain costs, and this does not necessarily translate into consumer price rises. We will of course continue to monitor market prices of agricultural commodities including meat, dairy products, eggs, cereals and fruit and vegetables.

■ Food: Shortages

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the extent of potential food shortages after the transition period (a) with and (b) without agreement on the future relationship with the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[128686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the extent of potential food price rises after the transition period (a) with and (b) without agreement on the future relationship with the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain and a food industry which is experienced in dealing with disruptions to food supply. This includes establishing alternative supply routes and suppliers, where appropriate, and other measures to minimise disruption. The Government has well established ways of working with the food industry including in situations with the potential to disrupt supply.

The Government has carried out extensive planning with the food industry and the Devolved Administrations to prepare for the end of the year. This includes planning for risks that might arise at the end of the transition period, whether or not there is an agreement on the future relationship with the EU. Our overall assessment of risks to food supply at the end of transition is that there may be disruption to some products but there will not be an overall shortage of food in the UK.

There are a number of factors which can affect consumer food prices, including agri-food import prices, domestic manufacturing costs and currency exchange rates. Most food sectors are accustomed to fluctuations in supply chain costs, and this does not necessarily translate into consumer price rises.

■ Food: Standards

Justin Madders:

[\[129031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that food standards are maintained after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has a clear manifesto commitment that in all of our trade negotiations we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 will transfer all existing provisions onto the UK statute book. This includes EU Council Directive 96/22/EC which bans the import and production of meat using growth promoting hormone or beta agonist treatments, existing food safety provisions ensuring no products, other than potable water are approved to decontaminate poultry carcasses, all EU maximum residue levels (MRLs) for plant protection products (as they are at the point of exit) and the standards for how they are set, as well as all EU import standards relating to food safety and animal welfare.

At the end of the transition period, we will also repatriate the functions of audit and inspection currently carried out by the European Commission to ensure that trading partners continue to meet our import conditions. We will also be verifying that requirements are carried out as stipulated through checks at the border. This will provide a robust system to maintain our high standards.

The independent advice of our food regulators, the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland, and rigorous processes will continue to ensure that all food imports into the UK are safe and meet the relevant UK product rules and regulations.

The Agriculture Act 2020 contains a duty for Ministers to report to Parliament on whether, or to what extent, commitments in new Free Trade Agreements, relating to agricultural goods, are consistent with maintaining UK levels of statutory protection in relation to environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

In July the Government established the Trade and Agriculture Commission, an independent advisory board set up to advise and inform the Government's trade policies on environmental and animal welfare standards in food production. The Government has now extended the Trade and Agriculture Commission, and committed to place it on a full statutory footing via the Trade Bill, with a provision to review it every three years.

■ Food: Waste**Ms Lyn Brown:****[128654]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on levels of food waste of the guidance on serving alcohol only with a substantial meal.

Ms Lyn Brown:**[128655]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing policies to ensure that food served as a substantial meal with alcohol is not wasted.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has not made an assessment of the impact of food waste levels as a result of this policy. However, we continue to support the hospitality sector to make sure good food is not wasted.

Since 2018 we have supported the surplus redistribution sector with over £11 million of grants to make sure they have the infrastructure to get good food, including from the hospitality sector, to those who have a need. We are also supporting WRAP and its brokerage work bringing businesses together with suitable food redistributors.

We are also directly helping hospitality businesses to waste less. The *Food Waste Reduction Roadmap* is open to the hospitality sector and sets out a series of milestones to *Target, Measure and Act* on their waste including the provision of sector specific tools to measure their waste. This programme is supported by the *Guardians of Grub* campaign which aims at empowering employees to waste less in its provision of advice, guidance and support.

■ Inland Waterways: Leisure**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[129968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of inland waters in (a) Huddersfield, (b) Kirklees and (c) England are safe for (a) wild swimming and (b) other human leisure activities.

Rebecca Pow:

The physical safety of swimmers and other water users at inland waters is a matter for the local management of the site. The Bathing Water Regulations 2013 are designed to protect water quality and public health insofar as it relates to pollution and have no provision for physical safety.

The numbers of inland designated bathing waters in the areas requested are:

1. Huddersfield: 0
2. Kirklees: 0
3. England: 12

Areas used for other water-based leisure activities are not designated as bathing waters because bathing water monitoring focuses on a single sampling point so is not directly relevant to water-sport participants, who cover a greater distance in the water than bathers.

■ Inland Waterways: Pollution Control**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[129967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support local community organisations that aim to clean inland waters.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra and its partner organisations support and encourage action by local communities in improving the water environment. The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) is a framework for co-ordinating partnership action between the public, private and third sectors with a specific focus on water. Since its launch in 2012, CaBA has grown from 25 pilots to include over 100 Catchment Partnerships consisting of 2,500 organisations covering England and cross border areas with Wales. They engage and empower local communities and help them to bring their local knowledge, resource and expertise to reduce flood risk, improve sustainable management of water resources and resilience to climate change.

Defra and the Environment Agency supports this local action by funding via CaBA Catchment Hosts, a central National Support Group and, in addition, £27 million of Government investment over three years has supported local projects through the Water Environment Grant scheme.

■ Inshore Fishing: Sussex**Caroline Ansell:**[\[130162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on his approval of the Sussex IFCA by-laws; what his timeframe is for that approval; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) Nearshore Trawling Byelaw and the Netting Byelaw have both been submitted to Defra requesting final approval.

Defra is currently reviewing the full byelaw package for both byelaws, including reviewing evidence in the impact assessment and results of the byelaw consultation, in accordance with our statutory guidance.

No decision has yet been taken by the Department on whether to confirm either Byelaw. An update will be provided when the final Defra consideration process is concluded.

■ Livestock: Balloons and Sky Lanterns**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[130239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a follow-up independent study of the research undertaken in 2013 on the effect of sky lanterns and helium balloons on the health and welfare of livestock.

Dr Luke Evans:[\[130240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress the Government has made on (a) implementing non-regulatory measures to minimise the

risks associated with and (b) increasing the safety standards of sky lanterns and helium balloons.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra's study of 2013 *Sky lanterns and helium balloons: an assessment of impacts on livestock and the environment* suggested that, while anecdotal reports and media coverage could imply that there is widespread concern from farming groups and others over the impacts of sky lanterns and balloons on the health and welfare of livestock, the evidence presented indicated that the number of cases reported each year of animals affected through ingestion of sky lantern and balloon debris is very small in the context of the wider livestock population. While it is recognised that there may be a significant level of under-reporting, on the basis of the evidence presented, we have concluded that the overall impact is very limited. No further assessment has been done on this.

General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (SI 1803) make it an offence to place a product on the market that is not safe. In addition, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute has published a Code of Practice for sky lanterns, which aims to provide guidance for manufacturers, importers, and retailers.

■ **Marine Environment: Explosions**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[129979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of explosions on the sea floor on the (a) health and (b) quality of marine life in British waters.

Rebecca Pow:

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

■ **Packaging: Recycling**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[128735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of requiring all (a) cleaning product and (b) food containers to be reusable.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not made a comprehensive assessment of the merits of requiring all cleaning product and food containers to be reusable. However, we do see merit in more packaging being reusable. An increase in the use of reusable packaging will

help us to achieve our ambitions of doubling resource productivity and eliminating avoidable waste by 2050, as stated in our Resources and Waste Strategy (2018).

We are currently developing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging. Through this, we want to encourage producers to move to reusable packaging, where this is appropriate and practicable. EPR for packaging will see producers paying for the waste management costs associated with the packaging that they place on the market. In using reusable packaging, producers will pay less because they will only pay fees for the first time the reusable packaging is placed on the market. In addition to this, EPR for packaging will see those costs modulated (varied) to account for various criteria. This could see producers who use reusable or recyclable packaging paying less than those who do not. We will be consulting in early 2021 on our proposals for introducing EPR for packaging.

■ Palm Oil: Sustainable Development

Ben Lake:

[128232]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and (b) similar schemes in preventing environmental and ecological destruction arising from the production of palm oil.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government-convened UK Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative produced four briefings in March this year, each providing information on a palm oil standard including its approach to sustainability and providing information on impact. This was a continuation of work produced under the UK Roundtable on Sourcing Sustainable Palm Oil in 2015, which aimed to provide technical assistance to support UK industry users of palm oil to transition to fully sustainable palm oil supply chains.

The briefings included the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil Standard. In addition, the briefings also covered the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil Standard, Malaysian Palm Oil Standard and International Sustainability and Carbon Certification. A fifth briefing was also produced to provide information on 'No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation' policies.

The briefings are available at: <https://www.efeca.com/our-work/resources/palm-oil-briefings-and-annual-progress-reports/>

It is not for Government to comment on the effectiveness of specific certification schemes. RSPO is set through an independent process, which does not involve Governmental input; we do not provide advice on any specific standard. Our forthcoming due diligence legislation will provide a common standard across all commodities, based on legality in producer countries.

■ Pet Travel Scheme: Northern Ireland

Paul Girvan:

[130197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether cats, dogs or ferrets being moved for non-commercial purposes from Northern Ireland to Great Britain will require a blood test and the results of that test before being moved, after the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

There will be no changes to the current pet travel health requirements for entry into Great Britain after the end of the transition period. There will be no requirement for pets to get a blood test for entry into Great Britain if they are travelling from Northern Ireland. This requirement only applies for movements from 'Unlisted' third countries.

■ Plants: Imports

Justin Madders:

[129035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of inspectors required to inspect EU imported plants after the end of the transition period; and how many inspectors are employed and fully-trained to carry out such inspections as at 14 December 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has undertaken significant recruitment to increase the number of plant health inspectors in order to service the demand for import and export checks and certification in England and Wales, where the majority of inspectors will be required. We will have sufficient resources to meet demand from 1 January 2021 when checks of high-priority plants from the EU begin, and July 2021 when we will have arrived at our end-state regime, to ensure minimal disruption to trade.

As of 14 December, APHA has more than 300 fully trained Plant Health inspectors undertaking a wide range of roles across England and Wales, with a further c150 staff completing their training and further new recruits to be onboarded before the end of December. Some of the additional staff recruited and trained will be dedicated to plant imports, with flexibility to expand the number from within the overall resource pool, based on demand.

■ Plants: UK Trade with EU

Justin Madders:

[129034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish details of the charge for inspections in respect of EU imported plants after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Inspection fees for imports of regulated plants and plant products from the EU will not apply until 1 April 2021 in England and Wales. This will give businesses time to adjust

to the new fee arrangements and factor it into financial planning for next year. A full list of regulated plants and plant products can be found on GOV.UK.

The fees for import checks on such goods from the EU will be proportionate to the frequency of checks applicable to each commodity. These fees have been published on the Plant Health Portal and have been communicated to stakeholders directly.

■ **Plastics**

Daisy Cooper:

[128734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce a date for banning the use of all single-use non-essential plastic items.

Rebecca Pow:

We have already introduced a restriction on the supply of plastic straws, drinks stirrers and cotton buds from October this year. In addition, we are scoping out additional items for which a ban would be a suitable and proportionate measure. The Environment Bill will also allow us to tackle problematic plastics through a variety of policy measures, including measures to impose charges on single-use plastic items; introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers; and make producers cover the costs of collecting and managing plastic packaging waste.

Generally, we prefer to help people and businesses make more sustainable choices, for example through better product labelling, rather than resorting to a charge or a ban. Plastic may be the best available material for some products and banning them may cause more harm than good. We expect the initiatives by industry, such as the UK Plastics Pact, combined with our reforms to work together to eliminate the most problematic plastics from use.

■ **Ports: Kingston upon Hull**

Christine Jardine:

[122858]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to employ veterinary surgeons at each of the Border Control Points under the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority.

Victoria Prentis:

Sanitary and phytosanitary controls on animals and animal products imported into Great Britain from the EU are being introduced in stages. From April, Port Health Authorities will be required to carry out remote documentary checks on products of animal origin, with physical and identity checks on animal products being carried out at Border Control Posts from 1 July 2021.

Defra has provided £14 million funding to local authorities in England to support Port Health Authorities with the recruitment and training of over 500 new staff, including Official Veterinarians. This includes £537,659 which has been awarded to Kingston Upon Hull City Council.

Defra is also working closely with the Animal and Plant Health Agency, which will be responsible for carrying out checks on live animals, to ensure the recruitment and training of the additional staff required is completed for each stage of the new import regime.

■ **River Severn: Flood Control**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[128909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to plan for potential flooding along the River Severn over the Christmas 2020 period.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 14 December 2020, [PQ UIN 125221](#).

In addition the Environment Agency (EA) continues to work alongside Local Resilience Forums to plan, exercise and prepare for responding to flooding. The EA is ready to provide its flood warning service and to deploy local flood protection measures and barriers along the River Severn.

The EA would welcome the hon. Member's support to urge his constituents to remain vigilant and take steps to protect themselves from the risk of flooding by signing up for free flood warnings via Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or by visiting the GOV.UK website at: www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[128910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to allocate long-term funding to flood defences along the River Severn in response to increased risk of flooding as a result of climate change.

Rebecca Pow:

The River Severn Partnership (RSP) is led by the Environment Agency (EA) alongside Shropshire Council. It has united local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, water companies through the Water Resources West group, the EA and Natural Resources Wales.

The RSP will deliver a long-term programme addressing water management across the Severn Catchment. This will be achieved through a proactive, coordinated and collaborative approach to flood risk management, water quality, environmental enhancement and an integrated approach to water resource management to deal with the impacts of climate change.

The EA is updating the River Severn modelling and flood mapping to incorporate the latest available data. The £250,000 grant-in-aid investment will deliver a completed model by the end of 2021. This new model will also deliver evidence to support the flood warning service, potential future flood schemes, and will inform our advice in response to proposals to develop within the catchment.

The EA in partnership with all other Flood Risk Management Authorities along the River Severn Catchment is currently putting together the next six-year Flood and Coastal Risk Management Capital Investment Programme 2021/22 – 2027/28.

The emerging Severn Valley water management plan seeks to reduce the risk of flooding from the River Severn for nearly 3,000 homes and businesses. The proposals aim to explore options of storing flood water to reduce the amount of water flowing down the river at times of flood, while also looking at ways to store it for use when needed.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[129966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to reduce the proportion of untreated sewage that flows into rivers and streams.

Rebecca Pow:

Water companies are committed in the 5-year business planning period (2020-2025) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.1 billion. However, I recognise that there is more to do. I met water company CEOs in September and made clear that the volumes of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced. To achieve this, I have set up a new Taskforce bringing together Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs. This Taskforce will set out clear proposals to address the volumes of sewage discharged into our rivers. The Taskforce is also exploring further short-term actions water companies can take to accelerate progress on storm overflows.

■ Safari Club International: Animal Products

Caroline Lucas:

[\[128924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has received information on the decision by Facebook and Twitter to ban social media platforms financed by Safari Club International on the grounds that they were seeking to influence the outcome of his Department's consultation on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies; whether he plans to take steps to ensure that that consultation process has not been compromised; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

My department is aware of the action taken by some social media platforms relating to the spread of misinformation in respect to trophy hunting. Trophy hunting is a topic that provokes strong views, reflected by the fact we received a large number of responses from members of the public and stakeholders. Our consultation and call for evidence process is robust and Defra follows best practice guidelines. We have considered all views expressed and evidence submitted in response to the consultation and call for evidence and we have no reason to suspect the process has

been compromised. We will respond to the consultation and outline the next steps as soon as possible.

■ **Sheep: Import Duties**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[129005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the UK sheep farming industry of the implementation of tariffs on sheep meat in the event of the UK reaching the end of the transition period without a deal on its future relationship with the EU; and what steps his Department plans to take to support the sheep farming industry in that scenario.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has been clear that it seeks a free trade agreement with the EU, based on friendly cooperation and maintaining tariff and quota free access. As any responsible Government would, we have plans in place to minimise disruption for the farming sector if a deal is not reached with the EU. We have been reviewing and updating the analysis we undertook as part of our no deal preparations in 2019 and Defra is looking at specific interventions which will help to mitigate impacts for sheep farmers. No decisions have been taken on any sector specific interventions, including the sheep sector, post the end of the transition period as any possible intervention must be dictated by the actual market situation at the time. Producer price impacts would also affect EU producers in a non-negotiated outcome scenario. For example, the EU is heavily reliant on the UK as an export market for Danish pork and bacon. In 2018, the UK purchased 81% of Denmark's total exports of bacon and ham. This trade was worth £100 million to Denmark.

■ **Sugar Beet: Neonicotinoids**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[128922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential environmental effect of Cruiser SB neonicotinoid dressed seed on sugar beet in the UK in spring 2021; what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect on (a) bees, (b) birds and mammals and (c) aquatic organisms of that neonicotinoid; and whether he asked for the advice of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides on the use of that neonicotinoid.

Victoria Prentis:

Article 53 of Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 allows countries, under certain circumstances, to consider authorising the use of a plant protection product for a period not exceeding 120 days, for a limited and controlled use where such a measure is necessary because of a danger which cannot be contained by any other means.

An application has recently been made under this legislation for an emergency authorisation for Cruiser SB as a seed treatment for use on sugar beet. As is normal for emergency authorisation applications, a full assessment, including an assessment

of environmental risks, has been carried out by the Health and Safety Executive and advice has been sought from the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides. A decision will be taken by Ministers shortly.

Caroline Lucas:

[128923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the National Farmers Union on the use of Cruiser SB neonicotinoid dressed seed on sugar beet in the UK in spring 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra meets regularly with the National Farmers Union, as we do with other major stakeholders. These meetings cover topics of current interest including, on occasion, issues faced by sugar beet growers. This is separate from the documented regulatory process of assessment and decision-making, led by the Health and Safety Executive, for the application for an emergency authorisation for the use of Cruiser SB.

■ Tree Planting

Caroline Lucas:

[127516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 enable the Forestry Commission to reverse a decision on a tree planting project (a) that has been made incorrectly and (b) where previously withheld evidence has come to light; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 do not provide for Opinions or Assessments made by the Forestry Commissioners to be amended or repealed.

A proposer's application for a relevant forestry project to the Forestry Commissioners for their Opinion, or the proposer's Notification of the project, once assessed, may result in a decision that consent under the regulations is not required. This decision is based on evaluating all the evidence available at the time.

Where an assessment of a relevant forestry project results in a decision that consent under the regulations is required the applicant must provide an Environmental Statement before the project is determined.

An applicant for consent may appeal the decision where consent has been refused or additional conditions have been imposed. Anyone aggrieved by the granting of consent can make an application to the High Court to have the consent quashed in specific circumstances.

To help ensure that all relevant evidence is available when decisions are made on tree planting projects, the Forestry Commission has recently published a new Priority Habitat Identification Booklet, which makes clear the onus on developers of woodland creation proposals to identify priority habitats, is training staff on this, and is appointing three new ecologists who will help to ensure that biodiversity interests are

identified. Natural England is also working with the Botanical Society of the British Isles and the Woodland Trust on a method which uses more up-to-date and comprehensive plant data to identify high-quality habitats to inform woodland planning decisions.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[129070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ensure that uprooted mature trees are replanted.

Rebecca Pow:

We will publish a new England Tree Strategy in spring, setting out plans to plant and protect trees across the country, including in towns and cities and on our streets.

The Government is committed to seeing more trees planted and has a general policy against permanent loss of woodland cover. The management and replanting of trees is managed through the felling licence regime.

Trees uprooted without human intervention, such as through windthrow, decay or lightning strike, are exempt from the need for a felling licence regime as this is part of the natural woodland life cycle.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Academic Freedom

Hywel Williams:

[\[128092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support UK academics' freedom and security overseas.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to supporting and promoting academic freedom. In October Universities UK published guidelines which provide advice to senior leaders at UK higher education providers on how best to protect their people, assets and reputation, including when travelling overseas.

The UK fully supports freedom of expression as both a human right in and of itself and as an essential element for the enjoyment of the full range of other human rights. Freedom of expression is required to allow innovation to thrive and ideas to develop; it leads to more secure and prosperous societies. In July 2019, the UK co-sponsored a joint statement alongside Canada and the Netherlands at the UN Human Rights Council, reiterating our commitment to defending the right to freedom of opinion and expression. In his statement to the Human Rights Council on 9 April, our Ambassador to the UN in Geneva stressed the importance of ensuring the actions of governments and international agencies are scrutinised, within the context of the international human rights framework.

Should a British national require consular assistance overseas we make every effort to contact vulnerable customers within 24 hours of being notified of their situation.

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya**Yasmin Qureshi:****[130020]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on the relocation of Rohingya refugees to the island of Bhasan Char.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is monitoring the situation and is in regular dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh, the UN and our INGO partners. We support the UN position that independent, full and detailed technical and protection assessments are needed to evaluate the safety and sustainability of living on Bhasan Char, and that any relocation should be voluntary and based on relevant, accurate and updated information.

The Minister for South Asia underlined the importance of these points in a call with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Momen on 19 November, and has discussed the issue several times with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. The British High Commissioner in Dhaka regularly engages with the Government of Bangladesh on Bhasan Char and has underlined the importance of allowing the UN to conduct these full technical and protection assessments. The Development Director also talks regularly to the UN Heads of Agencies and Resident Coordinator who are in constant touch with the Government.

Yasmin Qureshi:**[130021]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Government of Bangladesh works with (a) the UN and (b) international NGOs to assess the safety of the island Bhasan Char for Rohingya refugees.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is monitoring the situation and is in regular dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh, the UN and our INGO partners. We support the UN position that independent, full and detailed technical and protection assessments are needed to evaluate the safety and sustainability of living on Bhasan Char, and that any relocation should be voluntary and based on relevant, accurate and updated information.

The Minister for South Asia underlined the importance of these points in a call with Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Momen on 19 November, and has discussed the issue several times with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. The British High Commissioner in Dhaka regularly engages with the Government of Bangladesh on Bhasan Char and has underlined the importance of allowing the UN to conduct these full technical and protection assessments. The Development Director also talks regularly to the UN Heads of Agencies and Resident Coordinator who are in constant touch with the Government.

■ Belarus: Detainees

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[129057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on allegations of detained protestors being tortured in Belarus.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is deeply concerned by the reports of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment that have taken place in Belarus. The UK led sixteen partners in triggering the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Moscow Mechanism investigation into the allegations of human rights violations in Belarus. The subsequent report concludes that human rights violations have occurred on a massive and systematic scale. The UK has repeatedly raised its concerns directly with the Belarusian authorities. On 9 December HMA Minsk joined EU, US and Swiss counterparts in a meeting with the Belarusian Foreign Minister and called on the authorities to end impunity, investigate allegations of torture and mistreatment and allow access to the detention centres for international observers. We have raised our concerns in the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council and at the OSCE, including a UK-hosted side event on Belarus at the OSCE Ministerial meeting on 3 December, where the Belarusian Association of Journalists and human rights organisations Viasna and Civil Solidarity briefed international delegations.

■ Belarus: Foreign Relations

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[129056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) independent media, (b) human rights organisations and (c) community groups in Belarus on the UK's direct support to civil society and independent media in Belarus.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to defending and developing civil society and media freedoms in Belarus. We have doubled our financial support to civil society, with £1.5 million in project funding over the next two years. We are working with partners on reform for vulnerable people in Belarus, including working through UN agencies, to promote the economic empowerment of women. We are supporting and training independent media organisations. On 16 November the Foreign Secretary paid tribute to the courageous work undertaken by journalists by awarding the inaugural Canada-UK Media Freedom award to the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ). Representatives of independent media and the human rights group, Viasna, briefed the FCDO Permanent Under Secretary on 13 November. FCDO officials continue to engage with Human Rights Watch on the situation in Belarus.

■ CDC: Fossil Fuels

Preet Kaur Gill:

[129088]

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

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The Prime Minister announced at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December that the Government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas, with very limited exemptions. Following the announcement, CDC published its updated fossil fuel policy which excludes future investment in the vast majority of fossil fuel subsectors including coal, oil and upstream gas exploration and production, with very limited exceptions. CDC's approach requires investments to demonstrate alignment with a country's pathway to net zero emissions by 2050. Further details on CDC's updated fossil fuel policy are available at: <https://www.cdcgroup.com/en/news-insight/news/announcing-our-new-fossil-fuel-policy-and-guidance-on-natural-gas-power-plants/?fl=true>

■ China: Religious Freedom

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[129047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he and his Department plans to take to (a) secure details and an explanation for the arrest of Meihong Wang in Heilongjiang Province and (b) help secure the release of Meihong Wang and (c) promote freedom of religious belief in China.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of the reported abduction of Meihong Wang in Harbin, China. We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practise, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We regularly raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Chinese authorities, and will continue to do so.

■ China: Sanctions

Wera Hobhouse:

[129084]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to extend the sanctions list to include senior Chinese Communist Party officials responsible for human rights violations against Tibetan and Uyghur people.

Nigel Adams:

On 6 July, the UK Government established the Global Human Rights sanctions regime. The Government's position remains that it is not appropriate to speculate about who may be designated under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime, as

to do so could reduce the impact of the designations. We will keep all evidence and potential listings under close review.

■ China: Uighurs

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the news release entitled China: Big Data Program Targets Xinjiang's Muslims published on 9 December 2020, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on human rights abuses in China of the reported use by Chinese authorities of information in the (a) Aksu and (b) Karakax lists of Uighur detainees.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of recent reports on the use of data by the Chinese authorities to target Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. These reports add to the growing body of evidence of gross human rights violations perpetrated against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the region. We have repeatedly condemned these abuses and call on China to end arbitrary detention, in line with its international obligations.

Alex Sobel:

[\[129103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to engage with the Chinese Government to end the use of re-education camps in Xinjiang, in the context of protect detainees from covid-19.

Nigel Adams:

The risk of the spread of Covid-19 in places of detention is a matter of concern in a number of countries around the world. With regards to Xinjiang, we remain deeply concerned by the arbitrary detention of over a million Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang in "political re-education camps", including advocates of Uyghurs' rights, culture, language and religion. We continue to urge China to implement UN recommendations - to end the practice of extra-judicial detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities, and to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other UN experts unfettered access to the region.

■ Colombia: Peace Negotiations

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[128618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the Colombian peace agreement is upheld.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process, and supporting the Colombian Government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords will remain an important priority. We have contributed more than £60 million in support via the Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund (CSSF) and are the largest donor to the UN Trust Fund for Colombia. CSSF resources are targeted at accelerating the implementation of the peace accord, including support for the

Government's rural development and reintegration programmes, and strengthening the participation of the communities in conflict-affected areas.

We are proud to lead on the issue at the UN Security Council, and will continue to strengthen the international community's support and commitment to peace and stability in Colombia. Significant progress has been made on peace and security in Colombia in the past four years - whilst security challenges do remain, and will take time and resources to overcome, the situation has improved considerably.

■ Developing Countries: Death

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[130015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of integrating proposals on sexual and reproductive health in the forthcoming Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government supports the Gutmacher-Lancet definition of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and SRHR services are a core pillar of our action to end preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children by 2030. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of SRHR to this goal. Recent estimates suggest that, over one year, a 10-19% decline in reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health services, alongside increasing child malnutrition, will result in 24,400 additional maternal deaths and 506,900 additional child deaths.

■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

Jim Shannon:

[\[128974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Ethiopian counterpart on preventing civil war in that country.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November and called for the immediate de-escalation of violence, for the protection of civilians and for unfettered humanitarian access. He reiterated these messages when he met Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 25 November and made clear that all parties to the conflict need to want to find a political solution. I also stressed these points when I spoke with the Ethiopian Minister of Finance on 16 November and the Ethiopian Ambassador in London on 18 November, as well as in my tweets of 9 December and 24 November. Our Ambassador in Addis Ababa continues to engage the Government of Ethiopia in support of these objectives.

■ Ethiopia: British Nationals Abroad

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[128888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what he has had with his Ethiopian counterpart on the safety of UK nationals in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Prime Minister Abiy on 10 November and called for the immediate de-escalation of violence, for the protection of civilians and for unfettered humanitarian access. He reiterated these messages when he met Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 25 November and made clear the need for the restoration of basic services in Tigray. I also stressed these points when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador in London on 18 November, as well as in my tweets of 9 December and 24 November.

The British Embassy Addis Ababa has supported a number of British Nationals to leave Tigray. We are aware of 13 British people who left the Tigray area in convoys organised by the United Nations. We believe there to be 31 people remaining in Tigray with British nationality.

■ Gaza: Coronavirus**Wayne David:**[\[128879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the economic situation in Gaza.

James Cleverly:

The UK remains concerned about the economic impact of COVID-19 on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), particularly in Gaza. The impact of COVID-19 alongside high unemployment rates, three years of low economic growth and persistent fiscal deficits has resulted in a sharp decline in economic activity across the OPTs. Recent World Bank reports indicate GDP will contract by about 8 percent in 2020. A modest bounce back is expected in 2021 with growth returning to about 2.5 percent.

UK Aid includes helping improve water and energy supply, particularly in Gaza and addressing movement and access restrictions that currently inhibit trade. By focusing on supporting sustainable economic development, we aim to improve daily life for thousands of Palestinians and aid the longer-term recovery from COVID-19.

Dan Carden:[\[129093\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

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

■ Gaza: Food Supply

Dan Carden:

[\[129092\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

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

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

■ Gaza: Health Services

Dan Carden:

[\[129094\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

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

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

Kim Johnson:

[\[129150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the healthcare system in Gaza during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

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

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■ Morocco: Western Sahara**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[129071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage the Government of Morocco to secure peace in Western Sahara.

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[129072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will propose a motion to the United Nations Security Council requesting the United Nations Secretary-General appoint a Personal Envoy to Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara and are in regular contact with the parties, including the Government of Morocco. We are also in close contact with the UN, both in New York and in the region. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process. We strongly support the UN Secretary General's efforts to appoint a Personal Envoy as soon as possible.

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[129073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the mechanisms in the UK-Morocco association agreement to support a peaceful solution to the Western Sahara conflict.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We have regular exchanges with the parties to the Western Sahara dispute, including

Morocco. Association Agreements, including the UK-Morocco Association Agreement, include provisions for political dialogue.

■ **Palestinians: Curriculum**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[130258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his EU counterpart on the EU review into the Palestinian Authority curriculum; and what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the delays in the publication of that review.

James Cleverly:

The independent review of the content in Palestinian textbooks, led by our European partners, is currently underway. We have regular discussions with European partners on the review, including on plans for publication. The UK has repeatedly lobbied the EU to push for publication, but this is ultimately a decision for the EU.

To ensure that the final report is representative, the study has been extended to include a sample of textbooks introduced for school year 2020-21. Consequently, the study will now be completed in early 2021.

Nicola Richards: [\[130265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 92026 on Palestinians: Schools, whether the final EU report on the previous Palestinian Authority curriculum will be published by the end of 2020; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The independent review of the content in Palestinian textbooks, led by our European partners, is currently underway. We have regular discussions with European partners on the review, including on plans for publication. The UK has repeatedly lobbied the EU to push for publication, but this is ultimately a decision for the EU.

To ensure that the final report is representative, the study has been extended to include a sample of textbooks introduced for school year 2020-21. Consequently, the study will now be completed in early 2021.

■ **Palestinians: Radicalism**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[130257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Norwegian counterpart on that Government's decision to withhold funding from the Palestinian Authority in response that Authority using material inciting hatred and violence against Israel in its curriculum.

James Cleverly:

I have not discussed the issue with my Norwegian counterpart. We understand that the approval of Norway's Fiscal Budget is subject to negotiations in Parliament and that such negotiations may result in shifts between budget lines and geographic

priorities in the development aid budget. We understand that the Norwegian Parliament has proposed to reduce Norway's development assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territories by 30 million Norwegian Krone (approximately £2.5 million) in 2021, along with changes in priorities on other budget lines and allocations.

■ **Private Infrastructure Development Group: Fossil Fuels**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[129086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the Private Infrastructure Development Group has allocated to fossil fuel projects in each of the last 10 years.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: As the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG) is a multi-donor funded institution, the FCDO has worked closely with its co-owners, which include DGIS (Holland), DFAT (Australia), SECO (Switzerland), SIDA (Sweden) and the IFC (part of the World Bank Group), to shift PIDG's investments further in favour of renewables. In June 2020, PIDG announced a new climate change approach to help developing countries transition towards a global net zero carbon economy by 2050, and will not make new investments in energy projects powered by coal or oil. Of PIDG's investments in the past 10 years, \$547.7 million have been to projects using fossil fuels as a fuel source. Over the same period, PIDG has invested \$715.6 million in renewable power projects. In the most recent 5 years (2015-2019) the balance has shifted further in favour of renewables, with 66% of all power generation investments being to renewable power projects.

Data on all PIDG investment commitments are available online via its Results Monitoring Database and its annual reports.

FCDO also publishes data relating to its funding to PIDG via DevTracker.

■ **Protest**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[129973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that his Department promotes the right to peaceful protest to the international community.

Nigel Adams:

Respect for human rights and democratic freedoms underpins the UK's foreign policy. The UK supports freedom of expression, including the right to peaceful protest. UK Ministers and officials have regular and frank discussions about the full range of human rights concerns, wherever they occur, and we use our bilateral relationships, our development programmes, and our presence in multilateral institutions to drive progress.

In discussions with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ministers and officials raise the most pressing human rights issues of the day. We also set out concerns on a wide range of countries at every session of the Human Rights Council.

The UK co-sponsored a resolution on Peaceful Protests at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council. When the Minister of State for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised Hong Kong in the UK's national statement at the UN Human Rights Council on 25 September, he stated that the Joint Declaration, a legally binding treaty, set out that Hong Kong was guaranteed a high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms, including that, of assembly, and of association.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Detainees**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[130233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in Saudi Arabia on the alleged inhumane treatment of African and other migrants in Saudi Arabian detention centres.

James Cleverly:

We are concerned by reports of conditions in migrant detention centres. I raised our concerns on migrant detention centres with the Saudi Ambassador to the UK on 16 November. We are monitoring the situation closely, as we always do on human rights issues.

■ **Syria: Humanitarian Aid**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[129972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to alleviate the humanitarian situation of the Syrian people as a result of the Syrian Civil War.

James Cleverly:

The UK is at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the Syria Crisis. We have committed over £3.3 billion to the regional response since 2012, our largest ever to a single humanitarian crisis. This includes a commitment of at least £300 million for 2020 at the Brussels IV pledging conference.

Our aid is distributed through UN agencies and International NGO partners; it provides life-saving support to millions of Syrians, supports refugees to remain in countries in the region, and enables their host communities to accommodate them. Since 2012, across Syria and the region, we have provided over 28 million food rations, over 19 million medical consultations, and over 13 million vaccines.

■ **Syria: Schools**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[130229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking in response to reports by Syrian education NGOs that 44 FCDO-supported schools in northwest Syria have been attacked by the Assad regime and its allies in the past two years.

James Cleverly:

Tackling the humanitarian impact of the Syria Crisis remains a priority for the FCDO. The UK is one of the largest donors to the Syrian humanitarian response having committed over £3.3 billion since 2012 and the UK is also one of the leading donors on education in North West Syria. The FCDO is in the process of assessing the impact of the ODA budget reduction on the UK's aid expenditure in Syria

To date, the UK's Syria Education Programme is the UK's largest bilateral education programme and has supported over 401,235 (49.6% female) children in the North West. This programme has improved access to the teaching profession, supported schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, financially supported stipends for thousands of teachers and most importantly, supported children's access to high quality education and psycho social care.

The regime's brutal targeting of schools is appalling. Many children have had their most formative years shaped by a backdrop of conflict. The Foreign Secretary has called for a nationwide ceasefire as part of a political process, as the only way to end the Syrian conflict and we continue to call on all parties to maintain the agreed ceasefires.

■ Ukraine: Peace Negotiations**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[129055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Ukraine on Russia's attempts to reverse all unilateral measures that undermine the Minsk agreements.

Wendy Morton:

During the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on 7 October, he reaffirmed the UK's commitment to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The UK has been clear on the importance of finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. We support the Minsk agreements and the work of Germany and France within the Normandy Format. The Russian Federation has taken unilateral steps which undermine Ukrainian sovereignty and run contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. We continue to call on Russia to fulfil the commitments it has made under the Minsk agreements and to use its undeniable influence on the armed formations it backs in eastern Ukraine to ensure they do likewise.

■ UNRWA: Refugees**Bob Blackman:**[\[128661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made alongside international counterparts to the UN Relief and Works Agency regarding its working definition of a refugee.

Bob Blackman:

[\[128662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the UN Relief and Works Agency's working definition of a Palestinian refugee.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. UNRWA is also a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the region. The operational definition of a Palestinian refugee is any person whose "normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict." We are clear that the status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. Until that time, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting the UNRWA and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East.

■ Western Sahara: Sovereignty

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[129152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) US, (b) Moroccan, (c) Mauritanian and (d) Algerian counterpart on the disputed sovereignty of Western Sahara.

James Cleverly:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Western Sahara. We are in close contact with a range of interlocutors, including the parties to the dispute and fellow members of the UN Security Council. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Atrial Fibrillation: Diagnosis

Lee Anderson:

[\[127657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on detection and diagnosis rates for atrial fibrillation in England (a) from January to May 2019 and (b) from January to May 2020 inclusive; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not available in the format requested. The Quality Outcomes Framework reports annually for atrial fibrillation and it is not possible to break down into monthly data.

A register of patients with atrial fibrillation is used to monitor cumulative recorded prevalence year-on-year. Recorded prevalence of atrial fibrillation increased from

1.98% in 2018/19 to 2.05% in 2019/20. Data for 2020/21 will be published during 2021.

■ Autism

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[128290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support NHS leaders to bring down Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service waiting lists for autism diagnosis in (a) Leicestershire and (b) the UK.

Helen Whately:

In line with commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to test and implement the most effective ways to reduce waiting times for an autism diagnosis for children in England over the next three years. To support NHS leaders in England, NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned work to evaluate how different autism diagnostic pathways work for children and young people. This includes considering the workforce requirements to deliver effective diagnostic pathways and the appropriate pre and post-diagnostic support.

The Leicestershire Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service is working to reduce the length of time children and young people wait for an autism diagnosis through the introduction of additional capacity.

■ Blood Cancer: Research

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[130111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of funding for research into blood cancer.

Edward Argar:

Research is crucial in the fight against cancer. We invest £1 billion per year in health and care research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR expenditure on cancer research has risen from £101 million in 2010/11 to £132 million in 2018/19, the largest investment in a disease area.

■ Bowel Cancer: Young People

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[108242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help reduce the number of young people developing bowel cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: For genetic conditions that cause bowel cancer, such as Lynch Syndrome, the NHS Long Term Plan states that we will extend the use of molecular diagnostics and, over the next ten years, the NHS will routinely offer genomic testing to all people with cancer for whom it would be of clinical benefit, and expand participation in research. The NHS will begin from 2020/21 to offer more

extensive genomic testing to patients who are newly diagnosed with cancers so that by 2023 over 100,000 people a year can access these tests.

■ Brain Cancer: Research

Colleen Fletcher: [130110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of funding for research into brain cancer.

Edward Argar:

Research is crucial in the fight against cancer. We invest £1 billion per year in health and care research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR expenditure on cancer research has risen from £101 million in 2010/11 to £132 million in 2018/19, the largest investment in a disease area.

In 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain cancer research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission. Funding is being invested through the NIHR to support a wide range of research from early translational and experimental medicine research.

■ Cancer

Helen Hayes: [107687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data has been published from version 8 of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset (COSD); and whether that includes data on the number of people diagnosed with secondary breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: Version 8 of the Cancer Outcomes and Services Dataset (COSD) applies to cancer data submitted to Public Health England (PHE) from April 2018.

Data from this period is included in National and Official Statistics, such as the case-mix adjusted percentage cancers diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 by the Clinical Commissioning Group in England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/case-mix-adjusted-percentage-cancers-diagnosed-at-stages-1-and-2-by-ccg-in-england>). In addition, monthly COSD data reports are available to the NHS via a secure reporting website.

PHE published data on secondary breast cancer from v8 of the COSD in November 2020. This information is available here:

http://www.ncin.org.uk/cancer_type_and_topic_specific_work/topic_specific_work/recurrence

■ Cancer: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron: [122749]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the international response to

meeting increased demand in cancer care as a result of treatment delays during the covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Cancer: Diagnosis**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[116536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the projected reduction in cancer diagnoses in 2020 via GP referral and screening.

Jo Churchill:

No assessments of the full effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on NHS services can be made until the pandemic is over and the data is available in full.

One of the key priorities for cancer services is to restore the number of people coming forward and being referred with suspected cancer, and therefore having diagnostic tests, to at least pre-pandemic levels. By September 2020, the latest data published, urgent referrals were at the same levels in 2019. We are continuing to monitor this and are further encouraging anyone with symptoms to come forward to their general practitioners through our 'Help Us Help You' public awareness campaign.

To support this, systems are ensuring sufficient diagnostic capacity in COVID-19 secure environments. Endoscopy capacity is being increased, and the capacity of surgical hubs expanded to meet demand. Specific actions are being put in place to support any groups of patients who might have unequal access to diagnostics and/or treatment, and all cancer screening programmes have restarted routine invitations.

■ **Cancer: Stockport**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[116691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people living with cancer in Stockport during the second wave of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

During this second wave, cancer has been prioritised in the Greater Manchester area, including Stockport, and this has been agreed across all 11 hospital providers, to continue cancer surgery and at designated COVID-19 'green-sites', ensuring the safety of staff and patients to enable procedures to continue to go ahead.

Measures are in place, as in the first wave, to work together with hospitals around the whole of Greater Manchester to share provisions of staff and resources to ensure that patients from Stockport and every other locality in Greater Manchester have access to cancer treatment and important diagnostic procedures.

■ Care Homes: Government Assistance

Mrs Flick Drummond:

[129048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make additional support available to care homes as a result of increasing insurance premiums and mortgage costs.

Helen Whately:

We recognise that the adult social care sector is facing significant pressures in light of the pandemic and we are working closely across Government and with care providers to better understand the impact of cost increases across the sector. We have already made £4.6 billion of support available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care. In addition, we have made £1.1 billion available to social care, the majority for care homes, to support them with additional infection prevention and control costs related to Covid-19, and a further £149 million to help with additional costs of testing

As part of the 2020 Spending Review, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Government will provide councils with access to an additional £1 billion for social care next year and we also expect to provide them with estimated funding of around £3 billion to help manage the impact of COVID-19 across their services, including in adult social care and to compensate for income losses.

■ Care Homes: Learning Disability

Duncan Baker:

[127009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to prioritise people in care home settings with learning disabilities for covid-19 vaccination; and if he will take steps to ensure that those people are vaccinated with higher priority than priority level six in the context of the covid-19 mortality rate among adults with learning disabilities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advise the Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation.

As the highest risk of mortality increases with age, the JCVI advise that care home residents, their staff and those over 80 years old should be the first group to receive the vaccine. Adults with Down's syndrome and people with a severe and profound learning disability are also prioritised to receive the vaccine; they are within the fourth and sixth vaccine prioritisation groups respectively.

With regards to prioritising vaccines for people in care home settings with learning disabilities higher than in their current group six category, we will continue to review the evidence and advice from the JCVI as it emerges to determine if this is required.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[130104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to reduce waiting times for smear test results.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement, in collaboration with the pathology networks and cervical screening laboratory providers, have implemented a range of measures to ensure laboratory capacity is in place to deliver human papillomavirus (HPV) testing according to the target turnaround time of 14 days.

These measures include laboratory providers recruiting more staff, improvements to booking in of slides to allow more efficient processing and 24 hours a day, seven days a week testing. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to liaise regularly with laboratory providers to ensure that they have capacity to deliver HPV primary screening and that any issues that may impact on turnaround times are identified, addressed and mitigated against.

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[126804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the use of (a) seclusion and (b) restraint when applied inappropriately in locked mental health rehabilitation facilities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Government is clear that, where needed, inpatient care should be high quality, therapeutic and for the shortest time possible. The use of seclusion and any kind of restraint should only be used as a last resort and in line with strict protocols.

We are improving practice and minimising all types of force used on patients in accordance with the aims of the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018. We are working to finalise the draft statutory guidance for this Act and accompanying public consultation.

Work is also ongoing with the Care Quality Commission, NHS Digital and NHS England and NHS Improvement to prepare for the implementation and commencement of the Act's requirements. We will set out a timetable for publishing the statutory guidance and commencing the Act at the earliest opportunity.

■ Congenital Abnormalities: Coronavirus

Justin Madders:

[\[97607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the risk that covid-19 poses to people with spina bifida and hydrocephalus.

Jo Churchill:

People with spina bifida and hydrocephalus are not automatically identified as clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable.

GPs and hospital clinicians have the discretion to add individual patients to the shielded patient list based on careful, clinical assessments of each individual's needs. This will require expert clinical judgement on a patient-by-patient basis. If anyone is unsure if they should be following the guidance for the clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable, we would encourage them to discuss this with their GP or hospital specialist.

Continuing Care**Crispin Blunt:**[\[126775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department and NHS England are taking to ensure continuity of care for patients affected by the recent court ruling in *Bell v Tavistock*.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: A full clinical review must be carried out for all patients under the age of 16 years old who are currently receiving puberty blockers. If the patient intends to continue on puberty blockers or progress onto cross sex hormones, the lead clinician must make a 'best interests' application to the Court for final determination of that individual's needs. No patients will have puberty blockers withdrawn unless, as a result of the clinical review, a clinical decision, in consultation with the patient, is made to withdraw puberty blockers, or a court considers a 'best interest' decision and decides it is not in the patient's interest to remain on puberty blockers.

Coronavirus and Influenza: Vaccination**Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[127700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether latex-free flu vaccines are available; how many have been distributed to (a) GP surgeries and (b) pharmacies in winter 2020; and whether latex-free covid-19 vaccines will be available.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: Information contained in the patient information leaflets for flu vaccines suggests none of the vaccines for the 2020/21 flu vaccination programme include latex as an ingredient in the vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine for COVID-19, which began to be deployed on 8 December has no latex within the vaccine product. Its packaging is also free of latex. The vaccine comes in a clear vial (type I glass) with a synthetic rubber (bromobutyl) stopper and a flip-off plastic cap with aluminium seal. Information about the product specifications of future vaccines, should others be deployed, will be available on the Medicines Healthcare products and Regulatory Authority website.

■ Coronavirus: Christmas

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[128168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 tier restrictions on the number of people who can attend community lunches during the Christmas 2020 period.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: The Government has ensured that the regulations do allow charitable lunches over the festive period to continue this year.

In all three tiers there is an exception to gathering restrictions where the gathering is a permitted organised gathering which includes gatherings operated or organised by a charity. An attendee can participate in the gathering alone or as a member of a qualifying group.

There are also exceptions to the business closure requirements in each of the three tiers to enable premises to be used for the provision of voluntary services, including the provision of food banks, or to provide support for the homeless or vulnerable people.

■ Coronavirus: Clinics

Dean Russell:

[\[129128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on the roll out of long covid clinics.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have provided £10 million to fund over 40 pioneering specialist clinics for people suffering from the long-term effects of COVID-19. The plans for these clinics were published on 15 November and guidance was made available on 6 November.

NHS England and NHS Improvement committed to ensuring post COVID-19 assessment clinics will be available from early December 2020. In response, each integrated care system is working towards the provision of at least one such service.

A number of these clinics are already established and have started to accept patients. More information about the clinic locations and how to access them will be released in the near future.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[122624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of issuing Government guidance that clinically vulnerable people should work from home until they have received a covid-19 vaccination.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: The four-week period of national restrictions ended on 2 December and the tiering system has now been reintroduced.

Clinically vulnerable people are advised to work from home if possible. If this is not possible, they can go to work, but their employer must ensure that the workplace is Covid-secure.

We have no plans to issue guidance advising clinically vulnerable people to work from home until they have received a covid-19 vaccination.

Dr Julian Lewis:**[124642]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to add the opening of windows as a fourth element to the hands, face, space public messaging formula for minimising the spread of covid-19 among people when indoors; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The latest 'Hands, Space, Face' campaign launched on 3 December 2020 and has introduced the need to 'let fresh air in' to the core set of protective actions we are asking the public to incorporate into their daily lives to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Sir Graham Brady:**[128620]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department the effect of far-field aerosol transmission of covid-19 in venues that have ventilation levels of 10 litres of fresh air per person per second.

Sir Graham Brady:**[128621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of fresh air per person per second required to limit the transmission of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has undertaken no specific assessment.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies considered the paper 'Role of ventilation in controlling SARS-CoV-2 transmission' at meeting 60 on 30 September. The paper is published online at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emg-role-of-ventilation-in-controlling-sars-cov-2-transmission-30-september-2020>

Sir Mark Hendrick:**[128629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department made of the effect of cultural sensitivities on the implementation of covid-19 restrictions on days of (a) cultural or (b) religious celebrations.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government considers impacts on different groups of protected characteristics, including religious observance when making decisions on COVID-19 restrictions. The analysis and evidence is available at the following link:

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

Carolyn Harris:**[128701]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of permitting tier 3 residents to travel to non-social commercial and business appointments in tier 2 areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The guidance is clear that people must avoid travelling outside their area, including for overnight stays, other than where necessary.

If individuals live in a tier 3 area, they must continue to follow tier 3 rules when they travel to a lower tier area.

■ Coronavirus: Food**Daniel Zeichner:****[94452]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many food factories in England have been required by the Food Standards Agency or Health and Safety Executive to close or suspend operations as a result of a covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 28 September 2020]: The Foods Standards Agency and the Health and Safety Executive do not have the powers to close food factories in response to COVID-19 outbreaks. As with any localised outbreaks, the Joint Biosecurity Centre works with local leaders and public health officials to bring them under control. Where outbreaks are traced to workplaces, the relevant business leaders are also brought into these conversations to develop a plan to suppress the spread of the virus. By working in this collaborative way, it has not been necessary to use regulations to close any food factories in response to COVID-19 outbreaks.

■ Coronavirus: Hospitality Industry**Sir Graham Brady:****[128619]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to Answer of 20 October to Question 102756, what proportion of businesses within the hospitality sector meet SAGE standards for ventilation; and how many of those are in areas currently under Tier 3 restrictions.

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[128622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with businesses within the hospitality sector on ventilation in venues in the last six months.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Enforcement of the regulations is a matter for local authorities. Ministers and officials have regular discussions on a wide range of issues including ventilation for businesses within the hospitality sector.

■ **Coronavirus: Israel**

Miriam Cates:

[\[129166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what collaborative scientific research partnerships are ongoing between the UK and Israel to combat covid-19.

Edward Argar:

Funded by the Department, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is the nation's largest funder of health and care research. The NIHR has led urgent public health research on COVID-19, targeted at both domestic and global research and development solutions. Outside the United Kingdom, we are funding global health research to tackle COVID-19 in low- and middle-income countries, in partnership with UK Research and Innovation, using Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fund high quality applied health research and training. Countries eligible to receive ODA are as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee list of ODA recipients. Israel is not eligible to receive ODA and as such has not been involved in the NIHR's global health research in this area.

■ **Coronavirus: Research**

John Spellar:

[\[128866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what research his Department has undertaken to enable the early detection of superspreaders of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

The NIHR and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) have partnered to fund a comprehensive programme of research on COVID-19 to understand, prevent, treat and manage COVID-19. As part of this, there is no specific research commissioned on early detection of super spreaders of COVID-19.

The NIHR and UKRI are, however, funding relevant work looking at the transmission and epidemiology of the disease such as the Virus Watch study which is looking at household transmission; and the TraCK study looking at transmission between children, and between children and adults.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sarah Owen:

[107752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what preparations the Government is making with GPs for the distribution of a covid-19 vaccine.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 2 November 2020]: The BMA General Practitioners Committee in England agreed with NHS England and NHS Improvement the general practice COVID-19 vaccination service, which was commissioned in line with agreed national terms and conditions as an Enhanced Service. GP Practices working within Primary Care Network groupings were invited to nominate by Tuesday 18 November a site to be designated and approved for administering COVID-19 vaccinations. The ES specification was published on 1 December. Practices were asked to opt into the ES by the end of the 7 December.

NHSE&I wrote to practices on 4 December, giving 10 days' notice to prepare Primary Care Network groupings who had opted into vaccine delivery to be ready to roll out the vaccines from the week commencing 14 December, under the new Enhanced Service.

Practices in more than a hundred parts of England took delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine on 14 December, with hundreds of other sites starting to vaccinate patients in December. The sites are located in every region of England and will each deliver 975 doses of the vaccine to patients in their first week of vaccinating. Patients will be invited to return three weeks later for their second dose.

Helen Hayes:

[116585]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prepare for the roll out of a potential covid-19 vaccine among (a) social care workers, (b) residents of care homes and (c) people in receipt of in home care; and if he will publish the outcomes of discussions he is having with (i) the care sector, (ii) the NHS and (iii) local authorities on access to covid-19 vaccines for care providers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to these priority groups, including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old, and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions.

We have engaged regularly with the care sector, the National Health Service, and local authorities in planning for and rolling out the vaccine.

Wendy Chamberlain: [121367]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 116658 on coronavirus: vaccination, where in the UK each of the 58 fridges is located.

Wendy Chamberlain: [121368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 116658 on coronavirus: vaccination, how many fridges are located in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland.

Wendy Chamberlain: [121369]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 116658 on coronavirus: vaccination, how many fridges are located in each English region.

Wendy Chamberlain: [121370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2020 to Question 116658 on coronavirus: vaccination, whether the 58 fridges includes the 20 previously announced by the Scottish Government on 10 November 2020.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 1 December 2020]: Public Health England (PHE) has secured 58 specialised ultra-low temperature freezers for the storage of potential COVID-19 vaccines which require ultra-low temperature storage. The ultra-low temperature freezers are located in two national storage facilities in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland, in readiness for the commencement of a COVID-19 immunisation programme that will support activity across the United Kingdom. This does not include any ultra-low temperature freezers previously announced by the Scottish Government.

At a regional level, the National Health Service has made preparations, including sourcing ultra-low temperature storage to support local delivery.

The location of the facilities is not being disclosed publicly in order to maintain the integrity of the sites.

Caroline Ansell: [121870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of community pharmacies assisting with the roll-out of covid-19 vaccinations to ensure (a) timeliness and (b) safe access to vaccinations for the clinically extremely vulnerable; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Health Service stands ready to deliver each COVID-19 vaccination programme as soon as the vaccine is authorised for use by the medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

The planning for effective models of delivery includes the consideration of settings such as community pharmacies to support rollout.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Programme is engaging with senior pharmacy sector representatives from the Department, NHS England, and NHS Improvement regarding the community pharmacy sector's role in the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Emma Hardy:[\[121907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to prioritise tier 3 areas in the first covid-19 vaccination rollout.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to the Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use and which groups within the population to prioritise.

The Committee – in their interim advice - have advised that for Phase 1, the vaccine first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people over 80 years old and health and social workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. The prioritisation could change substantially if the first available vaccines were not considered suitable for, or effective in, older adults.

Sir Desmond Swayne:[\[124095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include people with spinal injuries affecting their ability to breathe within the priority group of people eligible to receive an anti-covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who provide advice to the Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use and which groups within the population to prioritise.

The JCVI in their advice has stated that Phase 1 roll out of a vaccine will have the prevention of mortality at the forefront of its objectives, as well as to support the National Health Service and social care system. For the first phase, the JCVI have advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, followed by frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and clinical risk factors. Included are those with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

Jim Shannon:

[\[124187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy that (a) the elderly and (b) pregnant women will receive the covid-19 vaccine first.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to these priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old, and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions.

The JCVI favours a precautionary approach and does not currently advise COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[124264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to ensure that people who are housebound receive a covid-19 vaccination.

Munira Wilson:

[\[124317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the need for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to be stored below minus 70 degrees celsius, what steps his Department is taking to ensure care home residents and staff are able to access covid-19 vaccines promptly.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: We have worked to ensure that we have the logistical expertise, transport, and workforce in place to rollout a vaccine at the speed at which it can be manufactured. In line with the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the vaccine will initially be rolled out to priority groups, including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old, and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions.

The JCVI appreciates that operational considerations, such as minimising wastage, may require deviation from the prioritisation order as outlined in the statement, where decisions are taken in consultation with national or local public health advice. We will follow the advice of the JCVI on clinical prioritisation which supports vaccinating those most at risk of death from COVID-19. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine involves

some logistical challenges and we are working hard to ensure that it is available to those most at risk.

Alex Norris:

[\[124291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the general population is required to take up a covid-19 vaccination to ensure the effectiveness of that vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: It has not yet been determined what proportion of the general population is required to take up a COVID-19 vaccination.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems. The JCVI recently published advice to facilitate the development of policy on COVID-19 vaccination in the United Kingdom with the priority list for COVID-19 vaccination. It is estimated that taken together, these groups represent around 99% of preventable mortality from COVID-19.

As the first phase of the programme is rolled out in the UK, additional data will become available on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines and whether they can prevent infection and onward transmission in the population.

Ian Mearns:

[\[124722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) parents and (b) carers of clinically vulnerable children will be prioritised for the covid-19 vaccine.

Clive Lewis:

[\[124798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to provide covid-19 vaccinations to teachers and other school staff.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to these priority groups, including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old, and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions.

As the first phase of the programme is rolled out in the UK, additional data will become available on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. This data

will provide the basis for consideration of vaccination in groups that are at lower risk of mortality from COVID-19.

Alberto Costa: [124776]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to introduce a form of proof for people who have received a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The careful and accurate recording of vaccination status is incredibly important both in terms of ensuring priority cohorts are offered the two doses of a COVID-19 vaccination, and to ensure robust surveillance systems are in place to support patient safety.

The National Health Service's National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) will be used as the national register of COVID-19 vaccinations. At the point that someone receives their COVID-19 vaccine, the vaccinating team will record it and this information will go onto the NIMS system and onto a patient's general practice record.

Emma Hardy: [124854]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a list of the hospitals that will be prioritised for the first round of covid-19 vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The National Health Service began **vaccinating patients against covid-19 at hospital hubs on 8 December 2020, at the start of the biggest immunisation programme in history.** There are 50 hubs in the first wave and more hospitals will start vaccinating over the coming weeks and months. The 50 hospital hubs in the first wave have been published on the NHS England website at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/12/hospitals-to-start-biggest-ever-nhs-vaccination-programme-this-week/>

Dan Jarvis: [126041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to categorise teaching staff as a priority group for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine(s) the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. The JCVI has advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

Therefore, in line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be initially rolled out to these priority groups, including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old, and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised

amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions.

As the first phase of the programme is rolled out in the UK, additional data will become available on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. This will provide the basis for consideration of vaccination in groups that are at lower risk of mortality from COVID-19.

Alison Thewliss:

[126063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's official advice is on covid-19 vaccination for people who are (a) pregnant and (b) lactating.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consists of independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level.

In line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will initially be rolled out to these priority groups, including care home residents and staff, people over 80 years old, and health and care workers. The vaccine will then be prioritised amongst the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, and all individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions

The JCVI favours a precautionary approach and therefore does not currently advise COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy. Those eligible for vaccination who are also breastfeeding should discuss with their clinician.

Mr Steve Baker:

[126851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people providing home care for vulnerable people have been prioritised for covid-19 vaccination in the same tranche as care home residents and staff; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that the vaccine should first be given to care home residents and staff, as well as by people over 80 years old and health and social care workers.

Included in the definition of 'social care workers' as per the Green Book are care home staff, personal assistants to personal budget holders, domiciliary support workers and day centre workers. Also included are those non-clinical ancillary staff in care homes who may have social contact with patients but are not directly involved in patient care.

Social care workers include those working in long-stay residential and nursing care homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow

introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality. This is also, social care staff directly involved in the care of their patients or clients and others involved directly in delivering social care such that they and vulnerable patients and clients are at increased risk of exposure.

We recognise the vital role unpaid carers play in caring for vulnerable individuals and we will provide further details on their access to the vaccine in due course.

Henry Smith:

[\[128930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to assess the effectiveness of covid-19 vaccines in immunocompromised people post-vaccination.

Jo Churchill:

Prior to the recent authorisation, the efficacy of COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 was evaluated in two clinical studies. Both studies excluded immunocompromised subjects and therefore no data is available about use of the vaccine when used at the same time as immunosuppressant medicines or the immune response to the vaccine in those on such medications. The second trial allowed inclusion of subjects with autoimmune disorders who were not currently receiving immunosuppressants. There are no specific contraindications or warnings in the product information regarding use in individuals with autoimmune disease.

Evaluation of data for other vaccines is ongoing but will include a robust review of all quality, safety and efficacy data, including in immunocompromised subjects if they were included in clinical trials.

Helen Hayes:

[\[129068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of access to covid-19 vaccines for (a) people with learning disabilities and (b) autistic people, with particular reference to people living in in-patient settings.

Helen Hayes:

[\[129069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department is having with officials and campaign groups on the prioritisation of people with learning disabilities and autistic people, including those living in in-patient settings, for covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the independent body of clinical experts, advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation including for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The vaccine is initially being rolled out to priority groups considered to be the most at risk and frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and all

individuals aged 16-64 years old with underlying health conditions. The JCVI's advice is published at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/940396/Priority_groups_for_coronavirus_COVID-19_vaccination_-_advice_from_the_JCVI_2_December_2020.pdf

People with a learning disability who are clinically extremely vulnerable, including adults with Down's syndrome, and people with a severe and profound learning disability are prioritised to receive the vaccine; and are within fourth and sixth vaccine prioritisation groups respectively. This applies to all care settings, and many younger adults in residential care settings will be eligible for a prioritised vaccine because they fall into one of the clinical risk groups, for example learning disabilities. Given the high risk of exposure in these settings, where a high proportion of the population would be considered eligible, prioritised vaccination of the whole resident population is recommended.

Throughout the pandemic officials from the Department have joined regular fortnightly meetings with learning disability and autism stakeholders to discuss the response to the pandemic and its impacts on people with a learning disability and autism.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[129118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including unpaid carers in the same priority group as frontline health and social care workers for the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Social care workers include those working in long-stay residential and nursing care homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality. This also includes social care staff directly involved in the care of their patients or clients, and others involved directly in delivering social care such that they and vulnerable patients and clients are at increased risk of exposure.

Cat Smith:

[130127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his definition is of frontline health and social care workers as set out in phase 1 on the Joint Committee on Vaccines prioritisation list.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Frontline healthcare staff includes those staff involved in direct patient care, as well as non-clinical staff in secondary or primary care/community healthcare settings.

The definition of front line social care workers includes those working in long-stay residential and nursing care homes, or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality,. This definition also includes social care staff directly involved in the care of their patients or clients and others involved directly in delivering social care such that they and vulnerable patients and clients are at increased risk of exposure.

■ Cystic Fibrosis: Coronavirus

Lee Anderson: [128276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support his Department is providing to people living with cystic fibrosis during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the cystic fibrosis (CF) clinical community to ensure additional guidance has been available to support care for patients with CF, both in hospital and away from hospital when appropriate. NICE published the 'COVID-19 Rapid Guideline: Cystic Fibrosis' in April 2020, which was updated in October 2020. This sets out guidance for clinicians and commissioners to maximise the safety of patients with CF and make the best use of National Health Service resources, while protecting staff from infection. The guidance is available at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng170

■ Dental Health: Children

Alex Cunningham: [106995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to hold a public consultation on a national early years supervised toothbrushing scheme for England.

Alex Cunningham: [106996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the (a) cost and (b) return on investment of rolling out supervised toothbrushing in early years settings for the 30 per cent most deprived children in England.

Jo Churchill:

No date has yet been set for a consultation on a national early years toothbrushing scheme for England.

We estimate the cost of rolling out a supervised toothbrushing scheme for 30% of the most deprived 3-5 year-olds would cost approximately £9 million per annum. The Public Health England Return on Investment tool estimates that supervised toothbrushing provides a five-year return of £3.06 for every £1 invested.

■ Dental Services

James Wild: [122905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the proportion of time that dentists allocate to NHS patients.

James Wild: [122906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made in renegotiating the (a) General Dental Services and (b) Personal Dental Services contract.

Jo Churchill:

Dentists contract with the NHS to provide an agreed level of dental activity per year. Where a dentist holds a contract with the NHS they must deliver the agreed activity or, if performance is below 96%, the NHS can recover the unused funds. Dentists therefore have a strong financial incentive to deliver the contracted service. Many dentists provide both NHS and private care but there are usually no shortage of applicants if NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) lets a dental contract.

The amount of dental service it is safe to deliver during COVID-19 has reduced significantly. Dentistry includes a number of aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) which require the highest level of infection protection control including resting the treatment room for up to an hour between patients. We are working hard to try and restore the service.

■ Dental Services: Children**Sir George Howarth:**[\[107598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on oral health inequalities in children; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made of the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on oral health inequalities in children.

The Dental Public Health Epidemiology Programme annual oral health surveys which include children's oral health have been affected. The 2019-2020 oral health survey of three-year-olds was suspended on the 18 March 2020 and the 2020-2021 oral health survey of five-year-olds has been suspended until summer term 2021.

■ Dental Services: West Yorkshire**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[129978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase the number of NHS dental appointments available in West Yorkshire.

Jo Churchill:

National Health Service dental practices are open for face to face care. The Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Chief Dental Officer for England to increase levels of service, as fast as is safely possible, taking into account Public Health England guidance and continued infection risks.

Dental practices are prioritising patients with urgent care needs, irrespective of whether they have been treated previously at the practice. If patients require urgent dental care and cannot get an appointment, they are advised to call NHS 111 who will assist in booking an appointment at one of over 100 designated urgent care centres, which continue to stay open across Yorkshire.

■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[124343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the aims of the Cheque for Tech Diabetes funding campaign.

Jo Churchill:

The £559 million technology funding for NHSX announced in the Spending Review is not disease specific but covers the infrastructure and whole pathways work for all major diseases, including diabetes. This investment will support the National Health Service frontline, help fast track innovation and deliver a better experience for patients and staff alike.

In addition to this work and as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement committed to both improving the pipeline of innovation and speeding up the uptake and spread, so that proven and affordable innovations get to patients faster. It sets out a number of specific commitments in relation to the treatment of people living with diabetes and supporting the adoption of new technologies.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[130242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of allocating funding for a National Diabetes Technology fund to ensure equitable patient access to diabetes technology.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS has made substantial progress on digital transformation, both in the digitisation of local services and the use of technology to improve outcomes for patients. The £559 million technology funding for NHSX announced in the Spending Review is not disease specific but covers the infrastructure and whole pathways work for all major diseases, including diabetes. This investment will support the National Health Service frontline, help fast track innovation, and deliver a better experience for patients and staff alike.

■ Endometriosis: Diagnosis

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[109240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that endometriosis can be detected earlier.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government has not taken any recent steps to ensure that endometriosis can be detected earlier.

The Government has recently received the Inquiry Report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Endometriosis, the report raised a number of important issues concerning the treatment and diagnosis of endometriosis which will be carefully considered as part of our ongoing work in women's health.

■ Epilepsy: Drugs

Jonathan Reynolds:

[92767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to (a) reinstate the Quality Outcomes Framework for Epilepsy indicator relating to contraception, conception and pregnancy and (b) give women who are taking anti-epileptic drugs access to pre-conceptional counselling through the Pregnancy Prevention Programme.

Jo Churchill:

The Quality Outcomes Framework (QoF) indicator which focused upon contraception, conception and pregnancy advice was retired in 2014 due to limitations with measurement.

In July 2018, NHS England and Improvement (NHSE/I) published the 'Report of the Review of the Quality and Outcomes Framework in England.' This identified a number of principles for the reform of QoF which NHS E/I are continuing to implement, including a focus upon quality improvement activities in areas where metric development is challenging, and upon an increased personalisation of care. The report is available via the link below:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/report-of-the-review-of-the-quality-and-outcomes-framework-in-england/>

NHS E/I continue to keep the QoF epilepsy domain under review, and are exploring the potential for new indicators to be developed and implemented.

Every pregnant woman taking the anti-epilepsy drug valproate must be enrolled in the statutory Pregnancy Prevention Programme, and every healthcare professional involved in the prescribing and dispensing of valproate (so for example GPs and pharmacists) must ensure women are aware of the serious risks to pregnancy valproate presents.

Following advice from the Commission on Human Medicines, the available data relating to safety of use of non-valproate epileptic medicines during pregnancy is currently being evaluated. As part of this review, the product information for prescribers and patients will be evaluated to ensure that it is clear and up to date, including the need for preconception counselling, as appropriate. The communications from this review will be made publicly available in order to support informed decision making about the most appropriate choice of antiepileptic treatment in the individual case.

■ Food: Advertising

Craig Whittaker:

[126199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the compliance of the proposed restrictions to communication and marketing activities of foods high in fat, sugar and salt on brands' and companies' own websites and social media channels with intellectual property laws.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: We published an evidence note alongside the consultation on the proposal to introduce a total restriction of online advertising for products high in fat, salt and sugar. The note references non-monetised benefits as result of reformulation of products. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/total-restriction-of-online-advertising-for-products-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt-hfss/evidence-note>

This builds on the impact assessment that accompanied the 2019 consultation on further advertising restrictions on TV and online. This is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786554/advertising-consultation-impact-assessment.pdf

As with all Government policies, legal advice is provided by the Government Legal Department to inform Ministerial policy decisions.

John Stevenson:**[126825]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the supporting evidence base is for each measure set out in the consultation on an online advertising ban for foods high in fat, salt or sugar.

John Stevenson:**[126826]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the potential average reduction in personal calorie intake that will result from the proposed online advertising ban on foods high in fat, salt or sugar; and how that estimate was calculated.

John Stevenson:**[126827]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what input his Department had in the policy-making process underpinning the public consultation on an online advertising ban on foods high in fat, salt or sugar which will introduce commercial and marketing restrictions on large and small businesses.

John Stevenson:**[126828]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential economic effect on businesses of a reduction in calories as part of the policy-making process for the public consultation on online advertising restrictions for foods high in fat, salt or sugar.

John Stevenson:**[126829]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Competition Markets Authority has been asked for an assessment of the potential effect on business competition of plans to restrict (a) online advertising and (b) the promotion of foods high in fat, salt or sugar.

Jo Churchill:

We published an evidence note alongside the consultation on the proposal to introduce a total restriction of online advertising for products high in fat, salt and sugar. The evidence note is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/total-restriction-of-online-advertising-for-products-high-in-fat-sugar-and-salt-hfss/evidence-note>

The evidence note builds on the impact assessment that accompanied the 2019 consultation on further advertising restrictions on TV and online, which included estimates of the potential reduction in daily calories consumed by children. This is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786554/advertising-consultation-impact-assessment.pdf

In the consultations we have asked about the impact of the proposals on small businesses and are engaging with industry to understand these in more detail to factor in the final policy decision. Government departments work very closely on reducing obesity and share responsibility for delivering the measures set out in 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives'.

The Competition Markets Authority has not been asked for an assessment of the potential effect on business competition of plans to restrict online advertising and the promotion of foods high in fat, salt or sugar.

Gender Recognition**Tonia Antoniazzi:****[124287]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of people who have de-transitioned in each year since 2017.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The National Health Service and the Department do not routinely collect data on the number of people who sought medical intervention to reverse or undo a previous medical intervention for the alleviation of gender dysphoria.

Gender Recognition: Children**Jackie Doyle-Price:****[126016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the terms of reference for the independent review into gender identity services for children and young people will include (a) the relationship between (i) autism spectrum disorder and (ii) sexuality with gender dysphoria, (b) the potential effect of transgender organisations on gender dysphoria and (d) the experience of (A) desisters and (B) detransitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The terms of reference for the independent review into gender identity services for children and young people are published on the NHS England and NHS Improvement at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/terms-of-reference-for-review-of-gender-identity-development-service-for-children-and-adolescents/>

The review will be wide-ranging and will make recommendations in relation to the best clinical approach for individuals with various complex presentations.

Gender Recognition: Health Services**Jackie Doyle-Price:****[126014]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of referrals for the Gender Identity Development Service; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Since 2013 there has been a 500% increase in the number of young people referred to the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS).

Dr Hilary Cass has been commissioned to carry out a review of the service, exploring how and when young people are referred to the GIDS. This review is expected to report in autumn 2021.

General Practitioners: Coronavirus**Chris Green:****[102102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the health impact of missed GP appointments as a result of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

General practice is open and people should continue to access services by phone, online or in person.

Although general practitioner appointment numbers fell in the early stages of lockdown, practices remained open offering more remote consultations to see as many patients as possible while protecting staff and patients from avoidable risk of infection. Appointment numbers are recovering and are returning to levels seen before lockdown.

Practices continue to undertake routine and preventative work including vaccinations and immunisations and screening, as well as supporting their more high-risk patients with ongoing care needs. Although it is still too early to carry out a full assessment of the impact, we continue to monitor the situation closely.

■ Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

Claire Hanna:

[\[128746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether negotiations have taken place on allowing residents in Northern Ireland to retain access to the European Health Insurance Card after the transition period.

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. The UK is open to arrangements that provide healthcare cover for tourists, short-term business visitors and service providers.

■ Health Services: West Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[121052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve rural communities' access to healthcare in West Sussex.

Jo Churchill:

The Government recognises the specific challenges that rural areas face and the potential for certain health inequalities to develop. We recognise that across West Sussex there are areas of significant rurality, which present particular healthcare challenges, including physical access to services, access to specialist services, social isolation and loneliness, and distance challenges for staff.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 places a legal duty on clinical commissioning groups to tackle health inequalities. NHS West Sussex is committed to working with its partners, including West Sussex County Council and the district and borough councils across the county, to ensure healthcare is commissioned to address these challenges.

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Jeff Smith:

[\[130137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to coordinate with Cabinet colleagues a cross-Government approach to reducing health inequalities as part of its response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

We remain committed to levelling up health outcomes so everyone can enjoy a long, healthy life whoever they are, wherever they live and whatever their social circumstances.

The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) is already leading work across Government to tackle the disparities highlighted by Public Health England in June. This includes reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions, actions to modify existing policy and policy in development to address these disparities. Over the last six months, Ministers have commissioned urgent work across Departments to ensure the response to COVID-19 is fully cognisant of and mitigating, the risk to those groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and its accompanying restrictions.

■ Heart Diseases

Jim Shannon:

[\[128972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with bradycardia in the UK in each of the last three years, by (a) age and (b) gender.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not available in the requested format.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Karen Bradley:

[\[128160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will permit hospitality businesses in areas with tier 3 covid-19 restrictions to operate with the same restrictions as those in tier 2 areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: The Government is keeping the restriction measures under continual review and will only make changes if the data and science supports it.

■ Hymen Surgery

Sarah Olney:

[\[128712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Lord Bethell's answer in the other place of 23 January 2020, Official report volume 801, column 1154, further to what steps he is taking to progress of the review into hymenoplasty.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 December 2020]: Earlier this year the Government committed to a review of hymenoplasty and other forms of female genital cosmetic surgery. This review is currently paused due to the COVID-19 emergency.

The Government is committed to ensuring that female genital cosmetic surgery procedures including hymenoplasty are both safe and appropriate and that women undergoing this type of treatment are not doing so due to violence or coercion.

■ Hysteroscopy: Finance

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the 2020-21 National Tariff Payment System Annex D: Guidance on best practice tariffs, section 15.2, paragraph 196, whether the 2021-22 National Tariff Payment System will include a higher price for outpatient hysteroscopy procedures than for ordinary and day-case elective admissions.

Edward Argar:

NHS England sets day case and outpatient tariffs for a range of procedures where expert clinical consensus is that this may be appropriate. In the case of hysteroscopy procedures there is a single price.

NHS England recognises that few hysteroscopy cases are reported as outpatient procedures and that most are reported as day cases or inpatient cases. NHS England has raised this issue with the NHS Digital-led Expert Reference Group that covers this clinical area. Expert Reference Groups are led by clinicians nominated by their Royal Colleges to agree currency design changes and provide their views about whether the prices relativities are correct. The Expert Reference Group for this clinical area advises that the same price is set for all forms of diagnostic hysteroscopy procedures under Healthcare Resource Group codes MA31Z-MA34Z.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Rehman Chishti:

[\[104099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of the flu vaccine by early December.

Jo Churchill:

General practitioners and community pharmacists are directly responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers, which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults, with deliveries phased through the season.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local areas to ensure that local providers are supported to meet increased demand for the flu vaccination this winter. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has granted dispensation to allow the movement of vaccines locally between practices and other National Health Service provider organisations this season, to help address local shortages.

In addition, the Department has procured additional doses of adult seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[105352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) teachers and (b) other key workers can receive a flu vaccination in winter 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The flu vaccination is recommended for those in at risk groups, and frontline health and social care workers who have direct contact with patients, so they can protect themselves and the vulnerable people that they care for. This is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The Department has procured additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to ensure more flu vaccines are available for eligible groups. Guidance for general practitioners, community pharmacists and trusts on accessing this stock has been published and those who have exhausted their own supply are now able to order from this central stock.

Teachers and other key workers, aside from frontline health and care staff, who are not in an at-risk group are not eligible for a free flu vaccination. However, they may have access to the flu vaccine under their employers' occupational health scheme.

Alex Cunningham:[\[106993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of dentists and dental staff being ineligible for a free flu vaccination on the ability of patients to access dental services; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Provision of flu vaccination for frontline health care workers, including National Health Service independent contractors such as dentists, is the responsibility of the employer, as part of their occupational health responsibility.

Some dentists and other dental staff who are in an 'at-risk' group will continue to be eligible for a free flu vaccine under the flu programme.

■ Innovation**Lee Anderson:**[\[128732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether consultations of stakeholders conducted by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) may address policy and affordability issues, in the context of NICE's duty to promote innovation.

Jo Churchill:

Section 233 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 provides that the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) must have regard to the broad balance between benefits and costs and the desirability of promoting innovation. NICE is an independent organisation and is responsible for its consultation processes.

■ **Malnutrition: Health Services**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[122746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has in place to ensure people with or at risk of malnutrition who require support from relevant services are not disproportionately affected by the second wave of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The new COVID Winter Grant Scheme provides an additional £170 million for local authorities in England, to support families with children and other vulnerable people with the cost of food and essential utilities this winter.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[100403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many out-of-area mental health placements started in each NHS region in each month since March 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

During the height of the pandemic, the scrutiny on out-of-area (OAPs) placements was paused, acknowledging the need for providers to focus on managing the impact of the pandemic. NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance to the National Health Service on 26 March 2020, which provided a relaxation in the reporting of OAPs. Nationally, both bed occupancy and OAPs dropped significantly in March and April due to significant efforts to discharge people from hospital wherever it was safe to do so, coupled with reduced referrals and presentations. Bed occupancy began to increase again in May as lockdown eased, leading to a subsequent increase in OAPs from June.

The available information requested ¹ is shown in the following table.

REGION	MARCH 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020	JUNE 2020	JULY 2020
London Commissioning Region	75	35	55	50	95
South West Commissioning Region	75	15	50	60	70
South East Commissioning Region	15	30	35	60	50
Midlands Commissioning Region	85	65	85	120	120

REGION	MARCH 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020	JUNE 2020	JULY 2020
East of England Commissioning Region	55	15	30	15	30
North West Commissioning Region	45	15	45	70	70
North East and Yorkshire Commissioning Region	100	55	80	120	130
Unknown Region	5	5	10	10	5
England (total)	455	230	385	505	570

Source: NHS Digital ¹ rounded to the nearest 5

The percentage of organisations in scope which participated each month was as follows: March 2020: 89%; April 2020: 84%; May 2020: 79%; June 2020: 81%; July 2020: 82%.

Crispin Blunt:

[\[126774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department and NHS England are taking to support the mental health and wellbeing of patients whose treatment has been suspended or cancelled following the judgment in *Bell v Tavistock*.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The Gender Identity Development Service will ensure that appropriate psychosocial support and psychological therapies are available to patients who are removed from puberty blockers, as well as to their families and carers.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[127517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that anti-stigma work on mental health will continue after the closure of Time to Change programme; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[127518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to (a) increase the importance of anti-stigma and anti-discrimination in mental health planning and (b) take steps to ensure that (i) people from BAME communities, (ii) people experiencing less well known or understood mental health problems and (iii) other groups

severely affected by mental health stigma benefit from national mental health anti-stigma programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is committed to addressing mental health inequalities, stigma and discrimination. Every Department, as well as major corporations, have made a Time to Change Pledge to continue challenging mental health stigma and the inequalities experienced by people with mental illness. The NHS Long Term Plan committed to a more concerted and systematic approach to reducing health inequalities and addressing unwarranted variation in care, including for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds who are known to access mental health care less than people from white backgrounds and are more likely to have mental health problems. This is supported by the investment of an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to transform and expand mental health services for all sections of the population.

Our Mental Health Act Reform White Paper will set out our proposals to improve the dignity and choices for people with mental illness, including for people from BAME communities.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

Andrew Percy:

[\[109285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the effectiveness of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We remain committed to delivering the core proposals of the children and young people's mental health Green Paper, including the introduction of senior leads in mental health and mental health support teams in schools and colleges, as well as the piloting of a four-week waiting time for specialist NHS services. The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health set a target of at least 35% of children and young people with a diagnosable mental health condition receiving treatment from an NHS-funded community mental health service by 2020/21. We are currently meeting this target with 36.8% of children and young people with such a need accessing treatment in 2019/20.

■ **Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[106504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to expand mental health services in the event of a second national lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise the pressures on mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated measures. We have released tailored guidance on the Every Mind Matters website and GOV.UK giving advice and practical steps for people to support their mental health and wellbeing. National Health Service mental health

services have remained open for business throughout this time, including delivering support digitally and by phone. For those with severe needs or in crisis, NHS mental health providers have set up 24 hours a day, seven days a week urgent mental health helplines. We have also provided over £10 million funding for mental health charities supporting people through the pandemic.

■ **Mental Health Services: Telemedicine**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[128080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that mental health providers are able to offer online consultations to patients who need them.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Talking therapies delivered by Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services will continue to be made available remotely so people can access help safely from home with face-to-face support provided to people, where appropriate, from within COVID-19 secure settings. Children and young people's community mental health services will also continue to offer digital and remote access to maintain support and accept new referrals over the winter.

■ **Mental Health: Surveys**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[127519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission and publish data on annual surveys on public attitudes towards mental health problems; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no plans at present to do so.

■ **NHS and Social Services: Protective Clothing**

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[120036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using anti-viral face masks in the NHS and social care settings.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) regulates 'face masks' that are medical devices, those intended to be used in a clinical/health care setting for the protection of the patient rather than the wearer. The MHRA has not conducted or participated in an assessment of anti-viral medical face masks for use in a health care setting.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have been approached by a number of suppliers claiming to have products or technologies with anti-viral properties. The Innovation and Sustainability Team within NHS England and NHS Improvement are

currently looking into these claims and their potential application across a range of items.

■ **NHS: Finance**

Jim Shannon:

[\[128980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of how much additional funding the NHS will need in 2021 to respond to the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has been clear from the outset that the National Health Service will get whatever funding it needs to respond to the pandemic.

In 2020-21, the Government has made £51.9 billion available for the health and adult social care system's response to COVID-19. The Spending Review 2020 settlement provides further support for the health and care system's response to COVID-19, totalling £17.3 billion. In addition, the Spending Review provided an additional £3 billion for the NHS next year, on top of the long-term settlement, to support the NHS recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

The Government stands ready to continue its pragmatic approach in 2021-22, for example by providing further funding to make vaccines widely available and to cover operationally necessary costs incurred by the NHS through its continued response to COVID-19.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[129956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what fiscal steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for the NHS over winter 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

The Government announced £3 billion of additional funding in July to support the National Health Service this winter. This includes ensuring Nightingale hospital surge capacity is available during winter, that the NHS has ongoing access to additional independent sector capacity and funding to support the safe discharge of patients from NHS hospitals.

A further £2.7 billion will go directly to Integrated Care Systems and sustainability and transformation partnerships through the rest of the financial year to help manage ongoing COVID-19 pressures and resume routine activity.

To upgrade accident and emergency departments ahead of winter, the Government has also committed £450 million to expand waiting areas, create more treatment cubicles and improve infection control.

■ Obesity: Training**Martyn Day:** [112089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the Scottish Government on their strategy to reduce the prevalence of obesity and the potential opportunities for mutual learning; and if he will make a statement.

Martyn Day: [112092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to work collaboratively with the administrations in (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland to reduce the prevalence of obesity.

Jo Churchill:

Ministers and officials in the Department have regular discussions with their counterparts in the devolved administrations on improving the health and wellbeing of the nation, including on reducing obesity. Discussions include domestic strategies and the delivery of United Kingdom-wide measures in our obesity strategy, such as front of pack nutrition labelling on food and drink.

■ Pectus Excavatum: Surgery**Emma Hardy:** [129090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will allocate funding to the NHS to invest in Pectus Excavatum treatment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are required to commission specialised services that are often expensive, rare or commissioned on too big a footprint for individual clinical commissioning groups to commission.

Pectus Excavatum treatment is an example of a specialised service and therefore the responsibility of NHS England and NHS Improvement. commissioning policy for surgery for pectus deformity, dated February 2019, is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/surgery-for-pectus-deformity-all-ages/>

■ Pneumococcal Diseases: Vaccination**Holly Mumby-Croft:** [130264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the availability of the pneumococcal vaccine in (a) Scunthorpe and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

There are two pneumococcal vaccines that are currently recommended for use, pneumococcal polysaccharide 23-valent vaccine (PPV23) and pneumococcal polysaccharide conjugate 13-valent vaccine PCV13 (Prevenar 13).

We are aware that, due to high demand, supplies of PPV23 are currently out of stock across the country. Further supplies are expected to become available in late January 2021. We are working closely with suppliers and the healthcare system to ensure that patients with the greatest clinical need can access the vaccine. We are continuing to liaise with the supplier to support expedited future deliveries.

■ **Protective Clothing: Felixstowe Port**

Joy Morrissey:

[\[129114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to clear the backlog of containers being used to store PPE at the Port of Felixstowe and remove that PPE to warehouse storage and free the containers to be returned to destination to carry further supplies.

Jo Churchill:

We have cleared the backlog of containers containing personal protective equipment at Felixstowe and are now managing the expected flow of containers that continue to arrive.

Our United Kingdom storage network is comprised of warehousing environments and off-quay container storage facilities combined with rental containers, all of which are being utilised to enable the release of containers back to the shipping lines.

■ **Respiratory System: Health Services**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[130086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance is in place for primary care on the provision of routine care to respiratory patients.

Jo Churchill:

The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) for 2020/21 has been revised to release capacity within general practice to focus efforts upon the identification and prioritisation of people at risk of poor health and those who experience health inequalities for proactive review including:

- Those most vulnerable to harm from COVID-19; evidence suggests that this includes patients from black, Asian and ethnic minority groups and those from the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally;
- Those at risk of harm from poorly controlled long-term condition parameters; and
- Those with a history of missing annual reviews.

■ **Sex: Females**

Sarah Olney:

[\[129082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ban virginity testing in the UK.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 December 2020]: We are committed to safeguarding vulnerable women and girls. The World Health Organization (WHO) is clear that virginity testing is a violation of the victim's human rights and can have an adverse impact on their physical, psychological and social wellbeing. The WHO also state that such tests have no scientific merit or clinical indication.

The General Medical Council advise that doctors are not required to provide intimate examinations that they have assessed as not clinically appropriate. If the examination is for a child or young person, doctors must assess their capacity to consent to the examination and must promptly raise concerns with an appropriate authority if they think a child or young person is at risk of or suffering abuse.

Smoking: Staffordshire**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[129129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the smoking cessation rate in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Jo Churchill:

The smoking rate for adults in Stoke-on-Trent has seen an overall decline, from 25.2% in 2011 to 18.2% in 2019.

The smoking rate for adults in Staffordshire has seen an overall decline, from 18.2% in 2011 to 13.9% in 2019.

Social Services**James Grundy:**[\[129160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made in setting up a commission to determine the future of adult social care.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals in 2021. The long-term reform of social care is a complex topic, which requires full and thorough consideration, particularly in light of the current circumstances.

The Department has recently held detailed discussions with stakeholders about social care and the impact of COVID 19 on reform priorities, including a roundtable with workforce representatives. We will continue to work with and listen to stakeholders as reform plans develop.

Strokes: Health Services**Lee Anderson:**[\[127658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people presented in hospital with ischemic stroke in (a) January, (b) February, (c) March and (d) April 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested. NHS Digital collects the number of finished admissions episodes which do not represent the number of patients, as a person may have more than one admission within the period.

■ Tobacco**Bob Blackman:**[\[128666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to increase public awareness of the risks of chewing (a) tobacco and (b) paan among the Indian community.

Jo Churchill:

Chewing tobacco and paan are harmful to your health. There is national advice on NHS.uk about the dangers and where to seek advice through local stop smoking services to help people quit.

Local authorities also provide campaigns, advice and support within their communities. To support clinicians and local authorities, Public Health England have published the 'Delivering Better Oral Health' guidance that contains a chapter on tobacco use, along with self-assessment tools to improve local tobacco control work and an oral cancer registrations indicator in the Public Health Profiles data for local commissioners to access.

■ Vaccination**Holly Mumby-Croft:**[\[127701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the proportion of the population who will need to undertake vaccination to ensure a positive effect on people who cannot undertake one for medical reasons.

Jo Churchill:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has stated that in order to interrupt transmission of COVID-19, modelling indicates that we would need to vaccinate a large proportion of the population with a vaccine which is highly effective at preventing infection. Currently it is not known whether any of the vaccines licensed or in development can prevent transmission.

■ Vaccination: Young People**Justin Madders:**[\[113571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people between the ages of 18-21, who for reasons not relating to long-term health conditions, are not up to date with their vaccinations.

Jo Churchill:

We do not hold specific data on the overall vaccination uptake data of individuals between the ages of 18-21 years old.

The National Health Service vaccination programme does not include any vaccinations delivered routinely to those aged between 18 and 21 years old, aside from Pertussis for pregnant women, and for those with long-term health conditions. However, there remain opportunities for individuals who have not been vaccinated, or fully vaccinated, to do so when they attend their general practitioner.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Tees Valley

Alex Cunningham:

[128952]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylums seekers have been waiting for a decision on their case for more than (a) six months and (b) twelve months within (i) Stockton Borough Council area and (ii) Tees Valley Combined Authority area.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not publish data on the number of asylum seekers who have been waiting for a decision on their case for more than (a) six months and (b) twelve months within (i) Stockton Borough Council area and (ii) Tees Valley Combined Authority area.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration, for main applicants only. This data can be found at Asy_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020/list-of-tables>

The Home Office are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, individuals who need protection are granted asylum as soon as possible and can start to integrate and rebuild their lives, including those granted at appeal.

■ Fraud: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[130238]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of covid-19 related fraud; and what steps she is taking to prevent those offences.

James Brokenshire:

The Government is aware that criminals are exploiting the pandemic to commit opportunistic crimes such as fraud. Although Covid-19 related fraud represents a small proportion of overall fraud reporting, we understand the devastating impact it can have on individuals. Along with partners, we have been implementing measures to ensure the public has the protection and advice needed to shield themselves from these crimes. We have published guidance for the public to spot potential frauds and

the steps they can take to avoid them. This advice can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime>

Our efforts include working alongside the National Cyber Security Centre to establish a new Suspicious Email Reporting Service. This service allows the public to report potential scams safely and effectively. To date, this has led to the removal of over 22,000 scams. Members of the public can forward suspicious emails to the dedicated email address: report@phishing.gov.uk

We are also working with the Cabinet Office, who lead on the response to public sector fraud, around tracking and mitigating the risk of fraud against the unprecedented levels of stimulus funding including the bounce back loan scheme.

■ Immigration

Kim Johnson:

[128743]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a breakdown of immigration enforcement visit statistics for the last 12 months by (a) location, (b) nationality, (c) ethnicity and (d) resultant arrests.

Kim Johnson:

[128744]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish data on immigration enforcement visits on a regular basis by (a) location, (b) nationality and (c) ethnicity.

Chris Philp:

To maintain the highest standard of accuracy, the Home Office prefer to refer to published data, as this has been subject to rigorous quality assurance under National Statistics protocols prior to publication.

We do not routinely publish data regarding breakdowns of immigration enforcement visits statistics by location, nationality, ethnicity and resultant arrests as to do so could only be done at disproportionate cost. All data published by the Home Office is considered in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Our published data is available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-enforcement-data-august-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/summary-of-latest-statistics>

Kim Johnson:

[129147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to reduce the number of immigration enforcement visits made in error to British citizens.

Chris Philp:

Immigration Compliance Teams conduct immigration enforcement visits to residential and business premises. Extensive checks are undertaken on all individuals before any action is undertaken.

These checks include searches of all internal Home Office databases and where necessary external checks, such as birth or financial checks. In the immediate aftermath of Windrush, additional processes were put in place to carefully check the status of Commonwealth nationals to minimise the risk of tasking visits involving British nationals or those with the right to remain in the United Kingdom.

■ Immigration Controls: Heathrow Airport**Steve Double:**[\[130135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2020 to Question 120898 on Heathrow Airport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of resource and support provided to Border Force to ensure that it is able to effectively discharge its duties at Heathrow within agreed service level agreements (a) over the Christmas period and (b) at the end of the transition period.

Steve Double:[\[130136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the maximum queue time for non-EEA passengers at Heathrow Airport during the period of national restrictions in England from 5 November 2020 to 2 December 2020.

Chris Philp:

Border Force is confident that resources to meet anticipated overall operational requirements are in place for the Christmas and transition period, with Border Force recruiting sufficient additional frontline staff and continuing to build staffing levels during 2020 across all critical ports. This will ensure full operational readiness at the UK border to meet the requirements from the end of transition.

Resource and staffing requirements at every port, including Heathrow, are continually reviewed by Border Force working with airport operators including Heathrow Airport Ltd, and resources are deployed flexibly as and when they are required.

Wait times in airports can be caused by a number of factors, not just related to resourcing. This includes the volume of immigration case working, additional support, checks in relation to Covid-19, and specific security activity. Our teams seek to balance this range of tasking each day. Whilst mindful of passenger wait times and experience, our primary objective is to ensure the security of the border.

New Border Force staff receive a comprehensive package of training prior to operational deployment. Comprehensive guidance and training plans have been developed to upskill BF frontline officers in new policy, process and system changes for the end of the Transition Period. Initial training is further reinforced and

supplemented by on the job mentoring once new staff have been deployed to UK ports.

Figures for the queue time for non-EEA passengers during the period from 5 November 2020 2 December 2020 are yet to be published.

■ Immigration: Coronavirus

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[129119]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will suspend the in-person reporting of migrants to immigration reporting centres (a) in the event of a national lockdowns and (b) during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

On Tuesday 17 March, following Public Health and Government guidance relating to COVID19 and the developing situation, we paused immigration reporting and sent an SMS text message to reportees with a valid mobile telephone number on our systems informing them of this.

On Tuesday 24 March we maintained the decision to close reporting centres and police reporting temporarily following the Prime Minister's address to the nation. This was because we were not confident that we could practice safe social distancing and operate within a COVID secure environment.

Immigration Enforcement recommenced face to face reporting in July and August for limited, priority cohorts of people. We have implemented Safe Systems of Working (SSOW) and Risk Assessments in all our Reporting Centres where we have put in place robust social distancing measures; health screening questions are asked as a person enters; face masks are offered to those who have travelled without them; one-way systems and sanitiser stations are placed throughout our buildings. We continue to review our current reporting arrangements in line with any new local and national COVID restrictions that are put in place.

Before inviting individuals into reporting, case owners will make an assessment based on the harm that they may pose to the public, as well as the vulnerability and personal circumstances of all of those we ask to report. We continue to keep in contact with the overall reporting population by telephone to update individuals on the current reporting position. An SMS text or email/letter is sent to those required to recommence reporting informing them of the date and time they should report, along with relevant advice on COVID. We have also updated the reporting pages on GOV.UK for those who report and their representatives. This information includes how to travel most safely by public transport, avoiding both busy transport hubs and traveling at peak times; advice on reporting alone where possible; and what to do if those reporting have symptoms or are shielding and how to contact their local reporting centre.

■ Knives: Crime**Jonathan Gullis:****[129138]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce knife crime in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is determined to turn the tide on knife crime in all areas, wherever it occurs. Across England and Wales, we are recruiting 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023 and the amount of funding available to the policing system for 2020/21 will increase by up to £1.1 billion, totalling £15.2 billion. Staffordshire Police will receive up to £211.1 million in 2020-21, an increase of 7.3% from 2019-20. Staffordshire have also been allocated 90 additional officers in the first year of uplift. As at 30 September 2020, the force is +55 officers into uplift against its baseline and is therefore well on its way towards its year one allocation.

We have tightened the law on knives through the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, which also introduced Knife Crime Prevention Orders. We have recently completed a public consultation on the introduction of Serious Violence Reduction Orders, to make it easier for the police to stop and search those who have been convicted of knife crime. While it is vital that the police have the resources and powers they need to tackle knife crime and serious violence, this is not a matter for the police alone. It is important that we also invest in prevention and early intervention to stop young people being drawn into violence in the first place. This is why we have invested a further £200 Million through the 10-Year Youth Endowment Fund to ensure those most at risk are given the opportunity to turn away from violence and lead positive lives. In addition, through the Early Intervention Youth Fund, which ran from 2018-2020, Staffordshire received £392,700 to develop a coordinated local approach to tackling serious violence.

■ Members: Correspondence**John Spellar:****[129951]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Minister of State for Immigration plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 5 November 2020 on Mr Ellis.

Kevin Foster:

The Minister for Future Borders and Immigration responded on 16 December 2020.

■ Offenders: Deportation**Jonathan Gullis:****[129137]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to remove foreign national offenders from (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove.

Chris Philp:

One of this Government's key objectives is to protect the public by removing foreign national offenders who commit criminal offences and have no right to remain in the UK. Foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them irrespective of where they live, including Stoke-on-Trent and Kidsgrove, and since January 2019, we have removed 6,450 foreign national offenders from the UK.

All foreign nationals who receive a custodial sentence are referred to the Home Office to consider removal action. Every week we remove foreign criminals from the UK to different countries who have no right to be here. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to return and deport foreign offenders and other immigration offenders where flight routes have been available to us, both on scheduled flights and charter flights.

For non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals, deportation will be pursued where it is conducive to the public good including where a person receives a custodial sentence of 12 months or more, commits an offence that caused serious harm or is a persistent offender. Currently, European Economic Area (EEA) nationals are deported in accordance with European Union (EU) law on the grounds of public policy or public security.

The UK's departure from the EU means that, in future, an EEA national who commits an offence after the end of the transition period (31 December 2020) will be considered under the same deportation thresholds that apply to non-EEA nationals.

We only return those with no legal right to remain in the UK, including foreign national offenders. Individuals are only returned to their country of origin when the Home Office and, where applicable, the Courts deem it is safe to do so.

This Government's priority is keeping the people of this country safe, and we make no apology for seeking to remove dangerous foreign criminals.

■ Police: Suicide**Dehenna Davison:**[\[129109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of (a) serving and (b) retired police officers who have died by suicide in the last 10 years.

Dehenna Davison:[\[129110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the suicide rate amongst (a) serving and (b) retired police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not centrally hold the information requested as the Office for National Statistics publish data on suicide by occupation, including police officers.

Information on suicides by occupation can be found here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/adhocs/10807suicidebyoccupationenglandandwales2011to2018registrations>

The statistics show that police officer (sergeant and below) suicide deaths in England remain relatively steady and small in number (e.g. 13 in 2011, reaching a high of 21 in 2012 and in the teens each year since, with 13 in 2019).

The death of any serving or retired police officer is a tragedy. The Government and police leaders take this matter seriously and are working to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff.

We have invested in programmes which offer help directly to officers and staff. This includes £7.5 to fund the development of the National Police Wellbeing Service, which was launched in 2019. The Service is helping forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health, and developing work around building resilience, as well as putting in place support for those who need it in response to traumatic events.

Dehenna Davison:

[129111]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department is providing to police forces to prevent suicides amongst (a) serving and (b) retired police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

The death of any serving or retired police officer is a tragedy. The Government and police leaders take this matter seriously and are working to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff.

We have invested in programmes which offer help directly to officers and staff. This includes £7.5 to fund the development of the National Police Wellbeing Service, which was launched in 2019. The Service is helping forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health, and developing work around building resilience, as well as putting in place support for those who need it in response to traumatic events.

The Government has also accelerated work to introduce a Police Covenant, which will ensure our police get the support and protection they need. We have been clear that the Covenant will also cover those who are retired from policing, to ensure that they are also supported effectively once they leave the service. The Covenant will be enshrined in law, with provisions being brought forward later this session, and the Home Secretary will have a duty to report annually on the work undertaken.

Our focus will be on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families. We are in no doubt that an area we must focus on is mental health support. We will continue to work closely with policing partners to ensure the Covenant has a lasting impact on both serving and retired officers and staff.

■ Refugees: Resettlement

Paul Blomfield:

[\[128670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential barriers to restarting the UK's refugee resettlement scheme.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[128671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will increase the UK's resettlement target in 2021 in response to the reduced number of refugees resettled in 2020.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[128672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her international counterparts on increasing the global number of refugee resettlement places.

Chris Philp:

The UK is one of the world's leading refugee resettlement states. Over recent years the Home Office has worked in partnership with UNHCR and other resettlement states to increase global resettlement capacity, including through leading various international fora. We have also provided direct advice and assistance to a number of states, supporting them to start, expand or develop their own resettlement schemes.

Alongside our international work, we have also been working closely with our key domestic stakeholders on plans to safely resume UK resettlement arrivals against the backdrop of unprecedented restrictions and pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of this work, and as announced by Baroness Williams of Trafford in the House of Lords on 9 November, the UK will shortly restart UK resettlement arrivals to fulfil our commitment of resettling 20,000 refugees affected by the conflict in Syria under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and we are working closely with partners to deliver this commitment.

Decisions regarding resettlement beyond the completion of this scheme, including the number of refugees we plan to resettle, are yet to be made and will need to take account of the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing pressures on the asylum system.

Chris Grayling:

[\[129988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made on resettling refugee families under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme; and how many people she plans to settle under that scheme in the next 12 months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is committed to publishing data in an orderly way as part of the regular quarterly Immigration Statistics, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. These can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics

To access the number of refugees resettled, access the latest statistical release using the link above, then “data tables”, “asylum and resettlement” and select either the summary or detailed resettlement tables. The latest set of figures were released on 26 November 2020.

We have been working closely with key domestic and international stakeholders on plans to safely resume UK resettlement arrivals against the backdrop of unprecedented restrictions and pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of this work the UK has restarted UK resettlement arrivals to fulfil our commitment of resettling 20,000 refugees affected by the conflict in Syria under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and we are working closely with partners to deliver this commitment. Decisions regarding resettlement beyond the completion of this scheme are yet to be made and will need to take account of the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing pressures on the asylum system.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Kim Johnson:

[\[129149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to include the replacement of wooden balconies in the eligibility criteria for the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is focussing public funding on cladding systems because unsafe cladding acts as an accelerant to fire spread and poses an exceptional fire risk at certain heights. Works which are not directly related to the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding will not be covered by the Building Safety Fund. Balconies are therefore not included unless they are integral to the cladding. Funding for the removal of unsafe cladding will remove the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding. Our guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and we have given expert advice on a range of safety issues to provide clarity.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what liability exists for surveyors who failed to identify and report building defects that created fire risks in breach of building regulations in force at the time of the surveyor's inspection and which were identified only later.

Christopher Pincher:

The forthcoming Building Safety Bill, the draft of which the Government published on 20 July 2020, will introduce far-reaching building safety reforms, including industry-

led measures to improve competency across the sector. Through this we will create duty holders that are responsible for a building's safety throughout its lifecycle with existing in-scope buildings transitioning into this system.

Chartered surveyors are regulated by RICS and members are required to have PII which provides a minimum level of indemnity cover for the professional risks they accept in undertaking their work. It is for the appropriate professional standards bodies to regulate the surveying profession. Government is not able to pre-determine what liability individual professionals hold for historic work.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[128645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of insurance claims made since July 2017 against developers' insurance for remediation costs relating to fire safety issues have been successful, in cases where defects have been accepted by developers.

Christopher Pincher:

This information is not held.

■ Buildings: Ventilation

Sir Graham Brady:

[128624]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to update the ventilation standards for buildings in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

SAGE (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) have considered evidence on aerosol transmission of SARS-CoV-2. SAGE provides scientific and technical advice to support government decision makers during emergencies. During the coronavirus pandemic, the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) and the Environmental and Modelling Group (EMG) provided advice to SAGE on this matter.

A paper on ventilation and Covid-19 has been prepared by SAGE EMG:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emg-role-of-ventilation-in-controlling-sars-cov-2-transmission-30-september-2020>.

SAGE EMG and NERVTAG have also published a paper on aerosol transmission which includes comments on ventilation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nervtagemg-role-of-aerosol-transmission-in-covid-19-22-july-2020>.

We are planning to consult on changes to the Building Regulations ventilation standards, including a number of measures to enhance the ventilation provision for non-domestic buildings to mitigate the risk of transmission of infectious agents. This

work has been informed by discussions with public health and ventilation experts. The Building Regulations apply when a new building is constructed, or when significant work takes place on an existing building.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[129976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of high-rise buildings in (a) Kirklees and (b) England have non-ACM cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

Summary information from the External Wall Systems data collection are published in this Building Safety Programme data release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england/building-safety-programme-estimates-of-ews1-requirements-on-residential-buildings-in-england>.

Regional analysis is not available.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[128715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people who have become homeless since March 2020 in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[128716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimates she has made of the number of people who are living in temporary accommodation in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[128717]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of children in temporary accommodation in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[128718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to reduce homelessness in (a) Slough and (b) England.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is committed to tackling homelessness, which is why it is spending over £700 million this year alone. This includes the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant of £200m and the £63 million Homelessness Reduction Grant which enable local authorities to do more to prevent and relieve homelessness in their areas.

Slough received a total of £820,101 from these specific funding streams. As a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act, councils now have a duty to prevent

homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation means people are getting help and ensures no family is without a roof over their head.

Next year, the Government will be spending over £750 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping and fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The latest homelessness data for April June 2020, including temporary accommodation numbers and the number of duties owed under the Homelessness Reduction Act can be found on the gov.uk website:

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

■ **Housing: Insulation**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[128642]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with mortgage providers on automatic movement onto variable rate terms for people who are unable to remortgage due to outstanding fire safety issues, with regard to the affordability of those variable rate terms.

Christopher Pincher:

The lending industry has assured the Minister for Building Safety that their existing customers in multi-occupancy and multi-storey buildings with fire safety issues should be able to access a product transfer without penalty. Individual lenders will make a commercial decision where a leaseholder is looking to re-mortgage.

■ **Housing: Stoke on Trent**

Jonathan Gullis:

[129146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to promote housebuilding on brownfield land in Stoke-on-Trent.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework expects local authorities to prioritise brownfield land for development wherever possible. Local authorities are best placed to assess the potential of individual sites, and each authority is required to publish a register of its developable brownfield suitable for new homes. Nationally, we are providing significant practical support for regeneration, including:

- The £4.5 billion Home Building Fund provides loans for new housing in two ways: the £2 billion long-term fund supports delivery of larger sites, mostly brownfield, through loans for infrastructure and site preparation; the £2.5 billion short-term loan fund (a further £450 million will be made available as announced by the PM in June) supports small and medium enterprises, custom builders and construction innovators to build housing, including some on brownfield.

- A new £100 million brownfield land release fund for local authorities to support new housing delivery.
- Our revision of Permitted Development and Use Class rules to encourage brownfield re-use: for instance, allowing (if well designed) two additional storeys on top of purpose-built blocks of flats; new space on top of houses in certain circumstances; and conversion or replacement of commercial and other buildings to create residential development.
- The Housing Infrastructure Fund, which has allocated nearly £4.1 billion for provision of infrastructure for housing projects, including some on brownfield.
- Land Remediation Relief, which cuts tax for companies cleaning up contaminated land.

The Government has now published its response to the consultation on assessing Local Housing Need and outlined a broader strategy to ensure we build more homes people can afford and to regenerate urban centres. Stoke-on-Trent is among the places where we will increase the indicative Local Housing Need number from the standard method by 35 per cent. We have already provided £10 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund Marginal Viability Funding to transform nine long-vacant brownfield sites in Burslem and Middleport, helping to breathe new life into the city.

■ Leasehold

Gareth Thomas:

[128616]

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 (a) cap increases to (i) service charges and (ii) management agent fees payable by owners of leasehold properties and (b) to prevent freeholders of shared ownership properties from using funds from leasehold service charges to pay legal fees for defending action taken by leaseholders; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government believes very strongly that any fees and charges should be justifiable, transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. The law is clear that service charges, administration and permission fees must be reasonable and, where costs relate to work or services, the work or services must be of a reasonable standard. Leaseholders may make an application to the First-tier Tribunal to make a determination on the reasonableness of their service charges or fees. A summary of leaseholders' rights and responsibilities must also be provided with the demand for charges.

We are also considering under what circumstances administration and permission fees are justified and if they should be capped or banned. We established a working group, chaired by Lord Best, who looked at this alongside the regulation of property agents and reported back to Government last summer. We are currently considering their recommendations.

Leaseholders may be liable to pay the legal costs of their landlord regardless of the outcome of a legal challenge - even if they win the case. This depends on the terms set out in their lease. This can lead to leaseholders facing bills that are higher than the charges they were seeking to challenge in the first place. It can also deter leaseholders from taking their concerns to a tribunal.

The Government believes leaseholders should not be subject to unjustified legal costs and will close the legal loopholes that allow this to happen. We will bring forward legislation to do this when parliamentary time allows.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Caroline Nokes:

[\[128668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by what date he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on leasehold reform.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. This includes measures to ban the sale of new leasehold houses, restrict ground rents to zero for future leases, give freehold homeowners equivalent rights to challenge unfair charges, and close loopholes to prevent unfair evictions. We are also working with the Law Commission to make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and cheaper – and to reinvigorate commonhold to provide consumers with a choice of tenure and the Right to Manage to help empower those that wish to, to take on management responsibilities for their properties. This is a long-term reform programme; it is complex with many interdependencies and will take time to get the detail right. Once it is enacted the effect will be felt for generations and so we are determined this work considers all the implications with care. We will bring forward leasehold legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ New Homes Ombudsman

Caroline Nokes:

[\[128669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by what date the New Homes Ombudsman will be established and taking on cases.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The New Homes Ombudsman scheme will enhance consumer protection for new build homebuyers. Published on 20 July 2020, the draft Building Safety Bill includes provision for the New Homes Ombudsman scheme to resolve disputes between developers and consumers. The legislation has finished pre-legislative scrutiny and we are considering the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committees' recommendations. Alongside introducing legislation, we continue to stay in touch with the industry-led New Homes Quality Board to consider the appointment of a voluntary New Homes Ombudsman scheme.

■ Planning Permission: Coronavirus**Stuart Anderson:**[\[129112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has been made of the potential merits of extending all planning permissions for projects which have been halted due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

To ensure that unimplemented planning permissions and listed building consents do not lapse unnecessarily due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has brought forward measures through the Business and Planning Act 2020 to extend planning permissions in England which have lapsed or are at an increased risk of lapsing during this period. Planning permissions that have lapsed or are due to lapse between 23 March and 31 December 2020 will receive an extension to 1 May 2021. This is an important step in supporting the construction industry and sustaining jobs. The legislation allows for certain dates to be extended by regulations, including the dates for eligible permissions and the extension period. The use of this power is being kept under review.

■ Rented Housing: Coronavirus**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[128742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to (a) write off tenants' rent arrears and (b) provide financial assistance to help tenants pay rent arrears accrued due to loss of earnings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has put in place an unprecedented financial package which is supporting renters with their housing costs. This includes support for businesses to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until March 2021. We have also boosted the welfare system, including increasing Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by up to £1,040 for the year and increasing Local Housing Allowance rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. As announced at the spending round for 2020/21 there is £180 million for local authorities to distribute in Discretionary Housing Payments for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors.

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, landlords are required to give tenants 6 months' notice except in the most serious circumstances such as anti-social behaviour, fraud and arrears of more than 6 months. Housing possession cases were suspended in the courts from 27 March until 20 September. Landlords are able to progress their claims, and the most serious cases are being prioritised by the courts. To further protect tenants, the Government has changed the law to ensure bailiffs do not enforce evictions in England until 11 January 2021, except in the most serious

circumstances such as illegal occupation, anti-social behaviour or rent arrears of more than 9 months accrued before 23 March.

We will keep these measures under review and our decisions will continue to be guided by the latest public health advice.

■ **Shared Ownership: Insulation**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with housing providers who offer shared ownership in buildings where there are outstanding fire safety issues, in relation to the (a) ability of their residents to sell their share, (b) liability of shared owners for remediation payments, (c) ability of shared owners to sub-let and (d) ability of shared owners to buy the remainder of the leasehold.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what advice his Department is providing to social housing providers that offer shared ownership in buildings where there are outstanding fire safety issues, in relation to liability for remediation costs for (a) the provider and (b) individual shared owners.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has continued to engage with leaseholders and housing providers of all kinds at ministerial and official level, to understand their concerns on a range of issues and discuss various policies.

It is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the cost of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they didn't cause.

The Government is determined to remove barriers to fixing historic defects and identify financing solutions that help to protect leaseholders, whilst also helping to protect the taxpayer. The Government has asked Michael Wade to accelerate this work. We will provide an update in due course.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Cheese: Canada**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[128898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the full details of the licensing procedures for UK-Canada cheese exports as agreed under the UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement and cheese tariff rate quota side-letter.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[128899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, under what terms UK cheese producers will export to Canada after 31 December 2023 in the event that no further agreement is reached with Canada before that time.

Emily Thornberry:[\[128900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how the UK's access to the EU share of Canada's WTO cheese tariff rate quota will be administered; and what new administrative processes will need to be undertaken by (a) UK exporters and (b) Canadian importers of UK cheese to access that quota.

Emily Thornberry:[\[128901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the UK will have access to a separate tariff rate quota for industrial cheese under the UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement.

Greg Hands:

The Trade Continuity Agreement (TCA) does not include a bilateral Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) on Cheese. However, our cheese exports will continue to be eligible for the EU reserve of Canada's World Trade Organisation (WTO) quota for a further 3 years.

Canada's WTO cheese quota is currently allocated every calendar year to traditional import allocation holders on the basis of their historical imports. The TCA does not change any administrative processes in how this quota operates for United Kingdom exporters or Canadian importers. The TCA ensures existing relationships between United Kingdom producers and Canadian importers who hold licenses for the EU reserve are protected.

From 31 December 2023, cheese originating in the United Kingdom will be eligible to be imported under the non-EU reserve of Canada's WTO cheese TRQ. The TCA sets out that the United Kingdom and Canada will begin negotiations on a new Free Trade Agreement in 2021.

■ Food: Canada

Emily Thornberry:[\[128902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what methodology her Department used to calculate the Tariff Rate Quotas that the UK will apply after 31 December 2020 to imports of (a) processed shrimp, (b) frozen cod, (c) low and medium quality common wheat and (d) sweetcorn from Canada.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom's Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) in the UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement on processed shrimp; frozen cod; low and medium quality wheat; and sweetcorn were calculated using relevant trade flow data – in this case the United Kingdom's share of EU imports (2014-2016 average) for each product.

These TRQs were resized from the equivalent quotas set out in the Comprehensive and Economic Trade *Agreement* (CETA) to reflect the fact that the United Kingdom is a smaller importer than the EU28.

The quotas on processed shrimp, frozen cod and low and medium quality wheat are temporary. Imports of these products from Canada will be tariff-free from 1 January 2024.

■ Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees

Kate Osamor:

[\[130164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many fossil fuel projects UK Export Finance (a) is currently considering for support or (b) has been asked to consider for support in the future; and for each project (i) where it is located and (ii) what fossil fuel it relates to.

Graham Stuart:

On 12 December 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the British government will no longer provide any new direct financial or promotional support for the fossil fuel energy sector overseas. This policy will be implemented as soon as possible following the conclusion of the consultation process that was also launched on 12 December.

During the consultation period and ahead of the implementation of the new policy, the government will continue to apply current policy for all in-scope activities including proposals for high carbon projects, with consideration of relevant factors including climate change.

I refer the Hon. Member for Edmonton to my responses to the Hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston on 18 November 2020 (UIN: 91998) and 25 November 2020 (UIN: 118072), which listed the fossil fuel related projects that UK Export Finance is currently considering for 2021, their locations, and the type of fossil fuel involved.

Kate Osamor:

[\[130165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2020 to Question 91998 on Fossil Fuels: Export Credit Guarantees, what status the listed projects have following the Prime Minister's announcement of 12 December 2020 on ending direct financing for fossil fuel projects overseas.

Graham Stuart:

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

During the consultation period and ahead of the implementation of the new policy, the government will continue to apply current policy for all in-scope activities including proposals for high carbon projects, with consideration of relevant factors including climate change.

The projects referred to in my response to the Hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston on 18 November 2020 (UIN: 91998) are still under consideration by UK Export Finance, and no decisions have been made. It is our policy not to comment on potential transactions for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

■ Trade Agreements

Gareth Thomas:

[\[121796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the terms of reference of the review of trade impacts modelling with an external panel chaired by Professor Tony Venables announced on 1 July 2020; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Modelling Review Expert Panel (MREP) will support the development of the Department for International Trade's (DIT) modelling capability by making sure that decisions related to the modelling of trade policies meet our mandate and objectives – and are informed by the best possible academic perspective.

The terms of reference specify the following objectives:

1. To determine what modelling capability will best support DIT's trade policy objectives;
2. To explore what economic impacts from trade should and can be feasibly captured in a trade modelling framework; and
3. To evaluate whether DIT's current modelling capability sufficiently meets DIT's needs and to identify where alternative or complimentary approaches may be required.

The MREP will serve solely as an external advisory panel and will not have authority or oversight on DIT research or policy. The MREP will not be asked to actively model a live agreement.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Video Conferencing

Alex Cunningham:

[\[128951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2020 to Question 81888 on Courts: Video Conferencing, whether his Department holds data on the number of Cloud Video Platform hearings that are completed per hour in (a) magistrates courts, (b) County courts and (c) across the network of tribunals.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS does not hold data on the number of hearings completed per hour or the duration of hearings. We continue to carefully monitor and evaluate the use of video and technology in courts, so that we can improve services and support access to justice. The decision to deal with a hearing or part of a hearing remotely is a matter for the judiciary and the length of hearings vary significantly whether in person or remote.

We are listening to feedback from all court users including the judiciary, legal professionals, staff and other key stakeholders to understand the impact of the

technology during Covid and findings of that evaluation will be available in Spring 2021.

■ **Divorce: Legal Opinion**

Sir Robert Neill: [\[130008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to promote access to early legal advice for divorcing couples.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[130010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of reductions in legal aid on access to professional or legal support for divorcing couples.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[130011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of improved early access to professional advice for divorcing couples on conflict and the mental health of those involved.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[130012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to the (a) public purse and (b) court system of ensuring legal aid is accessible in family law cases.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[130013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of improving early legal advice for divorcing couples to help reduce pressure on family courts.

Alex Chalk:

We spent £1.7bn in 2019 on Legal Aid to ensure vulnerable people have access to proportionate legal advice and support and that we minimise the burden on courts and tribunals.

Legal aid is available for private family matters where an applicant is a victim of, or at risk of being a victim of domestic abuse or child abuse, subject to the means and merits criteria. The Exceptional Case Funding scheme provides legal aid in cases which fall out of scope. It provides legal aid where without it there would be a breach, or risk of a breach of, human rights, subject to the statutory means and merits test.

But legal aid is only one part of a broader picture. As set out in our Legal Support Action plan, there are other forms of support that can help people overcome their problems, such as legal information, guidance and signposting so that everyone can access justice in a way that best meets their needs.

In April we also launched the new, two-year, £3.1m Legal Support for Litigants in Person Grant, which is designed to fund services provided at local, regional and national levels with the aim of understanding more about how they can combine to

help people. This new grant funding is in addition to the more than £9m that the MoJ has invested in support for litigants in person since 2015 through our existing Litigants in Person Support Strategy.

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service has established 17 Nightingale courts across England and Wales, providing 32 additional court rooms, and are recruiting more staff.

Judicial sitting days in the family court have been increased and approximately £3.5m additional funding has helped Cafcass increase staffing levels to respond to record levels of open cases.

■ Domestic Abuse

Ms Lyn Brown:

[128916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation's 2019/2020 Annual Report: inspections of probation services, published in December 2020, if he will publish an action plan in response to the finding that checks with the local police domestic abuse team at the point of initial assessment are not being done in over a third of cases.

Alex Chalk:

As with previous years there are no plans for HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to publish an action plan in response to Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation's (HMIP) latest Annual Report, given no specific recommendations are made like they are in Inspection Reports.

However, Contract Management Teams continue to work closely with Community Rehabilitation Companies to ensure that any areas of improvement that have been identified by HMIP form part of an agreed internal action plan, which is monitored closely as part of contract management processes. Similarly, HM Prison and Probation Service continue to monitor National Probation Service Divisions' progress against suggested areas of improvement or recommendations provided by HMIP.

■ Family Proceedings

Taiwo Owatemi:

[130236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress his Department has made on implementing the recommendations from its report of June 2020, Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases.

Alex Chalk:

The report identified a number of long-standing, systemic issues that require fundamental reform. The Family Justice Reform Implementation Group (FJRIG) is overseeing delivery of the reform agenda.

We are making good progress against several of the commitments outlined in our Implementation Plan published alongside the report. We have launched the review into the 'presumption of parental involvement' in private law children cases, and we

are developing the 'Independent Domestic Abuse Courts' (IDAC) pilot. We are also implementing changes within the Domestic Abuse Bill, including the prohibition of cross examination of victims by perpetrators or alleged perpetrators and automatic eligibility for special measures in the Family Court.

A more detailed delivery updated will be published in the new year.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Labour Turnover**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[128861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the attrition rate of staff at Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service has been in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

12 MONTHS TO	NOV 2016	NOV 2017	NOV 2018	NOV 2019	NOV 2020
Attrition rate	9.2%	9.9%	10.2%	11.7%	10.6%

The methodology used to calculate the attrition rate is:

$(\text{Total annual leavers [12 months]} / \text{Average annual headcount [12 months]}) * 100$

The % are calculated using permanent and FTC staff headcount figures for on strength staff only.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Pay**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[128863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff at Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service earn below £24,000 per annum.

Chris Philp:

As at 31 October 2020, the proportion of HMCTS staff, whose full-time equivalent salary is presently below £24,000, is 71.2% equating to 11,542 people.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Staff**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[128864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff by (a) court and (b) pay band are employed by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service.

Chris Philp:

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

■ Judiciary: Recruitment

Mr David Lammy:

[128855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the cost to the public purse was in 2019-20 of the (a) recruitment of and (b) induction and initial training for (i) full-time district judges, (ii) deputy district judges and (iii) lay magistrates and each (A) full-time district judge, (B) deputy district judge and (C) lay magistrate.

Alex Chalk:

Recruitment of judges in England and Wales is undertaken by the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC). The JAC completed 35 recruitment exercises and made 979 recommendations in 2019/20, including 47 district judges, 151 deputy district judges and 17 district judges (magistrates' court). The costs allocated to each exercise were £44,000 for district judges, £454,000 for deputy district judges and £60,000 for district judges (magistrates' courts). Due to the different costs incurred for different exercises, judge level recruitment costs are not reported.

The Lord Chief Justice is responsible for judicial training, exercised through the Judicial College. As district judges are required to have previous judicial experience, induction training is tailored to meet the specific needs of each judge based on their previous sitting experience. Of the appointments made in 2019/20, three district judges were required to attend training at a total cost of £10,000. The cost of induction training for deputy district judges was £1.2m plus £873,000 in sitting in days. These are observation days at a hearing before and after training that must be completed by fee paid judges before presiding over a hearing. Induction training was also provided to 30 newly appointed deputy district judges (magistrates' courts) at a total cost of £81,000. The Judicial College does not calculate the cost per judge of induction training.

In 2019-2020 1,033 magistrates were appointed. HMCTS are responsible for the recruitment and the delivery of training to magistrates and do not collate the costs of magistrate recruitment or training.

■ Magistrates: Ethnic Groups

Mr David Lammy:

[128856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of members of the working groups which have shaped the new policy on magistrate recruitment are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Mr David Lammy:

[128857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of applicants to the magistracy were from Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities in each of the last five years; and what comparative assessment he has made of the the success rates of those applicants and other applicants in being appointed to the magistracy in the last five years.

Mr David Lammy:

[128858]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of leadership magistrates are from BAME communities; and what steps have been taken to encourage magistrates from BAME communities to apply for those positions.

Mr David Lammy:

[128859]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps are taken to ascertain the socio-economic background of new magistrates; and if he will publish the data on that measure.

Alex Chalk:

Members of the Recruitment and Attraction Steering Group (who are involved in the working groups) are magistrates and lay members of Advisory Committees in each region who were appointed following an Expression of Interest exercise. Diversity data for the Steering Group Members is not separately collated. Other working group members are comprised of officials from MoJ, HMCTS and Judicial Office and we do not separately collate their diversity data for this specific role.

The Judicial Office collate the diversity data of magistrates. Currently, diversity data of applicants to the magistracy is not collated as it is not mandatory for prospective applicants to provide this information. The Magistrates Recruitment and Attraction programme is developing a new recruitment system that will capture diversity data of applicants throughout the application process. The diversity data of appointed magistrates are published in the Judicial Diversity Statistics.

Leadership roles within the magistracy, including those within the Magistrates' Leadership Executive, are undertaken by appointed magistrates. Leadership roles are openly advertised to all magistrates and filled through either an Expression of Interest exercise or following local selection processes. Diversity data of those who hold leadership roles is not separately collated.

The Judicial Office does not collate socio-economic data of new magistrates. The Judicial Diversity Statistics sets out data on magistrates' ethnicity, age and gender. By March 2021, the aim is for all Judicial office holders to be encouraged to self-classify against a wider range of diversity characteristics including a means of defining a socio-economic background.

The Judicial Diversity Statistics are published annually and are available through this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2020-statistics>

■ **Magistrates: Recruitment**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[129159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of magistrates in (a) Wakefield constituency, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) England.

Alex Chalk:

Working with the magistracy through the Magistrates' Recruitment and Attraction Steering Group, we are investing in a broad programme of work to recruit more, and

more diverse, magistrates across England and Wales. We have also reviewed our planned future recruitment to make sure this is in line with the demands on the magistracy, particularly in managing our recovery in response to the pandemic.

Recommendations for the appointment of magistrates are made to the Lord Chief Justice by independent advisory committees. The North and West Yorkshire Recruitment Advisory Committee, which includes the Wakefield constituency, has received 78 applications to date in 2020.

■ **Magistrates: Retirement**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[128860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect on the (a) age and (b) ethnic diversity of the magistracy of raising the compulsory age of retirement for magistrates.

Alex Chalk:

The Impact Assessment and Equality Statement, published as part of our Judicial Mandatory Retirement Age consultation, outlined our assessment of the potential effects of our proposals to raise the mandatory retirement age for judicial office holders, including magistrates. Our analysis suggests that raising the mandatory retirement age could help to retain valuable judicial resource and expertise but that there could be a small impact on the diversity growth of the magistracy. We anticipate that any adverse impact will be offset by our ongoing work to recruit more diverse magistrates.

■ **National Probation Service for England and Wales: Buildings**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation's 2019/2020 Annual Report: inspections of probation services, published in December 2020, how much his Department plans to spend on maintenance of (a) National Probation Service buildings and (b) Approved Premises in 2021-22.

Lucy Frazer:

We have a programme of investment to improve our probation estate. Following the Spending Review announcement on 25 November work to finalise budgets for next financial year is ongoing.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation's 2019/2020 Annual Report: inspections of probation services, published in December 2020, how much his Department (a) budgeted for and (b) has spent on maintenance of (i) National Probation Service buildings and (ii) Approved Premises in financial year 2020-21 to date.

Lucy Frazer:

This financial year (2020/21) we are forecasting to spend in excess of £63m on the Probation Estate which will allow us to progress critical maintenance works relating to fire safety and security; and progress vital repair works including lifts, showers and also redecoration. We have secured an additional £10m this financial year to invest in Approved Premises. This investment, alongside our probation reform programme will lead to an improved standard of accommodation for Probation staff and users.

The available information is as follows:

PROBATION OFFICES AND APPROVED PREMISES			
	Budget 2020/21	Spend to date	Forecast 2020/21
Maintenance projects (CDEL)	£17.4m	£1.7m	£15.0m
Maintenance projects (RDEL)	£5.0m	£3.9m	£7.6m
Facilities management (Fixed and variable works) (RDEL)	£33.4m	£29.0m	£40.9m

Notes: Spend to date is 1 April 2020 to 30 November 2020. The information has been extracted from financial systems and reflects services which have been invoiced and paid to 30 November.

■ Offenders: Females

Ms Lyn Brown:
[\[128652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on the implementation of the Female Offender Strategy of the analysis of imprisonment rates for women in 2019 by police service area, published by the Prison Reform Trust on 10 December 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

The number of adult women in custody has fallen by 23% in the last ten years (June 2010 to June 2020). However, with the introduction of an additional 20,000 police officers, we expect to see an increase in the prison population, including for women.

As set out in our Female Offender Strategy (2018), we know that many women can be better supported in the community on robust and effective community sentences, and we are working to divert women away from custody, where appropriate.

We announced in May 2020 that our first residential women's centre will be located in Wales. This will provide accommodation for vulnerable women with complex needs who would otherwise be sentenced to custody, enabling them to stay closer to home and maintain important family ties. The RWC will provide interventions that directly

tackle the issues which often underlie offending, such as substance misuse or poor mental health.

The Government's White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing* (September 2020) sets out our further plans for more effective community sentencing that responds to the underlying drivers of offending. We will support offenders to change their lifestyles for good and protect the public by better identifying individual needs, providing treatment options where appropriate, and utilising technology to drive compliance. Underpinning these measures, will be our ongoing probation reform, to deliver effective, tailored and responsive supervision of offenders in the community.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[128917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prison staff and (b) prisoners who have contracted covid-19 during the outbreak have since been identified as having long covid.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[128918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether (a) prison staff and (b) prisoners who have contracted covid-19 during the outbreak are receiving follow-up healthcare checks to monitor for and respond to the symptoms of long covid.

Lucy Frazer:

Ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of staff and prisoners in England and Wales remains a top priority and a wide number of steps have been taken together with public health experts to protect everyone in prison during the current pandemic.

HMPPS do not hold information on the number of staff or prisoners identified as having 'long covid'. Prisoners remain NHS patients and are able to access equitable healthcare to the general population, including in the treatment of COVID-19 symptoms. HMPPS do not have access to individual medical records which remain medically in confidence.

Staff are also NHS patients and access healthcare services in the same way as the general population, including for the treatment of COVID-19 symptoms. HMPPS do not have access to staff medical records which remain medically in confidence. However, public sector prison staff who have experienced any form of sickness absence can be referred to HMPPS' Occupational Health provider for assessment and to access additional support. This may include recommendations for workplace adjustments and a phased return to work programme to support the employee in their safe return to work and following their return.

■ Prisons: Disclosure of Information

Gordon Henderson: [\[128936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2020 to Question 106980 on Prisons: Disclosure of Information, what response his Department

has received from HMPPS trade unions to the drafts of the updated policy and supporting guidance documents.

Gordon Henderson:

[\[128937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 October 2020 to Question 106980 on Prisons: Disclosure of Information, whether the drafts of the updated policy and supporting guidance documents include provisions for prison staff to have access to a single whistleblowing telephone hotline through which to raise health and safety concerns.

Gordon Henderson:

[\[128938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 14 October 2020 to Question 99603 on Prisons: Disclosure of Information, when he expects to launch the new whistleblowing policy; and whether he plans to include in that policy provisions for prison staff to have access to a single whistleblowing telephone hotline through which to raise health and safety concerns.

Lucy Frazer:

Consultation has taken place with the following trade unions: Prison Officers' Association, Prison Governors' Association, PCS, Prospect, GMB, FDA, Napo and Unison and the response was largely positive with trade unions supportive of the new policy and supporting guidance documents.

The new Raising a Concern policy and supporting guidance documents include provision for staff in prisons to access the Integrity Hotline which allows staff to raise any concerns they may have about the workplace or their own wellbeing. HMPPS has effective and reliable systems for reporting and recording adverse security, and health and safety incidents. This allows staff to voice any concerns, and for health and safety teams to monitor and act where necessary.

Trade union consultation has now been completed and the new policy is now going through the separate Ministry of Justice and HM Prison & Probation Service policy governance processes. Once these processes are complete the policy will be published, which is expected to be in January 2021.

■ Probation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation's 2019/2020 Annual Report: inspections of probation services, published in December 2020, what plans he has to increase the proportion of facilities management jobs that are completed within the 10-day target.

Lucy Frazer:

We have a programme of investment to improve our probation estate. We have secured an additional £10m this financial year to invest in Approved Premises. This investment alongside our probation reform programme will lead to an improved standard of accommodation for Probation staff.

As part of our facilities management service delivery we prioritise statutory and planned preventative maintenance which is necessary for health and safety and fire safety to ensure that our workplaces remain safe for our staff and building users. We continue to work with our facilities management providers to improve the proportion of routine and less urgent facilities management jobs within the 10-day target.

■ Probation: Vacancies

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation's 2019/2020 Annual Report: inspections of probation services, published in December 2020, what plans he has to reduce probation officer vacancy rates in (a) London, (b) the South East and (c) the East of England.

Lucy Frazer:

The National Probation Service (NPS) is committed to increasing recruitment to fill Probation Officer vacancies, particularly in areas with significant local employment market challenges.

We have committed to recruiting 1,000 trainee Probation Officers in 2020/21 and we are developing a three-year strategy to address recruitment issues and improve retention in probation.

There has already been an increase of 5.7% in Probation Officer numbers between September 2019 and September 2020, and we expect this to increase further as we continue to significantly uplift recruitment.

We are focussing on regions with high operational vacancies to target local recruitment advertising, raise the profile of the important work probation officers carry out, and enhance our wellbeing offer to staff.

We recognise that pay and reward is also key as part of the overall package for staff and attracting prospective staff. The 2020/21 Pay Award proposal for the NPS will improve entry level pay for staff in all Pay Bands across the NPS, making the service more competitive with other workforces. The NPS is also working collaboratively with Trade Unions to continue pay modernisation over the coming years to ensure that our pay structure is coherent, sustainable and rewarding of our staff.

■ Remand in Custody

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what is the (a) longest, (b) median, and c) seventy-fifth percentile length of time spent in custody on remand for (i) adult females, (ii) adult males, (iii) young people in custody on 4 November 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

Centrally held court data does not include the amount of time spent remanded in custody, and therefore obtaining this information would result in a disproportionate cost to the department.

Prison receptions data has enabled an approximation of the data that has been requested. The attached tables provide information on the longest, median and seventy-fifth percentile length of time that adult women, adult men and young people spent remanded in custody up to the point that they were sentenced (Table 1); and also time spent remanded in custody pre-trial up to the point that they were admitted to prison between conviction and sentencing (for those who spent time on pre-trial remand) (Table 2). This data includes the first two quarterly periods for 2020 (January to June) – which tallies with the latest available published prison receptions data.

Attachments:

1. Table 1 [20201216 - Copy of PQ 128641_final.xlsx]

■ **Sentencing**

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[129134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he is taking steps taking to include Desecration of War Memorials Bill provisions in the Sentencing Green Paper.

Chris Philp:

Any vandalism or attack on property should be met with the full force of the law. Attacking any memorial is an insult, and this is particularly true of a war memorial commemorating those who have given their lives fighting for our freedom.

The Government has stated in the Sentencing White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, that it is currently reviewing the law in this area to ensure that where memorials are damaged or desecrated, the courts are able to sentence appropriately at every level for this particular type of offending.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Appeals**

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[129130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many parents have taken local education authorities (LEAs) to appeal at a tribunal against an Education, Care and Health Plan decision in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire in each of the last five years; and what proportion of those appeals were determined in favour of the (a) parents and (b) LEA.

Chris Philp:

The number of appeals brought against EHCP decisions (including the refusal to assess a child or young person; the refusal to issue an EHCP after an assessment; and the content of the EHCP) in the LEAs of (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire; and the proportion of those appeals determined in favour of the (a) parents and (b) LEA is shown in the table below. For context, the number of appeals withdrawn or conceded before, and those still awaiting, hearing is also included.

LOCAL AUTHORITY/YEAR	APPEALS RECEIVED ON GROUNDS OF REFUSAL TO ASSESS, ISSUE AN EHCP AND THE CONTENT OF THE PLAN	FOUND IN FAVOUR ¹ IN OF THE PARENTS OR YOUNG PERSON AT HEARING				WITHDRAWN	LEA CONCEDED PRIOR TO THE HEARING	AWAITING HEARING
Stoke on Trent								
2015-16	7	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2	3			0
2016-17	15	4 (56%)	3 (43%)	4	4			0
2017-18	14	4 (100%)	0	7	3			0
2018-19	20	6 (100%)	0	2	12			0
2019-20	26	8 (100%)	0	1	11			6
Staffordshire								
2015-16	76	12 (100%)	0	30	34			0
2016-17	106	28 (74%)	10 (26%)	26	42			0
2017-18	97	35 (67%)	16 (33%)	20	26			0
2018-19	81	35 (83%)	7 (17%)	15	23			1
2019-20	111	58 (95%)	3 (5%)	16	14			20

¹ Appeals found in favour of the parent or young person are those in which the appellant was successful in all or part of the appeal. The data are extracted from GAPS2- the Tribunal's case management system. The years referred to above are school years from 1 September to 31 August the following year.

TRANSPORT■ **Airports: Coronavirus****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[129127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to introduce rapid covid-19 testing at all UK airports.

Robert Courts:

As of 15 December, international arrivals to England can opt in to Test to Release for International Travel, allowing them to shorten self-isolation by up to 5 days after receiving a negative test result.

Any decisions on whether and how we can further ease border requirements, including whether rapid Covid-19 testing could be introduced at UK airports, will be made on the basis of clinical and scientific evidence.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus****Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[130115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is planning to take to support the aerospace sector under his Department's Aviation Recovery Plan.

Robert Courts:

The Covid pandemic, and the need for the Government to respond to it, have clearly impacted the aviation and aerospace sectors.

The Government has therefore announced through the Global Travel Taskforce, a number of measures to assist the sector to restart over the winter period. This includes the 'Test To Release for international travel' (TTR) scheme, which was launched on 15 December and will boost consumer confidence in air travel.

Following the successful implementation of these measures, the government will then put forward its strategic framework for the medium and long term recovery of the aviation sector.

Angela Crawley:[\[130140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which commercial aviation routes are being prioritised as part of the Government's plans to support the restart of the aviation sector in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19 and is committed to tackling this virus while enabling a sustainable and responsible return to travel.

Commercial air transport routes are a matter for airlines, and therefore decisions on how soon to operate a route after a period of inactivity is a matter for those airlines.

Since 10 July under the Travel Corridor policy, passengers arriving from a number of countries and territories are no longer required to self-isolate on arrival unless they

have visited or transited through a non-exempt country or territory. Ministerial decisions on Travel Corridors are informed by risk assessments provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, working closely with Public Health England, using a methodology endorsed by the 4 Chief Medical Officers of the UK.

As a further measure in support of international travel, the Test to Release scheme was launched on 15 December. This provides passengers arriving in England with the option to shorten the self-isolation period by up to half following a negative COVID-19 test.

Paul Girvan:

[130191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what engagement his Department of Transport has had with the aerospace industry to identify measures that could (a) safely open up aviation and (b) increase consumer confidence in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Robert Courts:

The Government is working closely with the UK's aerospace and aviation industries, including at sector level through the Aerospace Growth Partnership.

In addition, the Global Travel Taskforce has undertaken extensive engagement with the transport industry, including aviation and aerospace, and are putting in place a range of measures to support a safe and sustainable return to air travel and encourage consumer confidence.

On 15 December we introduced the 'Test to Release for International Travel' scheme in England, allowing arrivals from countries not on the travel corridors list to pay for a privately provided Covid-19 test and reduce their period of self-isolation if the test is negative.

Paul Girvan:

[130193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which commercial aviation routes are being prioritised as part of the Government's plans to support the restart of the aviation sector in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19 and is committed to tackling this virus while enabling a sustainable and responsible return to travel.

Commercial air transport routes are a matter for airlines, and therefore decisions on how soon to operate a route after a period of inactivity is a matter for those airlines.

Since 10 July under the Travel Corridor policy, passengers arriving from a number of countries and territories are no longer required to self-isolate on arrival unless they have visited or transited through a non-exempt country or territory. Ministerial decisions on Travel Corridors are informed by risk assessments provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, working closely with Public Health England, using a methodology endorsed by the 4 Chief Medical Officers of the UK.

As a further measure in support of international travel, the Test to Release scheme was launched on 15 December. This provides passengers arriving in England with the option to shorten the self-isolation period by up to half following a negative COVID-19 test.

Paul Girvan:

[\[130194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is planning to take to support the aerospace sector under his Department's Aviation Recovery Plan.

Robert Courts:

The Covid pandemic, and the need for the Government to respond to it, have clearly impacted the aviation and aerospace sectors.

The Government has therefore announced through the Global Travel Taskforce, a number of measures to assist the sector to restart over the winter period. This includes the 'Test To Release for international travel' (TTR) scheme, which was launched on 15 December and will boost consumer confidence in air travel.

Following the successful implementation of these measures, the government will then put forward its strategic framework for the medium and long term recovery of the aviation sector.

■ **Aviation: Environment Protection**

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[130116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government will take to ensure a green aviation recovery.

Robert Courts:

We are considering the future of the sector in terms of sustainability. The aviation sector must be a green one that creates high quality, skilled jobs.

The Jet Zero Council has now set out ambitions on sustainable aviation fuel, zero-emission aviation and aerospace technologies.

Following the successful implementation of our aviation restart measures, the government will then put forward its strategic framework for the medium and long term recovery of the aviation sector, and set out a pathway for recovery to sustainable growth.

We will be consulting on our position on aviation and climate change in the new year.

■ **Bus Services: Finance**

Andrew Percy:

[\[129169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Government's financial support package for coach businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has announced a range of measures available to support UK businesses, including coach operators. These include the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and I am pleased to note that there has been a high uptake of this scheme across the coach sector.

We continue to work closely with representatives from the coach sector to understand the ongoing risks and issues the sector faces and how these can be addressed.

■ Global Travel Taskforce**Dan Carden:**[\[129096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what timescales the Government has for implementing the recommendations of the Global Travel Taskforce.

Robert Courts:

The recommendations contained in the Global Travel Taskforce (GTT) report cover three broad principles: first, setting out clear public health measures; second, seeking to increase demand safely; and third, looking to the UK to drive a co-ordinated response with global partners.

The Test to Release (TTR) scheme, one of the key recommendations in the GTT, went live on 15 December. This provides passengers arriving in England with the option to shorten the self-isolation by up to half following a negative COVID-19 test.

The launch of TTR is just the first step – the remaining 13 recommendations also represent key deliverables that will play an important role in supporting industry to get back on a trajectory towards strong economic growth, and are being worked on at pace.

Angela Crawley:[\[130138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timescales are for implementing the recommendations of the Global Travel Taskforce, published on 24 November 2020.

Angela Crawley:[\[130139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Global Travel Taskforce next plans to convene to discuss the outstanding recommendations from its report, published on 24 November 2020.

Robert Courts:

From its inception the Global Travel Taskforce was a time-limited body, and it has now concluded its work.

However, the Government is working closely and at pace with industry and our international partners to implement the taskforce recommendations and ensure a safe and sustainable return to international travel as quickly as possible.

The taskforce recommendations addressed three priorities: implementing effective public health measures; encouraging safe growth in demand; and driving a co-ordinated response with global partners.

As a first step, on 15 December the Government introduced the 'Test to Release for International Travel' scheme in England, allowing arrivals to pay for a privately provided Covid-19 test and reduce their required period of self-isolation if the test is negative.

Paul Girvan:

[\[130192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Global Travel Taskforce is next scheduled to convene to discuss the outstanding recommendations from that Taskforce's report of 24 November 2020.

Robert Courts:

The Global Travel Taskforce has concluded its work. However, the Government is working closely and at pace with industry and our international partners to implement the taskforce recommendations and ensure a safe and sustainable return to international travel as quickly as possible.

The taskforce recommendations addressed three priorities: implementing effective public health measures; encouraging safe growth in demand; and driving a co-ordinated response with global partners.

As a first step, on 15 December the Government introduced the 'Test to Release for International Travel' scheme in England, allowing arrivals to pay for a privately provided Covid-19 test and reduce their required period of self-isolation if the test is negative.

■ Nitrogen Oxides: East Sussex

Caroline Ansell:

[\[130163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Channel Nitrogen Oxide Emissions Control Order Area on particulate matter emissions in (a) the Channel, (b) East Sussex and (c) Eastbourne; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The English Channel and North Sea will become a Nitrogen Oxide Emissions Control Area from 1 Jan 2021, applying the highest level of internationally agreed NOx controls for ships built after that date in the region – termed IMO Tier III.

The Department undertook extensive modelling of the likely impacts on UK air quality in support of the designation of the area in 2016, and the impact of the measure will be kept under review through the UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory.

While specific reductions for regions have not been analysed, on a per-ship basis the new standards will represent an 80% reduction in NOx emissions from existing Tier I vessels, with significant reductions in secondary particulate matter formation expected.

■ Pedestrians: Wakefield**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[129156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of journeys undertaken by foot in Wakefield constituency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the 9th May the Government announced a £2bn package of funding for cycling and walking. This included a £225 million Active Travel Fund from which West Yorkshire Combined Authority has been allocated around £12,500,000 this financial year. The Department has also funded the development of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which includes plans for a Core Walking Zone in Wakefield city centre.

Decisions on the allocation of the rest of the £2 billion will be made during the life of this Parliament. Much of this funding will be provided to local authorities to deliver local cycling and walking plans.

■ Ports: Renewable Energy**Bob Blackman:**[\[128658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has held with representatives of UK ports about upgrading their green infrastructure.

Robert Courts:

The Department has regular meetings with ports and their trade representatives on a range of issues including green infrastructure at ports. Most recently, I met with board members of the UK Major Ports Group on the 19th of November. The discussion included decarbonisation and green infrastructure.

UK ports and the UK domestic maritime sector that rely on our ports, are covered by the Net Zero 2050 target and our national carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act.

■ Shipping**Joy Morrissey:**[\[129116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) the UK has access to sufficient shipping capacity and (b) capacity is not being withheld to manipulate shipping costs.

Robert Courts:

Shipping is a global commercial market, and shipping lines will adjust their operations and pricing to take account of demand and market fluctuations. Shipping lines are currently facing a period of exceptional demand versus capacity that is causing price rises on an international level, and causing operational challenges worldwide.

This includes operations into and out of the UK and Europe. Whilst this remains predominantly a commercial issue for the market to resolve, Government is liaising

closely with shipping lines and ports to encourage mitigations and management of operations to minimise the impacts on the UK wherever possible.

■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Bob Blackman:

[\[128657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has held with representatives of the maritime industry about that industry's role in contributing towards the UK's Net Zero targets.

Robert Courts:

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.

We continue to work with the maritime industry as part of the Clean Maritime Council to implement the Clean Maritime Plan, which outlines the UK's pathway to zero carbon emissions in domestic maritime. The Council recently discussed the Prime Minister's announcement of a £20m Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition to develop clean maritime technology.

Further plans on the decarbonisation of the maritime sector will be included in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, to be published in the spring next year.

TREASURY

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[129955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Government fiscal support for (a) job retention and (b) self-employed people during the covid-19 pandemic in the UK and internationally.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) continues to be one of the most generous schemes in the world.

Given the schemes' economic and fiscal significance, HM Treasury and HMRC are undertaking evaluations of the CJRS and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). The CJRS Evaluation Plan, which was published on GOV.UK on 17 December 2020, sets out the evaluation approach.

■ Financial Services: Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130067\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Royal Society's report entitled, Digital Technology and the Planet, published on 3 December 2020, what plans

he has to ask the Financial Conduct Authority to develop guidance on the energy proportionality of digital technologies.

John Glen:

In October 2019, the FCA published a Statement on Climate Change. This set out the FCA's key interests and intended outcomes:

- I. Enhancing environmental disclosures.
- II. Improving the regulatory framework – including by encouraging innovation.
- III. Protecting consumers – including by combatting greenwashing.

The FCA is an operationally independent, non-governmental body, given statutory powers by the Financial Services and Markets Act (2000) as amended by the Financial Services Act (2012). Developing new guidance is the responsibility of the FCA, and therefore this matter is one for the FCA to consider.

■ **Google: Taxation**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130075\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Google's reported treatment of Digital Services Tax as a regulatory cost in an email to customers of that company.

Jesse Norman:

The DST is a tax on businesses that generate revenue from the provision of social media services, search engines and online marketplaces.

The Government cannot comment on how individual businesses have responded to that tax.

■ **Housing: Insulation**

Kim Johnson:

[\[129148\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of suspending the time limit for the repayment of the stamp duty surcharge on second properties where the property sale has been delayed due to (a) cladding and (b) EWS1 issues.

Jesse Norman:

Homeowners who pay the higher rate of Stamp Duty Land Tax on purchases of additional property can receive a refund of the higher rate if they sell their old main residence within three years of the purchase. For most people, three years is enough time to sell a property.

However, the Government recognises that there will sometimes be exceptional circumstances not in the control of the buyer or seller which mean that a previous main residence cannot be sold within three years. If someone purchased a new main residence on or after 1 January 2017, they may be eligible to apply for a refund if they were prevented from selling their previous main residence before the expiry of the

three-year time limit owing to exceptional circumstances beyond their control. The previous main residence must be sold before HMRC will consider whether the circumstances are exceptional.

■ Low Incomes: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[129142\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support people on low incomes in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to supporting all groups in society, including the most vulnerable, with the challenges caused by COVID-19. In order to support those on low incomes in particular, the Government has announced a package of temporary welfare measures, which include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and the Working Tax Credit basic element, an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of market rents and a relaxation of the UC minimum income floor for all self-employed claimants.

In addition to the above measures, workers on low incomes who cannot work from home and who are asked to self-isolate may be eligible for a one-off payment of £500 under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. The Government has also announced a £170m COVID Winter Grant Scheme to support the most vulnerable over winter that will be run by councils in England, with at least 80% of the funding earmarked to provide support with food and bills.

The Government has also provided unprecedented support for businesses and individuals in order to protect jobs and incomes across the UK through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). As at 31 October 2020, there were 7,000 employments furloughed in the unitary authority of Stoke-on-Trent (take-up rate of 6%) and 27,200 employments furloughed in Staffordshire County (take-up rate of 7%).

HM Treasury modelling published in July showed that Government support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as of May 2020 had supported the poorest working households the most (as a proportion of income).

■ Minimum Wage: Non-payment

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130039\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses have been investigated by HMRC for potential infractions of the National Minimum Wage, in each of the last 10 years.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130040\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses have been taken to court by HMRC for potential infractions of the National Minimum Wage, in each of the last 10 years.

Bridget Phillipson:**[130041]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses have fined following court proceedings brought by HMRC in relation to non-payment of the national minimum wage in each of the last ten years; and what the sum total was of those fines in each of the last ten years.

Jesse Norman:

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

A majority of NMW cases are subject to civil (non-criminal) sanctions, which include penalties of up to 200% of the arrears, and public naming and, for the worst offences, criminal prosecution. Prosecution does not guarantee payment of arrears to workers, can be lengthy, is expensive for the taxpayer, and is generally reserved for the most serious cases that form part of a pattern of wider criminality. Cases are referred to the Crown Prosecution Service who decide whether or not to prosecute.

HMRC have a strong enforcement record on NMW and since 2010-11 have completed nearly 25,000 NMW investigations, identifying over £100 million in national minimum wage arrears for over 950,000 workers and levying more than £59 million in penalties.

The table below provides figures for businesses that HMRC have investigated, prosecuted and the amount of fine imposed following a prosecution, totalling £27,423 for breaches of National Minimum Wage legislation since 2010.

YEAR	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES INVESTIGATED	NUMBER OF PROSECUTIONS	FINES FOR PROSECUTED EMPLOYERS
2010 - 2011	2901	1	£3,696
2011 - 2012	2534	0	£0
2012 – 2013	1696	1	£1,000
2013 – 2014	1455	0	£0
2014 – 2015	2204	0	£0
2015 – 2016	2667	0	£0
2016 – 2017	2674	4	£19,500
2017 – 2018	2402	1	£2,977
2018 – 2019	3018	0	£0
2019 - 2020	3376	1	£250

■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

Stephen Farry:

[\[129163\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of how much and what proportion of covid-related rates relief returned by UK supermarkets will be allocated to the Northern Ireland Executive.

Jesse Norman:

The UK Government has been clear throughout the pandemic that businesses should use support appropriately, and welcomes any decision to repay support where it is no longer needed. Any funds returned will support the continuing efforts to protect people's jobs and incomes.

The UK Government is working with the devolved administrations and will set out details for business on making repayments shortly.

■ Revenue and Customs

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130032\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list the directorates within HMRC.

Jesse Norman:

A copy of the HMRC Organisational Structure as at 30 November 2020 is provided in the attached PDF.

Attachments:

1. HMRC Directorates PDF [HMRC Directorates.pdf]

■ Revenue and Customs: Debt Collection

Navendu Mishra:

[\[130252\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many debt collection companies HMRC has employed since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC use eight different debt collection agencies and the debt can be spread across them at any one time. HMRC do not contract directly with these agencies, but instead have access to their services via the Debt Market Integrator. This organisation acts as a broker and routes the debts to the debt collection agencies that are members of the panel. This is the same way that other Government departments have access to debt collection agency services. The Debt Market Integrator itself is a joint venture between Cabinet Office and the private sector.

■ Revenue and Customs: Discrimination

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130038\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many complaints there have been of sexist behaviour in the workplace in HMRC in each of the last five years, by directorate.

Jesse Norman:

Since 2016 there have been 22 complaints of sexist behaviour as detailed below.

YEAR	FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECORDED UNDER SEX CATEGORY
2016	less than 5
2017	6
2018	6
2019	6
2020 (to date)	less than 5

On the request to break these figures down further by directorate, releasing this data would breach HMRC's statutory obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation, as it could lead to identification of the individuals concerned.

The figures provided are for formal complaints recorded under the 'sex' category, which includes sex discrimination and sexual harassment. It is possible that other complaints may have had an aspect of sexist behaviour, but if it was not the primary reason for the complaint it could have been recorded under a different category.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Internet****Bridget Phillipson:**[\[130042\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library copies of the data protection impact assessment on the webchat facilities available on HMRC's website.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not usually publish Data Protection Impact Assessments, as there is no legal requirement to do so.

■ **Revenue and Customs: Racial Discrimination****Bridget Phillipson:**[\[130037\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many complaints there have been of racist behaviour in the workplace in HMRC in each of the last five years, by directorate.

Jesse Norman:

Since 2016 there have been 38 complaints categorised under race, detailed below.

YEAR	FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECORDED UNDER RACE CATEGORY
2016	5
2017	6

YEAR	FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECORDED UNDER RACE CATEGORY
2018	6
2019	11
2020 (to date)	10

Release of these figures by directorate would breach HMRC's statutory obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation, as it could lead to identification of the individuals concerned.

The figures provided are for formal complaints recorded under the 'race' category. It is possible that other complaints may have included a racial element, but if that was not deemed the primary reason for the complaint it could have been recorded under a different category.

■ Revenue and Customs: Recruitment

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130036\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) staff, (b) director-level staff and (c) director-general-level staff have taken up a post in HMRC in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

The HMRC HR system does not identify the information requested by Director, or Director General grade, although HMRC can extract the information for all Senior Civil Service (SCS).

Over the last five years, 38,681 staff have taken up post, 156 of whom are members of the SCS.

ENTRANTS DATA	GRADES BELOW SCS	SCS GRADE	TOTAL
April 2015 - March 2016	8336	4	8340
April 2016 - March 2017	8720	26	8746
April 2017 - March 2018	4367	40	4407
April 2018 - March 2019	6023	32	6055
April 2019 - March 2020	5897	35	5932

ENTRANTS DATA	GRADES BELOW SCS	SCS GRADE	TOTAL
April 2020 - November 2020	5182	19	5201
Totals	38525	156	38681

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Bridget Phillipson:

[130033]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library the (a) total headcount and (b) full-time equivalent staffing of each directorate of HMRC.

Jesse Norman:

The table below details the headcount and full-time equivalent staffing in HMRC directorates on 30 November 2020:

HMRC STAFF IN POST PER DIRECTORATE AS AT 30 NOV 2020

Directorate	Headcount (a)	FTE (b)
Adjudicators Office	58	54.24
Benefits & Credits Delivery	4170	3499.67
Border Delivery Group	3	2.9
Borders & Trade	12	11.17
Borders Design to Delivery	248	243.65
Borders Strategies	44	43.72
Business Tax & Customs	4735	4312.07
Business, Assets & International Policy	467	437.61
CCG Central Services	851	833.28
CCG Transformation	37	35.86
CDIO - Core	2795	2677.99
CDIO - CSIR	235	222.59
CFO Corporate	88	84.17

HMRC STAFF IN POST PER DIRECTORATE AS AT 30 NOV 2020

Support

CFO Transformation Programmes	138	130.1
Change, Assurance and Investment	32	29.82
Commercial Directorate	137	130.41
Corporate Centre	40	39.48
Corporate Finance	1344	1132.11
Counter Avoidance Directorate	1512	1389.04
COVID-19	81	78.53
CS Director General	21	19.85
CS&TD Business Architecture	17	16.73
CSG Transformation	270	255.57
Cust Exp, Professionalism, EU Transition	279	265.61
Customer Insight & Design	475	444.9
Customs & Borders Directorate	597	562.78
Customs Transformation	295	286.23
Debt Management	4722	4218.44
Estates	606	578.91
EU Transition Unit	89	87.39
EXCOM	39	24.81
Finance Planning & Performance	304	285.11

HMRC STAFF IN POST PER DIRECTORATE AS AT 30 NOV 2020

Fraud Investigation Service	4991	4721.36
Government Banking Service	34	32.82
HMRC Change Portfolio	82	78.83
HMRC Communications	262	252.86
HMRC Strategies	69	67.39
HR	1606	1488.51
Indirect Tax Directorate	299	283.83
Individuals & Small Business Compliance	9056	8484.68
Individuals Policy	306	292.8
Internal Audit	68	65.02
Investment Planning Team	42	40.39
Knowledge, Analysis & Intelligence	547	524.44
Large Business Service	2328	2187.96
MTDB Transformation Programmes	227	222.31
Off Payroll Working Programme	52	49.9
Operational Excellence & Output Mgmt	1219	1094.5
PDC Customer Strategy & Tax Design	161	149.71
PT Operations	8551	7182.51

HMRC STAFF IN POST PER DIRECTORATE AS AT 30 NOV 2020

Risk & Intelligence	3063	2851.52
Solicitors Office	1381	1295.96
Surge & ODP	544	542.5
Tax Administration	340	320.36
Tax Strategy & Professionalism	82	80.39
Total Organisational Capabilities	13	12.3
Trader Support Service (TSS)	14	13.35
Wealthy & Mid-sized Business Compliance	4024	3695.94
Other *	8	
Grand Total	64110	58466.88

* There are eight people unassigned to a directorate as they are either non-Executive directors, or employees whose identity is withheld for security reasons.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[130045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what dates the HMRC Resources and Performance Committee has met since April 2020; and whether at those meetings the Committee (a) considered the adequacy of HMRC's level of staffing, (b) recommended an increase in staffing and (c) recommended a reduction in staffing.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC's Resources and Performance Committee met on the following dates:

- 20 April 2020
- 18 May 2020
- 15 June 2020
- 20 July 2020
- 17 August 2020
- 21 September 2020
- 19 October 2020
- 16 November 2020

The Resources and Performance Committee receives updates on HMRC's workforce position and considers resourcing on a monthly basis to help inform ExCom. The Committee did not recommend an increase or reduction in HMRC staffing.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130046\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what dates the HMRC Audit and Risk Committee has met since April 2020 24 July 2019; and whether at those meetings the Committee (a) considered the organisational risks of HMRC's level of staffing, (b) recommended an increase in staffing and (c) recommended a reduction in staffing.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC's Audit and Risk Committee provides assurance to the Board and the Principal Accounting Officer on the integrity of the financial statements and the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances across HMRC on governance, risk management and the control environment.

Since 1 April 2020, the Audit and Risk Committee has met on:

- 7 April 2020
- 21 May 2020
- 23 June 2020
- 23 July 2020
- 6 October 2020
- 3 November 2020
- 1 December 2020

The Committee routinely considers the Department's corporate level risks. The Committee did not recommend an increase or a reduction in staffing.

■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130043\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many calls to the telephone lines operated for taxation advice by HMRC were abandoned by the caller before reaching an advisor, in each quarter of the last five years.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130044\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of calls to the HMRC taxation advice line were terminated by the caller before reaching an adviser in each quarter of the last five years; and what the average wait in seconds was before the call was terminated in each quarter of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

It is not possible to provide comparable data for 2015-16 because HMRC changed their telecoms provider part way through the year. The data for the other years is below.

			130043	130044	
			Taxes Helplines (number of calls abandoned by customers)	Taxes Helplines (percentage of all calls made that were abandoned by customers)	Average wait time by customer before abandoning
2016-17	Q1	Jun-16	283,568	6.75%	425 sec
	Q2	Sep-16	138,762	4.10%	387 sec
	Q3	Dec-16	96,601	2.80%	381 sec
	Q4	Mar-17	166,170	3.68%	398 sec
2017-18	Q1	Jun-17	336,547	8.27%	337 sec
	Q2	Sep-17	338,128	9.30%	312 sec
	Q3	Dec-17	261,231	7.98%	317 sec
	Q4	Mar-18	355,659	8.08%	317 sec
2018-19	Q1	Jun-18	394,781	10.06%	380 sec
	Q2	Sep-18	296,443	8.58%	322 sec
	Q3	Dec-18	295,416	9.41%	329 sec
	Q4	Mar-19	386,537	9.39%	343 sec
2019-20	Q1	Jun-19	532,869	14.23%	768 sec
	Q2	Sep-19	342,882	10.06%	350 sec
	Q3	Dec-19	256,363	8.36%	312 sec
	Q4	Mar-20	450,578	11.61%	449 sec
2020-21	Q1	Jun-20	465,585	22.47%	764 sec
	Q2	Sep-20	398,630	15.58%	568 sec

HMRC publish their monthly and quarterly performance data:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports>
and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>.

■ Revenue and Customs: Termination of Employment

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130035\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) staff, (b) director-level staff and (c) director-general-level staff have left a post in HMRC in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

The HMRC HR system does not identify the information requested by Director, or Director General grade, although HMRC can extract the information for all Senior Civil Service (SCS).

Over the last five years, 27,175 staff have left HMRC, 181 of whom were members of the SCS.

LEAVERS DATA	GRADES BELOW SCS	SCS GRADES	TOTAL
April 2015 - March 2016	1418	2	1420
April 2016 - March 2017	2056	9	2065
April 2017 - March 2018	5982	27	6009
April 2018 - March 2019	7097	54	7151
April 2019 - March 2020	6511	45	6556
April 2020 - November 2020	3930	44	3974
Total	26,994	181	27,175

■ Revenue and Customs: Vacancies

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130034\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many days have (a) posts, (b) director-level posts and (c) director-general-level posts been vacant in HMRC in each month of each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested concerning the number of posts vacant in HMRC in each month of the last five years cannot be provided, as this data is not available.

■ Scotland Office: Public Expenditure

Mhairi Black:

[\[127587\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the planned budget is of the (a) Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, (b) Union Unit and (c) Union Taskforce for 2021-22.

Steve Barclay:

The planned budget of the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and Office of the Advocate General for 2021-22 is £11.43m.

There is no information available on any specific business unit as HM Treasury does not make decisions on individual business areas within Departments.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus

Stephen Farry:

[\[129164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Stamp Duty holiday, to (a) mitigate the effect of logistical delays occurring during property transactions as a result of covid-19 restrictions and (b) facilitate full outworking of sales that are underway that may otherwise not complete.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as fifty per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This momentum in the property market will also support the jobs of people whose employment relies on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

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

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment: Supported Housing

Cat Smith:

[\[130129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to enable service users of supported accommodation to access employment services.

Guy Opperman:

The department (DWP) provides a range of support to the different vulnerable groups who may live in supported accommodation.

For people at risk of homelessness, we help them to make Universal Credit claims, provide tailored support through Jobcentre Plus and priority access to the Work and Health Programme.

DWP has also put into place a range of measures to support disabled people and their employers, including specialised employment support programmes such as

Access to Work and Disability Confident. During the Covid-19 outbreak, we have made changes to ensure disabled people have still been able to access this specialist employment support.

■ Food Banks: Infant Foods

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[129971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that all parents have access to infant formula at food banks.

Will Quince:

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. Decisions about which donations to accept and make available to food bank users are therefore a matter for food bank providers.

Healthy Start vouchers support pregnant women or those with children under four who are on a low income with the cost of milk (including infant formula), fruit and vegetables helping to boost children's long-term health. The weekly value of these vouchers will increase from £3.10 to £4.25 from next April.

■ Homelessness

Mark Pritchard:

[\[128911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support homeless people who require a fixed address to access public services.

Will Quince:

If a Universal Credit claimant doesn't have a permanent address, there are a number of options available to them. They can use a 'care of' address, like the address of a family member or trusted friend. There is also the option of using a hostel address if the claimant is staying there, or in exceptional circumstances, the claimant can use their local jobcentre address.

There are varied and complex reasons behind a person's homelessness and that is why it is DWP's priority to ensure homeless people get the appropriate support they need to move into work so they can succeed and move on with their lives. This support includes help for people to make a Universal Credit claim and to access the Jobcentre Plus employment offer, with priority access to the Work and Health Programme. Jobcentres in England are required to offer a voluntary referral to claimants who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a local housing authority of the claimant's choice.

The Department is committed to tackling homelessness and is supporting the manifesto commitment to end the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has worked closely with local authorities and the sector to offer vulnerable people safe accommodation and support. The 'Protect Programme', provides targeted support to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our communities from

Covid-19, and builds on the success of the still ongoing 'Everyone In' campaign - by September it had supported over 29,000 vulnerable people; with over 10,000 in emergency accommodation and nearly 19,000 moved on into settled accommodation.

The Next Steps Accommodation Programme makes available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to prevent people from returning to the streets.

Alongside this funding, the Government is also making available the expertise from MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative and Homelessness Advice and Support Adviser Teams to help coproduce accommodation provision and related support services.

For the most up to date information relating to the Government's response to homelessness and rough sleeping please refer to the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/housing-local-and-community/homelessness-rough-sleeping>

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Sir Graham Brady:

[128623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance his Department has issued for businesses in the hospitality sector that wish to improve ventilation within their properties in order to expedite covid-safe reopening.

Sir Graham Brady:

[128625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department plans to update the guidance on ventilation for businesses in the hospitality sector in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

HSE recently updated web guidance on [Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) which is aimed at most businesses, including the hospitality sector.

The guidance provides businesses with simple ways to identify areas in a workplace that may be poorly ventilated and measures they can take to improve ventilation in those areas. It also addresses the issue of balancing good ventilation with thermal comfort (keeping a comfortable workplace temperature).

Sir Graham Brady:

[128627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's 27 November 2020 policy document Transmission Risk in the Hospitality Sector, what proportion of hospitality businesses have been determined to have poor ventilation.

Mims Davies:

Although the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has the national policy lead for occupational health and safety standards in the hospitality and catering industry, Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible for enforcing health and safety law at individual premises.

HSE is unable to provide data showing what proportion of hospitality businesses have been determined to have poor ventilation as this data is not collected from LAs.

■ **Jobcentres: Staffordshire**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[129143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made in hiring additional work coaches in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove.

Mims Davies:

DWP currently has 65 additional new Work Coaches to date for the Stoke-on-Trent area including Kidsgrove, with a further 15 to be deployed in early 2021.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: Ethnic Groups**

Cat Smith: [\[130130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2020 to Question 114936 on Kickstart Scheme: Ethnic Groups, what steps her department is taking to help ensure collection of data on the proportion of jobs created as part of the Kickstart scheme allocated to Black, Asian and minority ethnic young people; and what her timescale is for making information available on (a) ethnicity, (b) disability and (c) other disadvantaged groups amongst Kickstart participants.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions' Kickstart Scheme is providing job placements for 16-24 year olds at risk of long term unemployment. Young people will be directed to the scheme through a Job Centre by a Work Coach. This will ensure that those who need support the most are able to benefit, regardless of ethnicity, disability or any disadvantage.

Some personal information, including ethnicity of participants, is voluntarily provided when a young person applies for a placement. This means that any information might not be a fully accurate representation of demographics.

Our data gathering is still in its early stages but we have plans for a wider evaluation of Kickstart that will draw on available data and insights (such as case studies from young people, participant surveys and feedback from Work Coaches) where possible showing outcomes and effects for different groups, including by gender, ethnicity and those facing additional barriers to employment. We will feed this insight into the programme as we continue to roll it out. No information is currently available but we will consider how this might be published in due course.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Plastics**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[128734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce a date for banning the use of all single-use non-essential plastic items.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 December 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Rebecca Pow:

We have already introduced a restriction on the supply of plastic straws, drinks stirrers and cotton buds from October this year. In addition, we are scoping out additional items for which a ban would be a suitable and proportionate measure. The Environment Bill will also allow us to tackle problematic plastics through a variety of policy measures, including measures to impose charges on single-use plastic items; introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers; and make producers cover the costs of collecting and managing plastic packaging waste.

Generally, we prefer to help people and businesses make more sustainable choices, for example through better product labelling, rather than resorting to a charge or a ban. Plastic may be the best available material for some products and banning them may cause more harm than good. We expect the initiatives by industry, such as the UK Plastics Pact, combined with our reforms to work together to eliminate the most problematic plastics from use.

We will introduce a new world-leading tax on plastic packaging which will apply to businesses producing or importing plastic packaging which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content, subject to further consultation, from April 2022. Together with the Government's reform of the Packaging Producer Responsibility system, this will transform the economic incentives of producers by encouraging more use of recycled plastic and driving up recycling rates.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[91852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that civil registration of marriages can continue wherever possible during the covid-19 lockdown.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 12 November 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kevin Foster:

~~Current regulations provide for marriages and civil partnerships to take place in England only in exceptional circumstances i.e. where one of the parties is seriously ill and not expected to recover. It is for local authorities to ensure ceremonies can be safely delivered in line with Public Health and local authority guidance.~~

~~Marriages and civil partnerships can take place in Wales where appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken and safety measures are in place~~

National restrictions in England came to an end on 2 December. Marriages and civil partnerships are allowed under each of the current four tiers of local restrictions in England, and it is for local authorities to ensure ceremonies can be safely delivered in line with Public Health and local authority guidance

Marriages and Civil Partnerships can take place in Wales where appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken and safety measures are in place.