



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:16 P.M., 12 January 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Carbon Emissions

Martyn Day:

[\[133055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the net zero strategy will be published; and whether that strategy will include reductions in emissions necessary for meeting the UK's 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We will publish the Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26. We will build on my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan and the Energy White Paper, as well as upcoming plans in key sectors such as the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Heat and Buildings Strategy.

The UK's Nationally Determined Contribution is ambitious and demonstrates our continued leadership in tackling climate change. Our Net Zero Strategy will be a comprehensive plan for decarbonising sectors across the economy, both to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and meet our interim targets, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK.

We are building on the strong foundations we have established in decarbonising our economy; our ambitious manifesto commitments; and announcements from the Prime Minister and my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer of measures to cut emissions as we build back better in our economic recovery from COVID-19.

Richard Burgon:

[\[133069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the net zero strategy will be published; and whether that strategy will include plans on the emissions reductions required to meet the UK's 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution of reducing emissions by 68 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We will publish the Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26. We will build on my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan and the Energy White Paper, as well as upcoming plans in key sectors such as the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Heat and Buildings Strategy.

The UK's Nationally Determined Contribution is ambitious and demonstrates our continued leadership in tackling climate change. Our Net Zero Strategy will be a comprehensive plan for decarbonising sectors across the economy, both to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and meet our interim targets, making the most of new growth and employment opportunities across the UK.

We are building on the strong foundations we have established in decarbonising our economy; our ambitious manifesto commitments; and announcements from the

Prime Minister and my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer of measures to cut emissions as we build back better in our economic recovery from COVID-19.

Dan Carden:

[\[133138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the net zero strategy; and whether that strategy will include plans to meet the UK's 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution of reducing emissions by 68 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We will publish the Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26. We will build on my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan and the Energy White Paper, as well as upcoming plans in key sectors such as the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Heat and Buildings Strategy.

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We are building on the strong foundations we have established in decarbonising our economy; our ambitious manifesto commitments; and announcements from the Prime Minister and my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer of measures to cut emissions as we build back better in our economic recovery from COVID-19.

■ Electricity Generation

Graham Stringer:

[\[129983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's BEIS Electricity Generation Costs (2020) published on 24 August 2020, if he will publish the empirical, numerical evidence underlying its estimate of (a) stagnant capital and (b) operational cost for (i) Combined Cycle Gas Turbines and (ii) other conventional generation technologies in that report.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The evidence behind the (a) capital and (b) operational cost assumptions for (i) Combined Cycle Gas Turbines and (ii) other conventional generation technologies has been published in a report prepared by Leigh Fisher and Jacobs (2016) [1]. Minor updates to Combined Cycle Gas Turbine efficiency have been made since, as a result of a published benchmarking exercise by Wood (2018) [2], which affects operational costs.

[1] 'Leigh Fisher and Jacobs' (2016): Electricity Generation Cost Update'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-fisher-and-jacobs-2016-electricity-generation-cost-update>

[2] 'Call for CCUS Innovation: literature review, benchmarking report and calculator'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-for-ccus-innovation-literature-review-benchmarking-report-and-calculator>

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Sarah Olney:

[130179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to measure the effect of Green Homes Grant scheme funding on the energy performance certificate rating of each home that receives that funding.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Developed to help stimulate economic recovery and support and create tens of thousands of jobs; the scheme provides funding for homeowners to install energy efficiency and low carbon heat measures which give greatest thermal benefits and carbon reductions, but which consumers are typically less likely to install on their own.

In order to ensure installations will be of the highest quality, the scheme requires that all businesses and tradespeople that install measures must be TrustMark registered, as well as MCS certified for heat and PAS certified for energy efficiency. That means they will have been thoroughly vetted for technical competence, customer service and trading practices, and will be operating in accordance with the TrustMark customer charter, and MCS and PAS industry standards.

Catherine West:

[134030]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits aligning the deadlines for all Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme phases with the Voucher Scheme deadline of March 2022.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Local Authority Delivery and Vouchers schemes have been designed to work alongside each other whilst reflecting the differences in delivery methods. Both schemes' primary objective is to provide a short-term economic stimulus.

BEIS has allocated Local Authority Delivery funding to 55 projects totalling £74.3m of expenditure for delivery by March 2021, which can play an important role in sustaining and creating jobs in all regions of England.

BEIS anticipates funding in excess of £124m of LAD scheme projects imminently with a delivery date of September 2021, and a further £300m is allocated to the regional Local Energy Hubs for delivery by December 2021.

These staggered dates intend to balance the aim of the scheme to support economic recovery whilst being pragmatic over delivery timescales.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Coronavirus

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[133767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to ensure installers can undertake their commitments as part of the Green Homes Grant scheme during the covid-19 outbreak; and what penalties are in place to ensure installers undertake work they have committed to do.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Based on the latest advice from my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister, tradespeople may continue to work if they are unable to do so from home. Installers registering and participating in the Green Homes Grant Scheme must agree to the Installer Terms and Conditions. As stated in paragraph 13f under General Obligations :

'At all times when participating in the Scheme...the Installer must: comply, and ensure that its officers, employees, agents and subcontractors comply, with UK Government best practice "Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)" when working at or in any Customer's property'.

We understand that COVID-19 restrictions may affect the ability to install measures in households. We will not be imposing any penalties for installers who are unable to undertake work they have committed to as a result of the current restrictions but, as ever, vouchers will only become redeemable once scheduled works have been completed.

The extension to the scheme will allow more flexibility for when installations can take place, and we are working to ensure that voucher validity period reflects the coronavirus situation where necessary.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Greater London

Helen Hayes:

[\[130156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of recently imposed Tier 3 covid-19 restrictions in London on jobs in the (a) hospitality and (b) retail sectors in London; and what steps he is taking in support those (i) businesses and (ii) jobs.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government is fully committed to supporting retailers and the hospitality sector as the nation responds to the impacts of COVID-19.

We have entirely removed all eligible properties in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors from business rates, so that no pub, hotel, or high street shop will pay business rates for 12 months – worth over £10 billion. We have provided Local Authority grants of almost £11.7 billion paid to 999,735 SME's in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors. We have extended the moratorium on commercial landlords' right to forfeiture for the non-payment of rent to the end of March 2021.

We have also extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until the end of April 2021, extended the Future Fund to the end of January 2021, with an ability to top-up bounce back loans, and increased the support available to the self-employed through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grant Extension.

On 1 December, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs'.

On 5 January when the new National Lockdown began, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a one-off top up grant for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the spring. £4.6 billion in new lockdown grants has also been made available to support other impacted businesses.

■ Hydrogen: Environment Protection

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[133661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to stimulate private investment in green hydrogen production facilities; and what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on increasing demand for green hydrogen from the transport sector.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and subsequent Energy White Paper, 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.

We have also committed to consulting on a preferred hydrogen business model in 2021 and will bring forward further details this year on the revenue mechanism to bring through private sector investment via our new business models. Again, our business model work will focus on supporting both green and blue hydrogen.

I meet with my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport regularly to discuss all aspects of transport decarbonisation including the role for green hydrogen. A good example of cross departmental working is the recent announcement in the spending review of £3 million to support the development of the UK's first Hydrogen Transport Hub in Tees Valley.

■ Wind Power

Graham Stringer:

[\[129982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's BEIS Electricity Generation Costs (2020) published on 24 August 2020, if he will publish the empirical evidence, other than bid prices, underlying the

estimate of (a) falling capital and (b) operational costs in the wind sector, (i) offshore and (ii) onshore in that report.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The estimates of (a) falling capital and (b) operational costs for (i) onshore and (ii) offshore wind generation are informed by a variety of internal and external evidence sources. These include published estimates from Arup (2016) [1] and DNV GL (2019) [2] as well as internal estimates informed by stakeholders and external commentators, such as Bloomberg [3], Baringa [4], Aurora [5], and others. These assumptions have also undergone an independent peer-review by Professor Derek Bunn (2020) [6], and more detail on specific assumptions can be found in this publication.

[1] 'Arup (2016): Review of Renewable Electricity Generation Cost and Technical Assumptions' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arup-2016-review-of-renewable-electricity-generation-cost-and-technical-assumptions>

[2] 'Potential to improve load factor of offshore wind farms in the UK to 2035' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/potential-to-improve-load-factor-of-offshore-wind-farms-in-the-uk-to-2035>

[3] <https://about.bnef.com/new-energy-outlook/>

[4] "An analysis of the potential outcome of a further 'Pot 1' CfD auction in GB", https://www.baringa.com/getmedia/99d7aa0f-5333-47ef-b7a8-1ca3b3c10644/Baringa_Scottish-Renewables_UK-Pot-1-CfD-scenario_April-2017_Report_FINA/

[5] www.auroraer.com

[6] 'Peer review of 2019 electricity generation cost updates' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/peer-review-of-2019-electricity-generation-cost-updates>

■ **Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**

Graham Stringer:

[129981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's BEIS Electricity Generation Costs (2020) published on 24 August 2020, what estimated value for the annual decline in performance of offshore wind was used in that report.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: BEIS estimates a constant load factor and availability across the lifetime of an offshore wind farm, and therefore a constant performance. This is based on research performed by Arup (2016) [1] and independently peer-reviewed by Professor Derek Bunn (2020) [2].

BEIS also assume an improvement in load factors in future as turbines deployed in wind farms increase in size, and this relationship is discussed in detail in a published study performed by DNV GL (2019) ^[3] .

[1] 'Arup (2016): Review of Renewable Electricity Generation Cost and Technical Assumptions' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arup-2016-review-of-renewable-electricity-generation-cost-and-technical-assumptions>

[2] 'Peer review of 2019 electricity generation cost updates' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/peer-review-of-2019-electricity-generation-cost-updates>

[3] 'Potential to improve load factor of offshore wind farms in the UK to 2035' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/potential-to-improve-load-factor-of-offshore-wind-farms-in-the-uk-to-2035>

CABINET OFFICE

■ Port Infrastructure Fund

Stephen Morgan: [\[131438\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions his Department had with (a) Hutchinson Port Holdings, (b) the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell prior to the award of funding from the Port Infrastructure Fund on 15 December 2020.

Stephen Morgan: [\[131442\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he had with Hutchison Port Holdings prior to the award of funds to that company through the Port Infrastructure Fund on 15 December 2020.

Stephen Morgan: [\[131443\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he had with the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell prior to the award of funds through the Port Infrastructure Fund on 15 December 2020.

Stephen Morgan: [\[131444\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he had with The Bristol Port Company Limited prior to the award of funds through the Port Infrastructure Fund on 15 December 2020.

Stephen Morgan: [\[131448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to meet the funding shortfall faced by Portsmouth International Port following the Port Infrastructure Fund award on 16 December 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[131459\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment HMRC has made of the adequacy of the £200 million Ports Infrastructure Fund to ensure the effective running of customs operations at UK ports.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[131461\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he had with HMRC on the timing of announcements made from the Ports Infrastructure Fund.

Julia Lopez:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions within Government are not normally disclosed. Cabinet Office officials are in regular contact with ports across the UK as part of their regular engagement. This includes all ports which applied to the fund. This contact is ongoing. There were no discussions between Cabinet Office officials or ministers and the Rt Hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell regarding the Port Infrastructure Fund.

The Port Infrastructure Fund (PIF) team worked with an independent eligibility and assessment team, with specialist experience and technical expertise in rail, air and maritime port infrastructure design and build to assess the funding applications. The Fund Allocation Authority (FAA), which is made up of representatives from across the relevant government departments such as HMRC, Defra and Border Force, subsequently made decisions about allocations based on the recommendations of the PIF Team.

The Fund received 53 applications from a range of sea ports, rail facilities and airports. Of the 53 ports that applied to the fund, 41 were successful in their application and a total of £200M has been provisionally allocated. 12 ports were not considered eligible or were unsuccessful at assessment phase.

It is a commercial decision for ports as to whether to provide these facilities. In normal circumstances, ports would be expected to fund such facilities themselves. However - in recognition of the unique circumstances of EU Exit, and the tight timescales for putting infrastructure in place - Government has made £470m of funding available to support border readiness.

Ports will need to fund the remaining 34% themselves. As the maximum amount of funding available was £200 million, a 66% award was applied across all applications ensuring all successful bids received a fair and proportionate level of taxpayer funded support.

■ UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Equality

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[132976\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what equality impact assessment his Department has undertaken on the potential (a) legal and

(b) socioeconomic effects of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on different groups with protected characteristics.

Marion Fellows: [\[133023\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what equality impact assessments his Department has undertaken on the potential legal and socioeconomic effects of the UK leaving the EU on different groups with protected characteristics.

Marion Fellows: [\[133024\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on people with protected characteristics.

Marion Fellows: [\[133030\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on disabled people.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster made a statement under section 19(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1998 regarding the provisions of the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill. This Bill, now Act, implements the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Further to this, relevant requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation have been followed.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Trees

Luke Pollard: [\[134114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have (a) policies on (i) encouraging tree planting and (ii) managing trees on their land and (b) guidelines on authorisation for the removal of trees.

Jeremy Quin:

The policy for woodland management is held centrally within the Ministry of Defence (MOD). There is no separate Royal Navy, Army or Royal Air Force policy. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation is responsible for woodland management on the Defence Estate. The Department's objective is to establish new woodland and develop existing woodland in direct support of military training.

MOD Officials are working closely with colleagues at the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Forestry Commission (FC) to ensure MOD land is included within Government tree planting programmes.

All tree felling is assessed and authorised through the FC and MOD unless there is a specific military need or a significant health and safety requirement.

Members: Correspondence**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[133721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when will he respond to the correspondence sent by the Member for East Londonderry on 6th November 2020 on employment with defence contractors.

Jeremy Quin:

Unfortunately, the letter posted by the hon. Member has not yet been received by the Ministry of Defence. When alerted to the problem on 4 January the Ministry of Defence requested that the letter be sent by email. This was received the same day and a response has already been sent by email.

Attachments:

1. Ministerial Correspondence Letter [MC2021_00140 .pdf]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Culture: Greater London****Tulip Siddiq:** [\[131355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate he has made of the financial contribution of the arts and culture to London's wider economy; and what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on those sectors in London.

Caroline Dinéage:

The most recent data available from the DCMS Provisional Sector Economic Estimates relating to 2018 shows that the Cultural Sector in London contributed £23,111m GVA, of which the London Arts Sub-Sector contributed £4,525m

The Government's unprecedented £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund has now surpassed the £1 billion milestone. Over £500million in recovery grants have been made to over 3000 arts and heritage organisations in England helping to support 75,000 jobs with over £300m awarded to London through grants and repayable finance awards.

EDUCATION**Children: Day Care****Wera Hobhouse:** [\[131384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the finding of the survey by Pregnant Then Screwed that 46 per cent of mothers who had been made redundant or expected to be made redundant said that a lack of childcare provision played a role in their redundancy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of childcare places to support working parents.

Vicky Ford:

The government prioritised the opening of early years settings in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing, and to support working parents. In July 2020, when the Pregnant Then Screwed survey was in the field from the 16-18 of July, official data shows there were an estimated 43,000 settings open with 417,000 children attending. This data is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/2020-week-29>.

Since then, we have continued to see more early years settings open, and attendance has steadily increased over the course of the 2020 autumn term. As of 10 December 2020, official data, also available via the above link, shows an estimated 55,000 early year settings were open with 792,000 children in attendance. On a typical day in the autumn term, we expect attendance to be 929,000, due to different and part-time patterns of childcare during the week. We estimate that the 792,000 children attending early years settings was approximately 85% of the usual daily level.

On 21 December 2020, I wrote to Directors of Children's Services at local authorities, to remind them of the statutory responsibilities shared between local authorities and the Secretary of State for Education to ensure there is enough Early Years childcare for parents. We are not aware of any local authority reporting a current sufficiency issue. However, we anticipate that the role of local authorities in market stewardship through the next year may prove significant in ensuring that the market is able to continue providing free early education entitlements, and to meet the needs of parents.

We will continue to both monitor sufficiency of childcare places through our regular ongoing contact with early years departments in local authorities, and work in partnership with local authorities and the sector to support working parents.

■ Children: Social Services**Tulip Siddiq:****[131357]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Health and Social Care on incorporating children's social care services into Integrated Care Systems.

Vicky Ford:

As the 'NHS Integrating Care – The next steps to building strong and effective integrated care systems across England' guidance sets out, "as Integrated Care Systems are established and evolve, this will create opportunities to further strengthen partnership working between local government, the NHS, public health and social care".

The department is wholly supportive of closer partnership working that improves safeguarding and protection of children. We are clear in the arrangements set out in the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance that there is a shared

responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard, and promote, the welfare of all children in a local area. That is why we have placed an equal duty on health, police, and local authorities to ensure these agencies make arrangements to promote the welfare of children. We will continue to work closely with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care, and the wider safeguarding sector, on this vital agenda.

■ **Coronavirus: Students**

Hilary Benn:

[\[132771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the spread of covid-19 of students returning to their university residences after Christmas 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

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

On 7 January we published updated guidance on ‘Students returning to, and starting higher education, in Spring Term 2021’. This sets out that most students should not return to university and should study from their current residence, where possible, until at least mid-February. Only those students who are on courses which are most important to be delivered in-person, to support the pipeline of future key workers, should return to university as planned. Other students are being asked to stay where they are and access their learning online during the period of national restriction.

These students should be able to return, on a staggered basis, once national restrictions are lifted. Further information on this guidance is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950367/Students_returning_to_and_starting_higher_education_in_Spring_Term_2021.pdf.

All students should be offered testing on their return to university and we strongly encourage them to take this up. Any returning student who chooses not to be tested should self-isolate for 10 days.

■ **Educational Institutions: Coronavirus**

Wes Streeting:

[\[131338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to provide guidance to schools and colleges on how covid-19 testing will be conducted within their settings; and for what reason that guidance was not issued before the end of school term.

Wes Streeting:

[\[131340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his planned timescale is for the delivery covid-19 tests to schools for the mass testing of pupils at the start of the school term on 4 January 2021.

Wes Streeting:[\[131341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, further to his Written Ministerial Statement of 17 December 2020, when (a) schools, (b) colleges, (c) Directors of Public Health and (d) Directors of Children's Services will receive guidance on operational planning for the roll-out of covid-19 testing to schools and colleges from 4th January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has provided schools and colleges with access to guidance and support for setting up the mass testing of staff, students and pupils. They can access the published guidance through the shared digital platform and request further advice using the DfE helpline. More information on the helpline is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>.

■ **Further Education****Kate Osamor:**[\[133087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to publish the further education White Paper.

Gillian Keegan:

We hope to publish the White Paper in January. It will set out our ambitious reform programme which will ensure that further and technical education supports people to get the skills our economy needs throughout their lives, and wherever they live in the country.

■ **Higher Education: Fees and Charges****Paul Girvan:**[\[134530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to reduce the maximum fee for higher education tuition.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to a sustainable higher education funding model which supports high quality provision, meets the skills needs of the country, and maintains the world-class reputation of UK higher education. We also recognise that tuition fees must represent value for money for students and taxpayers.

The government has already announced that the maximum tuition fee cap will remain at £9,250 for the 2021/22 academic year in respect of standard full-time courses, meaning maximum fees have been frozen for 4 consecutive years. We continue to consider the recommendations in the Augar report, including those pertaining to higher education fees and funding, very carefully.

Universities and other higher education providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees under the maximum cap defined by government. In deciding to keep charging full fees, providers will want to ensure that they can continue to deliver courses which are fit for purpose and help students progress their qualifications. The Office for Students, as regulator for higher education providers in

England, has made it clear that providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and academic standards, which set out requirements to ensure that courses are high-quality, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes and that standards are protected, regardless of whether a provider is delivering its courses through face-to-face teaching, remote online learning, or a combination of both.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse: [\[131383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the financial costs of securing (a) PPE, (b) cleaning costs and (c) staff replacements for early years providers delivering early education during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Keeping children and staff safe is our utmost priority. The majority of early years staff in settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, and our early years guidance confirms what PPE should be used in the event a child becomes symptomatic while in a setting.

If an education or childcare setting cannot obtain the PPE they need they should approach their local authority.

Local authorities should support them to access PPE suppliers and available stock locally, including through coordinating the redistribution of available supplies between settings according to priority needs.

The department has undertaken surveys of providers about their finances throughout the pandemic. The latest report is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/945249/SCEYP_COVID-19_Wave2_Main_Report_171220.pdf. The next wave of the study is currently taking place and asks questions about the cost of PPE, cleaning and workforce. Findings from this wave of the study will be published in due course.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[133730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of closing early-years settings alongside the closure of primary and secondary schools during the covid-19 lockdown period that commenced on 5 January 2021, in (a) England and (b) Havering.

Ian Lavery: [\[133848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of the safety of nursery settings remaining open during the January 2021 national lockdown.

Peter Kyle: [\[133989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what was the scientific basis for directing early years settings to stay open during the new national restrictions.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[134067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister on keeping early years settings open under the new January 2021 national covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[134175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of closing (a) nurseries and (b) other early year providers for all except the children of key workers and vulnerable children during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Apsana Begum:[\[134225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to review the decision to keep early years settings open prior to the lockdown review planned for mid-February 2021.

Vicky Ford:

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 4 January 2021 that early years settings remain open for all children during the national lockdown. Details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>.

Schools have been restricted because additional measures are needed to contain the spread of the virus. The wider significant restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the spread of the virus in the community enable us to continue prioritising keeping nurseries and childminders open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.

Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. Current evidence suggests that pre-school children (0 to 5 years) are less susceptible to infection and are unlikely to be playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence the new strain of the virus causes more serious illness in either children or adults and there is no evidence that the new variant of coronavirus disproportionately affects young children.

PHE advice remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create inherently safer environments.

Early years settings have been open to all children since 1 June 2020 and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a rise in virus cases within the community. Early modelling evidence from SAGE showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate when modelled with both primary schools and secondary schools.

Early years childcare providers were one of the first sectors to have restrictions lifted last summer, in recognition of the key role they play in society. Childminders and nursery staff across the country have worked hard to keep settings open through the COVID-19 outbreak so that young children can be educated, and parents can work.

The earliest years are the most crucial point of child development and attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children's social and emotional development. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support working parents. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

These plans are being kept under review in the light of emerging scientific evidence. We are working with the scientific community to understand the properties and dynamics of the new variant VUI-202012/01 in relation to children and young people.

The department has been working closely with local authorities to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, setting up dedicated regional teams that are in frequent contact. Bringing together expertise from across the department, these teams monitor the challenges local authorities are facing. Our London regional team is in close contact with Havering and will be assessing the situation for early years settings in the authority.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[134017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that nursery and early years staff have access to (a) mass testing, (b) PPE and (c) covid-19 vaccines following the decision to keep early years settings open during the January 2021 national lockdown.

Vicky Ford:

During national lockdown restrictions, all early years providers remain open nationally to all children, providing vital early education and childcare. The wider restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the spread of the community enable us to continue to prioritise keeping early years providers open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.

The department is working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure rapid asymptomatic testing for all early years staff to support early years providers to remain fully open. In the meantime, as they are essential workers, early years staff have priority access to symptomatic tests via the online portal.

As outlined in our published guidance, additional use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for COVID-19-related purposes is only needed in a small number of cases, such as if a child becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms and a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained, or when undertaking aerosol generating procedures. Public Health England has advised that the current guidance on the system of controls, including the use of PPE and face coverings, should continue to be followed.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the government on which vaccine/s the UK should use and also provide advice on who should be offered them. JCVI advises that the first priorities for

the COVID-19 vaccination should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age. In the next phase of the vaccine rollout, JCVI have asked that DHSC consider occupational vaccination in collaboration with other government departments. The Department for Education will input into this cross-governmental exercise.

■ Remote Education

Helen Hayes:

[\[131345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is he taking to ensure that students who are unable to return to the classroom at the start of the Spring Term can access learning remotely.

Nick Gibb:

Given the critical importance of ensuring that all children and young people continue to learn during the national lockdown, the Department has updated the expectations for schools and colleges to clarify and strengthen what is expected during this period and drawing on our evolving understanding of best practice in remote education.

With most pupils now being taught remotely and schools having made huge progress in developing their remote education provision, it is right that we increase the expectations on what pupils receive. Schools should follow the remote education expectations set out in the actions for schools during the COVID-19 outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#res>. Pupils will be set between 3 and 5 hours per day of remote education depending on their age, with daily check-ins on their engagement, and involving the effective use of digital education platforms.

To help schools and further education (FE) colleges in meeting these expectations, the Government has invested in a remote education support package. Our Get Help with Remote Education page provides a one stop shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support package available: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>. This includes helping schools and FE colleges to access technology that supports remote education, as well as peer to peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively. It also includes practical tools, a good practice guide and school led webinars to support effective delivery of the curriculum, as well as information on issues such as safeguarding, statutory duties and expectations.

As part of over £300 million invested to support access to remote education and online social care, over one million laptops and tablets have been secured for disadvantaged children and young people. This figure includes 560,000 that were delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities in 2020. By the end of this week we expect to deliver three quarters of a million devices. The Department has also partnered with some of the UK's leading mobile network operators to provide free

data to disadvantaged families, which will support access to education resources, including Oak National Academy, and other websites. Schools, trusts and local authorities can access this support through the Get Help with Technology service.

The BBC has also adapted their education support for the spring term 2021 and will be making educational content available on the television. This will help to ensure all children and young people can access curriculum-based learning from home.

Where pupils continue to experience barriers to digital remote education, we expect schools to work to overcome these barriers. This could include supplementing digital provision with different forms of remote education such as printed resources or textbooks. This should be supplemented with other forms of communication to keep pupils and students on track or answer questions about work.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[133232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the new covid-19 variant VUI-202012/01, what plans his Department has for remote online learning for schools to protect staff and students from January 2021.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[133233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment the Government has made of the transmissibility of the VUI-202012/01 covid-19 variant by school-aged children; and what effect that assessment has on the return of schools in 2021.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[133235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the new strain of covid-19, what plans his Department has for remote online learning for schools to protect staff and students in England from January 2021.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[133236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the new strain of covid-19, whether his Department has made an assessment into the transmissibility of the virus on school-aged children; and what effect the new strain of the virus will have on the return of schools in 2021.

Nick Gibb:

From Wednesday 6 January, a new national lockdown came into effect and schools should already be following the new rules. Schools should only allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend face-to-face education. All other pupils are being taught remotely.

The Department knows that receiving face-to-face education is best for children's mental health and for their educational achievement, and we will keep the restrictions on schools under review. Limiting attendance at this time is about reducing the number of contacts that people have with other households given the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and the intense pressure on the NHS.

Our get help with remote education portal provides information, guidance, and support on educating pupils and students remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The portal can be accessed here: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk>.

Although the recently identified variant of COVID-19 appears to be more transmissible in general, there is currently no firm evidence that it disproportionately affects children and young people, nor is there evidence that the new strain causes more serious illness in either children or adults.

For those pupils and staff still attending school, the system of protective measures that we have asked schools to implement continues to mean that any risks are well managed and controlled.

■ Schools: Discipline

Richard Fuller: [\[132844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria was applied for the distribution of the funding of £10 million to improve school discipline announced on the 28 February 2020.

Nick Gibb:

On 28 February 2020, £10 million was announced to fund the behaviour hubs programme, which will begin this year and run for three years. The programme aims to improve pupil behaviour and behaviour practices in at least 500 schools by enabling schools and multi academy trusts with exemplary behaviour to work in close partnership with those that need and want to improve, alongside a central offer of support and a taskforce of behaviour advisers.

Schools receiving support must be Ofsted Requires Improvement, have adequate leadership, and be motivated to improve. Schools providing support must meet stringent eligibility criteria including being Ofsted Outstanding, have above average progress for Read, Writing and Maths for two of the past three years for all pupils or disadvantaged pupils, and have exemplary behaviour management practices and culture.

All schools in the country, including those in the programme, will have access to a free online repository of good practice resources curated and developed by the behaviour advisers. Resources may include good practice case studies and tools for schools to audit their own behaviour practice.

■ Sikhs: Curriculum

Hilary Benn: [\[132769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to issue new guidance on teaching (a) about Sikhism in secondary schools and (b) diversity and inclusion in KS2 and KS3.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education does not provide guidance to schools on teaching about any specific religion.

All state funded schools are required to teach religious education (RE) which must reflect that “the religious traditions in Great Britain are Christian, in the main, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain”. For most maintained schools, in each local authority area the key document in determining the teaching of RE is the statutory locally agreed syllabus, which sets out details of what must be taught. Alternatively, academies and most schools designated as having a religious character may develop and teach their own RE syllabuses.

Schools should publish online the content of their curriculum in each academic year for every subject, including religious education.

The Department provides non-statutory guidance to schools on how the Equality Act 2010 affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the Act, including inclusion and diversity in how the curriculum is delivered. The guidance can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools.

Diversity is also being considered by the Independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities established by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, to examine inequality in the UK. In their Call for Evidence, the Commission asked for evidence to describe how the school curriculum could be adapted in response to the ethnic diversity of the country. The Commission is due to report to my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, by the end of February 2021 and the Department will carefully consider the Commission’s report when published.

■ Teachers: Absenteeism and Sick Leave

Jamie Stone:

[134058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the data his Department holds on the rates of (a) sick leave and (b) absence of (i) primary and (ii) secondary school teachers from the workplace for the periods from (A) 1 September 2018 to 4 January 2019, (B) 1 September 2019 to 4 January 2020 and (C) 1 September 2020 to 4 January 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not available in the format requested.

For the 2018/19 academic year, the Department collects information on teacher sickness absence from all state funded schools via the School Workforce Census, held in November each year since 2010. Each census collects data for absence from the previous academic year. The latest data available cover the academic year September 2018 to August 2019.

Information on the number and rates of teacher sickness absence are published in the ‘School Workforce in England’ statistical publication at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The table below shows teacher sickness absence data during the 2018/19 academic year in state funded schools in England:

TEACHER SICKNESS ABSENCE DATA [1] [2]	2018/19
Average number of Days - all teachers	4.1
Average number of days taken	7.5
Percentage taking absence	54.0
Total Number of Days lost	2,133,253
Total teachers taking absence	284,146

For the 2019/20 academic year, to reduce burdens on schools during the COVID-19 outbreak, the return of absence data for the 2019/20 academic year was not required in the ongoing 2020 School Workforce Census. Schools will not be asked to submit 2020 census absence data retrospectively in future censuses.

For the 2020/21 academic year, the Department intends to publish detailed school workforce absence data from 19 January 2021. This data will be included as part of the publication 'Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID- 19) outbreak'. The data shall be drawn from the educational setting status form, which was set up to help the government monitor the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on schools, nurseries and colleges, focus support more effectively and keep children safe.

The Department plans to return to collecting information on teacher sickness absence in the 2020/21 academic year from all state funded schools via the School Workforce Census, held in November 2021. This data shall be released, as per the usual timings, in the summer of 2022.

[1] The total teachers taking sickness absence and total days taken are estimates based on the schools that were able to make a full absence return. They are only available for England as a whole and not by region, local authority or school. For further details please see the methodology document.

[2] Before using this data, please check the methodology section for important information such as definitions, limitations and caveats. This is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/891b274b-8080-433d-897f-5e39f2082379>.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus****David Mundell:**[\[133747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that developing countries have access to covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. The UK has committed up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. This makes the UK among the COVAX AMC's largest bilateral donors. Our commitment will support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, by contributing to the supply of 1 billion doses in 2021, and vaccinations for up to 500 million people.

Owen Thompson:[\[133980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that low-income countries have access to adequate supplies of the Oxford-AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. The UK has committed up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), an international initiative that will support global equitable access to vaccines, including the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine, in up to 92 low and middle-income countries. The AMC will supply 1 billion doses in 2021, vaccinating up to 500 million people.

COVAX has an advance purchase agreement with AstraZeneca for 170 million doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford candidate at non-profit pricing. This is in addition to an existing agreement with the Serum Institute of India (SII) for 200 million doses - with options for up to 900 million doses more - of either the AstraZeneca/Oxford or Novavax vaccines (the latter is yet to complete phase 3 trials). The agreement with SII will see any combination of these vaccines be available at a price no greater than US\$3 a dose.

■ India: Agriculture**Tommy Sheppard:**[\[133032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he had with his Indian counterpart on the treatment of Punjabi Farmers during his recent visit to India.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary discussed protests about agricultural reforms with his Indian counterpart during his visit to India in December, whilst making it clear that the handling of protests is an internal matter for the Indian authorities. The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is common to all democracies. Governments also have the power to enforce law and order if a protest crosses the line into illegality.

India: Religious Freedom**Carla Lockhart:**[\[133295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the introduction of the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance legislation in India on freedom of religious belief and religious conversion in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The British High Commission in New Delhi maintain a continuous assessment of the human rights situation in India, and are monitoring developments regarding new inter-faith marriage laws in some Indian states, including the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance legislation in Uttar Pradesh. India has a proud history of religious tolerance and we trust the Government of India to address the concerns of any people that may be affected by this legislation. Where we have concerns, we will continue to raise them directly with the Government of India.

Overseas Aid: Malaria**Dr James Davies:**[\[133963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to maintain the Government's £500m annual budget to tackle malaria internationally.

Wendy Morton:

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the government to take the difficult decision to temporarily reduce ODA to 0.5% of GNI. The Foreign Secretary has set out a strategic approach to ensure maximum impact for our aid spend. Global health remains a priority. It is one of seven challenges where the Foreign Secretary believes UK aid can make the most difference.

In light of this decision, we are currently planning spend for the next financial year, and will be able to provide more information in due course. We will seek to remain one of the most generous donors in the world on malaria. The UK's current pledge to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria is our largest to date and will help to distribute 92 million bednets.

■ Soft Power and External Affairs Department: Finance

Layla Moran: [\[134087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the budget was for the Soft Power and External Affairs office within his Department in each year since 2010.

Layla Moran: [\[134088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff were employed in the Soft Power and External Affairs office within his Department in each year since 2010.

Nigel Adams:

We have not included pre-2018 figures as staff numbers and departmental administration budgets in that period are not directly comparable.

	NUMBER OF STAFF IN SOFT POWER AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TEAMS	ADMIN BUDGET OF SOFT POWER AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TEAMS (£)	PROGRAMME BUDGET OF SOFT POWER AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TEAMS (£)(OPENING ALLOCATIONS)
FY 18/19 FCO	9	85,000	301,000,000
FY 19/20 FCO	12	75,000	304,000,000
FY 20/21 FCO(until 1 September 2020)	14	79,000	309,000,000
FY 20/21 FCDO(from 2 September 2020)	16*	79,000**	309,000,000

* This includes the FCDO Soft Power Team, and the external affairs function of the FCDO Corporate and Internal Communication Team, which includes former FCO and DfID staff.

** This only covers soft power. There is no separate budget for external affairs, since it is just one function of a team with other responsibilities.

■ Sri Lanka: Religious Freedom

Stephen Kinnock: [\[132928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports of the forced cremation of covid-19 victims in Sri Lanka, what representations he has made to his Sri Lankan counterpart on the protection of religious beliefs and freedoms.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The UK Government is concerned about the Government of Sri Lanka's continued decision to mandate cremations for all those affected by Covid-19, and recognises the particular impact this is having on Sri Lankan Muslims and other faith communities. The Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised concerns about this directly with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, most recently in December. Lord Ahmad also raised the importance of minority rights in a call with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena in November. The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka has also raised concerns about mandatory cremations several times with the Sri Lankan Government, most recently in January.

The UK has shared guidance with the Government of Sri Lanka on how burials can continue to operate in a safe format, within the WHO guidelines, to ensure all religious groups can practise their rites. We will continue to engage with the Government of Sri Lanka on this important issue.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **Abortion****Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[133063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the temporary measure allowing medical abortions to happen outside a clinical environment, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that potential abuse, coercion and sex-trafficking of under 18s who may request medical abortions at home under that measure is detected.

Helen Whately:

Safeguarding is an essential component of abortion services. All providers must comply with legal requirements and have regard to any statutory guidance relating to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Providers must ensure that all staff are trained in recognising the signs of potential abuse and know how to respond.

Providers must have written guidance that staff are aware of and can easily refer to as well as easy access to a named lead in the organisation for guidance and advice.

It is also a requirement that clinicians caring for women requesting abortion should be able to identify those who require more support than can be provided in the routine abortion service setting, for example young women, those with a pre-existing mental health condition, those who are subject to sexual violence or poor social support, or where there is evidence of coercion. These requirements apply to all consultations whether they take place via video link, telephone call or face to face.

■ Abortion: Side Effects

Fiona Bruce:

[\[109293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what reports his Department has received from NHS trusts on women attending a hospital for haemorrhaging after an early medical abortion in each of the last five years.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 November 2020]: The attached table shows the number of reported haemorrhage complications after early medical abortions for residents of England and Wales. The information is based on abortion notification forms (HSA4) submitted by clinics and hospitals to the Chief Medical Officer at the Department. Data for 2020 are provisional and are subject to change.

Complications are reported up to the time of discharge from the place of termination, therefore complications that occur after discharge may not be recorded.

Attachments:

1. Reported Haemorrhage Complications [PQ109293 Attachment.xlsx]

■ Aspartame

Alex Norris:

[\[131421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask the Food Standards Agency to conduct a detailed examination of the safety of aspartame, following research done by Professor Millstone and Dr Dawson.

Jo Churchill:

As an independent Government department, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) keeps under review the evolving body of credible scientific evidence on the safety of all food additives including aspartame and advises the Government if any action is needed.

The FSA is aware of both the paper written by Professor Millstone and Dr Dawson criticising the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) assessment of the safety of aspartame, and the response issued by EFSA. The FSA does not consider that any action in relation to the safety of aspartame is needed at the present time.

■ Blood Cancer: Diagnosis

Jim Shannon:

[\[131273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve early diagnosis of (a) mycosis fungoides and (b) Sézary syndrome, two subtypes of cutaneous T-cell lymphoma.

Jo Churchill:

T-cell lymphomas are recognised as a rare form of cancer that require pan regional arrangements for referral and treatment. Cancer Alliances have pathways in place to support diagnosis as part of their skin cancer pathways.

■ Breast Cancer

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[130755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November to Question 105411, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of breast cancer recurrences recorded in the Cancer Services and Outcomes Dataset.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[130756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November to Question 105411, what charities the National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service has met and (b) when have those meetings took place.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[130757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November to Question 105411, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) collection and (b) submission of data on cancer recurrence by hospital trusts.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has been sharing provider-level data on the completeness of recurrence reporting with individual National Health Service trusts since July 2016. This is accepted as being significantly below the estimated number of secondary breast cancers. The latest data with figures covering 2014 to 2018 was published in November 2020 and are available at the following link:

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

Since 2019, the National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service (NCRAS) has discussed recording of recurrence data with Breast Cancer Now, formerly Breast Cancer Care, Cancer52, Pancreatic Cancer UK, National Audit of Breast Cancer in Older People National Bowel Cancer Audit Macmillan, Cancer Research UK and the developers of the NHS England Cancer Waits Dataset.

NCRAS works closely with cancer service managers at hospital trusts to determine sources of data which can be used to complete the Cancer Services and Outcomes Dataset (COSD) items. The NCRAS Data Liaison team provide direct support to hospital providers to improve their ability to collect data. This includes system procurement support, review of COSD data, clinical engagement and data reporting and validation.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Naz Shah: [\[131299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date covid-19 tests were made available for people living in (a) retirement complexes and (b) sheltered accommodation; when rapid flow tests will be made to people living in those types of accommodation; and for what reasons people living in those accommodations have not been provided with the same access to testing as people living in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Staff or residents within retirement complexes and sheltered accommodation who are symptomatic are eligible for testing through the self-referral portal. We are expanding our testing capacity all the time and we now have capacity to test over 500,000 people a day. We have prioritised people who are most at risk from the effects of Covid-19, and we will continue to review our social care testing strategy for adult social care in light of the latest evidence and available capacity.

■ Care Homes: Screening**Gareth Thomas:**[\[97448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that agency staff have access to home covid-19 testing kits to enable them to obtain a test result prior to their starting an assignment at a care home.

Helen Whately:

All bank and agency staff working in care homes are eligible to access weekly COVID-19 PCR testing through the care home they work in, and we have also introduced twice-weekly rapid testing with Lateral Flow Devices.

Domiciliary care workers can access weekly PCR tests via their employer.

Anyone with symptoms can access testing through the self-referral portal system.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening**Justin Madders:**[\[131314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department plans to make of the effectiveness of only testing for cervical cell changes for people who test positive for HPV following their cervical cancer screening.

Jo Churchill:

In November 2015, the United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) recommended that women who test positive for human papillomavirus infection (HPV) would go on to have cytology or assessment of cell changes. The recommendation was that HPV screening should replace the previously used cytology test as the primary screening for cervical disease. Evidence from four European randomised controlled trials considered the use of high-risk HPV (hrHPV) testing as a primary screening test and found that hrHPV was found in 99.7% of cervical cancers as it looks for the presence of the virus which in turn can detect more pre-cancerous lesions than cytology. HrHPV testing has been shown to reduce the risk of developing cervical cancer through increased sensitivity for underlying disease.

The programme recommends that women continue to be screened regularly and speak to their general practitioner if they have any concerns or symptoms.

■ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Coronavirus

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[130085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans are in place to ensure access to digital or face-to-face pulmonary rehabilitation services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Through its communication to general practitioners (GPs) and commissioners on 31 July 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement asked GPs to restore activity to usual levels where clinically appropriate and contact clinically vulnerable patients and those whose care may have been delayed.

Respiratory disease is a national clinical priority in the NHS Long Term Plan and increasing access to pulmonary rehabilitation is part of this. The National Respiratory Programme is part of the wider Cardiovascular Disease and Respiratory programme which was allocated £15 million of the NHS Long Term Plan funding for 2020/21.

■ Clinical Trials

Alex Sobel: [\[134110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will support Trial Development Days run by (a) the National institute for health research (NIHR) and (b) Cancer Research UK to offer advice and understanding of the methods that are required for clinicians to meet the standards for acceptance for the NIHR grant.

Edward Argar:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Design Service (RDS) provides advice and support to research teams to develop and submit high quality applied health and care grant applications to the NIHR and other national peer-reviewed funding programmes offering specialist advice on all aspects of an application. There is online research support resources available at the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/researchers/apply-for-funding/how-to-apply-for-project-funding/>

■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software

Tulip Siddiq: [\[120092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make the contract tracing covid-19 app accessible and user-friendly for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Helen Whately:

The National Health Service COVID-19 app is designed and built to conform with Web Content Accessibility 2.1 Level AA, an internationally recognised standard that assures accessibility for all people with differing or specific access needs. The app was tested by disabled people, including people with hearing loss, and their insights helped inform the design of the app and make it as accessible and user-friendly as possible.

Language has been kept as simple as possible to help all users and key bits of supporting information and guidance are available in a variety of alternative formats, including British Sign Language.

■ Coronavirus

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[125219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the Government does not report the number of cases where people have recovered from covid-19.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not hold centrally information on the number of people who have recovered from COVID-19. In order to publish accurate figures the Government would need to collect the number of people who have been infected with the virus and to track their subsequent recovery.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[133222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government was made aware of the existence of the VUI-202012/01 covid-19 variant.

Jo Churchill:

Ministers were informed of the new VUI-202012/01 COVID-19 variant on 11 December 2020.

Anne Marie Morris: [\[133864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will publish any data it collects on the number of patients that recover from covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Bexley

Sir David Evennett: [\[122574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been advised to self-isolate in (a) Bexley Borough and (b) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency in each of the last three months.

Helen Whately:

NHS Test and Trace does not hold data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Brighton and Hove

Caroline Lucas: [\[86010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to agree to the request from Brighton and Hove City Council for the seven day temporary mobile testing unit provision in that city to be extended; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The deployment of mobile testing, including whether a service is extended, is coordinated locally. There are two local testing sites within Brighton and Hove which are located at the East Brighton Park Tennis Court and Portland.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Stella Creasy: [\[100384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any issues have been identified in respect of Deloitte's contract to manage the provision of a test and trace service at a performance meeting; and whether any remedial plans have been agreed.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: To date there have been no issues with regard to Deloitte's performance as per their contractual standards and therefore no remedial plans have been agreed.

Stella Creasy: [\[100385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any issues have been identified at a performance meeting in respect of the Government's contract with Lighthouse Labs and its role in the test and trace service; and whether any remedial plans have been agreed.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Lighthouse Labs are operating in accordance with their contracts. Performance is constantly monitored against set criteria to ensure that the supplier is meeting expectations. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of these agreements the Department cannot provide specific details.

Stella Creasy: [\[100386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any issues have been identified at a performance meeting in respect of the Government's contract with Radox Labs in its role in providing a test and trace service; and whether any remedial plans have been agreed.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 October 2020]: Radox is operating in accordance with its contract. Performance is constantly monitored against set criteria to ensure that the supplier is meeting expectations. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of these agreements the Department cannot provide specific details in accordance with the key performance indicators within their contract.

Justin Madders: [\[109441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance track and trace operatives are given on contact tracing positive covid-19 test results from in-patients in hospitals.

Helen Whately:

When contacting a hospital inpatient, call handlers are first asked to check whether the individual is available to speak with them. If they are, they will proceed with the call as usual. If they are not available, they are advised to ask if they can speak to a next of kin. Any complex contact tracing will be carried out by staff who have already received clinical or public health training and have worked in public health or healthcare, some for many years.

Barbara Keeley:[\[113042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that covid-19 contact tracing services capture information on contacts that occur after a person has taken a routine covid-19 test in the event that that person has tested positive for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: Where a person tests positive for COVID-19, NHS Test and Trace will ask them to provide information about their close contacts throughout the period that begins 48 hours before symptom onset or 48 hours before the date of their test if they did not have symptoms and ends seven days after symptom onset or date of test, when they are most likely to be infectious. They are also asked to provide information about all other members of their household.

Layla Moran:[\[119359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have had to wait for (a) 24 hours, (b) between two and three days, (c) between four to seven days and (d) more than one week to be told to isolate by the NHS Test and Trace service after having been in contact with someone infected with the covid-19 virus.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 26 November 2020]: NHS Test and Trace does not hold data in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Daisy Cooper:**[\[124312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) the algorithm or methodology that combines the five indicators to determine the covid-19 tier system for an area and (b) how that methodology incorporates (i) geographic and (ii) other contextual inputs.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: Decisions on which area goes into which tier are primarily based on five key epidemiological indicators as follows: - case detection rates in all age groups; - case detection rates in over-60 year olds; - the rate at which cases are rising or falling;

- the positivity rate or the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken; and - the pressure on the National Health Service, including current and projected occupancy.

Whilst each metric is important in its own right, the interplay between each indicator for a given area is equally important. As a result, hard numerical thresholds on each metric are not set. The indicators are designed to provide a full picture of what is happening with the virus in any area so that suitable action can be taken. The Government will maintain an approach that continues to allow our decisions to be driven by the data and expert judgement.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[133238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he plans to put in place for people who are shielding in Tier 4 covid-19 lockdown areas.

Jo Churchill:

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 4 January, a new national lockdown has been introduced to help tackle the large rise in cases of COVID-19. In addition to the new rules that apply to everyone, the Government is also advising all clinically extremely vulnerable people to shield to further protect themselves during this period.

Current guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people is to stay at home as much as possible, apart from going outside for exercise or to attend health appointments. They are advised not to go to the shops and should work from home where possible. If unable to work from home, they should not attend the workplace.

Further details are available at the following link:

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

Sarah Olney: [\[134045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a child under the age of five can accompany their parent on a walk with another adult from a different household, who is not in the support bubble of the parent and child, under the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Children under the age of five do not count towards the two-person gathering limit for outdoor exercise under the current national lockdown restrictions.

■ Coronavirus: Golf

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[133631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the covid-19 risk assessment in support of closing golf courses in England; and what the differences in risk are compared with Scotland.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[133726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the closure of gyms in areas under tier 4 covid-19 restrictions on the (a) mental health and b) physical wellbeing of people who regularly use gyms to exercise.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[133776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the scientific basis for the Government's decision not to allow pubs to provide alcoholic drinks in sealed containers for takeaway during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups when making decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic. The SAGE has provided expert strategic scientific advice to Government throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, and this can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies>

The Government is committed to publishing data that has informed its decision making, including the tiers framework and allocations, which can be found at the following link:

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

Evidence is clear that action is needed on a national scale to suppress the spread of the virus. We have introduced national restrictions to reduce social contact across England. It is therefore necessary for sports facilities, such as golf courses, to close. Whilst these facilities are closed, it remains important for wellbeing to be able to exercise and enjoy outdoor recreation safely, and that is why individuals can continue to do this in public outdoor places under the new restrictions. However, people are advised to remain as local as possible, to act responsibly, and limit transmission risk wherever possible, including by ensuring social distancing with anyone they do not live with. Health is a devolved issue and so each nation is able to make decisions as they see fit.

We understand these rules are difficult for everyone, but reducing social contact is paramount to protecting the National Health Service and saving lives. The Government will keep this under constant review and has published guidance on mental health and wellbeing and this is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#what-can-help-your-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

■ Coronavirus: Home Care Services

Caroline Nokes:

[\[109312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the transmission rates of covid-19 in personal care settings; and if will publish the data supporting that assessment.

Helen Whately:

The Department recognises the importance of understanding COVID-19 transmission rates within personal care settings. We are working with academics to understand infection rates in care homes. This work is ongoing and is not yet published.

We have developed an adult social care dashboard that helps local, regional and national authorities understand where infection is taking place. Additionally, we have made over £1.1 billion available to local authorities through our Infection Control Fund to support adult social care providers take measures to halt the spread of the virus.

■ Coronavirus: Laboratories

John Spellar:

[\[93520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which hospital laboratories in the West Midlands have been commissioned by NHS Test and Trace to process covid-19 samples.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 25 September 2020]: Processing of COVID-19 samples has taken place in laboratories belonging to the following National Health Service trusts in the West Midlands:

- Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust;
- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust;
- Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust;
- The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust;
- The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust;
- University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust;
- University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust;
- Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust;
- Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust; and
- Wye Valley NHS Trust.

■ Coronavirus: Learning Disability

Rachael Maskell:

[\[133041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to amend the list of people who are extremely vulnerable to covid-19 to include people with learning disabilities.

Jo Churchill:

On 4 November adults with Down's syndrome were added to the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) list based on evidence from the QCOVID risk stratification model, commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer via the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Committee.

This research identified that other people with learning disabilities without Down's syndrome were not found to face a high enough risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 to be added the CEV list based on their learning disability alone. Some people with a learning disability will be considered CEV, by virtue of having another health condition on the CEV list.

The definition of CEV groups remains under constant review and if new scientific evidence comes to light then we would not hesitate to alter its composition as necessary.

■ Coronavirus: Leisure

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[130157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the data used to differentiate between leisure centre activities when setting out which could be pursued under the most recent covid-19 tiering system.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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

We have also published supporting information to accompany the laying of the most recent regulations are laid before Parliament on 30 November, which is available at the following link:

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

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

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

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

■ Coronavirus: Passive Smoking**Owen Thompson:****[133050]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any research has been carried out on the effect of passive exposure to exhaled e-cigarette vapour or cigarette smoke on the transmission of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not carried out any research in this area and is not aware of any external research at present. Being in close proximity to anyone with COVID-19 infection would carry a risk of passing on that infection regardless of whether they are smoking or vaping. Public Health England has published COVID-19 advice for smokers and vapers which recommends that vapers avoid exhaling clouds of vapour in the presence of others. This advice is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-advice-for-smokers-and-vapers/covid-19-advice-for-smokers-and-vapers>

■ Coronavirus: Pupils**Neil Coyle:****[128998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many schoolchildren have tested positive for covid-19 in Bermondsey and Old Southwark constituency in each of the last four months.

Helen Whately:

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

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:****[110881]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people adhere to self-isolation rules when asked to do so after contracting, or found to be a close contact of someone who has contracted, covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 November 2020]: Anyone notified by NHS Test and Trace that they have tested positive for COVID-19 or are a close contact of someone who has is legally required to self-isolate.

NHS Test and Trace, with input from Public Health England and the Scientific Pandemic Influenza – Behavioural group, have conducted a survey to understand compliance with self-isolation. The results of this survey will be published in due course.

John Redwood: [\[121111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the level of compliance with the policy of self-isolation for identified contacts with covid-19 infection in the latest period for which figures are available.

Helen Whately:

Anyone notified by NHS Test and Trace that they have tested positive for COVID-19 or are a close contact of someone who has is legally required to self-isolate.

NHS Test and Trace, with input from Public Health England and the Scientific Pandemic Influenza – Behavioural group, have conducted a survey to understand compliance with self-isolation. The results of this survey will be published in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[106294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the difference was between number of covid-19 tests undertaken and number of test results sent to people who had been tested in each week during the last two months for which data is available.

Helen Whately:

We do not publish data in the format requested.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[113170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of positive covid-19 cases have been missed in each Operation Moonshot pilot of rapid covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 November 2020]: The Department does not publish data in the format requested.

Chris Grayling: [\[124143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of PCR covid-19 tests carried out that have produced a false positive result.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

Alex Sobel: [\[124859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps people should take who wish to request a covid-19 test and who do not have internet access or an email address.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: There are a number of ways individuals can access testing without an email address or internet access. Individuals can ask

someone they trust who has a mobile number or email address, for example, a family member to book a test or receive their results. If this is not possible, individuals can contact 119 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and 0300 303 2713 in Scotland to book a test at their nearest test site and to receive their results, either via a call back to a landline or by contacting 119 once the results are available. We are working to further improve the accessibility of testing via non digital routes.

Julian Sturdy: [\[91630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests have been available on average each day in each region in the latest period for which figures are available.

Julian Sturdy: [\[91631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many requests for covid-19 tests have been made on average each day in each region in the latest period for which figures are available.

Julian Sturdy: [\[91632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 testing sites are operating at maximum capacity.

Julian Sturdy: [\[91633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 testing sites are operating with spare capacity.

Helen Whately:

The Government does not publish data in the format requested.

Theresa Villiers: [\[93553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether health professionals (a) are required to be and (b) have been present onsite at covid-19 testing centres at all times.

Helen Whately:

Healthcare professionals are not required to be present at COVID-19 testing centres.

■ Coronavirus: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis: [\[133257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate supply of personal protective equipment for (a) the NHS and (b) social care providers over winter 2020-21 in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Jo Churchill:

We are confident we have secured enough personal protective equipment (PPE) for this winter period and that we have the processes and logistics in place to distribute PPE to where it is needed, including Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. We have almost 32 billion PPE items on order and by December 2020 we had built a four-

month stockpile of all COVID-19 critical PPE with a tremendous contribution from United Kingdom manufacturers.

■ Coronavirus: Theatres

Nadia Whittome:

[\[133317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the scientific basis was for the decision to close theatres in Tier 3 local covid alert level areas; and what assessment he has made of the effect of people visiting theatres on the transmission of covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]:

All indoor entertainment venues, including theatres, had to close in areas under tier 3 restrictions. However, on 4 January, the Prime Minister announced a national lockdown, meaning theatres are now closed across England, although they are still be able to open for training, rehearsals and for filming. While we understand and appreciate the efforts businesses have taken to limit the risk of transmission in their premises, Scientists have confirmed that the new variant is between 50 and 70% more transmissible and can be spread by people with no symptoms. It is right, therefore, that theatres and other entertainment venues must close in order to manage the spread of the virus.

■ Coronavirus: Travel

Steve Brine:

[\[133820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there was a statutory basis for the restrictions on overseas travel in the Government's Tier 4: Stay at Home guidance published on 19 December 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: You can only travel internationally or within the United Kingdom (UK) where you first have a legally permitted reason to leave home. In addition, you should consider the public health advice in the country you are visiting. If you do need to travel overseas and are legally permitted to do so, for example, because it is for work, even if you are returning to a place you've visited before, you should look at the rules in place at your destination at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

UK residents currently abroad do not need to return home immediately. However, you should check with your airline or travel operator on arrangements for returning.

If you are visiting the UK, you may return home. You should check whether there are any restrictions in place at your destination.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Alberto Costa:**[\[124775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to protect people from fraudulent advertising online of untested or misleading covid-19 vaccines.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 place strict regulatory controls on the manufacture, distribution, retail sale / supply and advertising of medicinal products for human use. Medicinal products, including vaccines, must hold a Marketing Authorisation (product licence) for legal sale and supply in the United Kingdom.

The Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has responsibility for the regulation of medicinal products, blood and medical device and has a role as the law enforcement authority in respect of these products. The MHRA's first priority is the protection of public health and any medicinal product or vaccine identified as being offered for sale without the appropriate authorisations will be investigated as a potential breach of the Human Medicines Regulations and a clear threat to health and safety of UK citizens.

Offences against the Human Medicines Regulations are criminal and non-compliance can and does result in prosecution through the criminal courts. Officials at the MHRA are actively assessing the nature and extent of such a threat and are working with partners in UK and elsewhere across the globe to provide an appropriate and effective response.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[128216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of whether there is potential risk to allergy sufferers of the covid-19 vaccination; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of EpiPens in the event of an increased demand in response to the covid-19 vaccination.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 December 2020]: As with any vaccine, the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is contraindicated in those with hypersensitivity to any of the vaccine ingredients. Following two reports of anaphylaxis following the vaccine last week, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued further advice on 9 December that any person with a history of immediate-onset anaphylaxis to a vaccine, medicine or food should not receive the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and that vaccine recipients should be monitored for 15 minutes after vaccination, with a longer observation period when indicated after clinical assessment. A protocol for the management of anaphylaxis and an anaphylaxis pack must always be available whenever the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is given.

While our current recommendation for the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine does not specify an exhaustive list of other potential sources of anaphylaxis which may be present in individuals' histories, we would advise a cautious approach at present.

This advice is under ongoing review and we will update it as more evidence becomes available.

Supplies of EpiPen and other adrenaline auto-injectors are available. All patients who require an adrenaline auto-injector should be able to obtain one from their pharmacy. We continue to work very closely with all the manufacturers of adrenaline auto-injectors to ensure enough supplies remain available for the patients who need them. All centres administering the COVID-19 vaccine are equipped with anaphylaxis kits. Anaphylaxis kits contain adrenaline ampoules and not EpiPens or other adrenaline auto-injectors. There are currently sufficient supplies of adrenaline ampoules to meet demand.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[131231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to indemnify GP practices for public and employers liability under the clinical negligence scheme for general practice to ensure that more practices are able to administer the covid-19 vaccination without undue obstruction.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

General practices are covered by state indemnity for clinical negligence claims under the Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice, introduced in April 2019. This includes any claims that result from participating in the vaccination programme.

This cover applies to all staff who are employed or engaged by a general practice to deliver the vaccination programme. It also applies to any setting used by the practice to deliver the programme, including any vaccinations in a care home or other domiciliary setting.

As for other aspects of their work, general practices need to ensure that they have sufficient public and employer's liability cover in place for this vaccination work.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[134252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what protocols his Department has put in place to minimise the risk of disruption in the supply chain for the distribution of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England (PHE) has worked with its specialist medical logistics partners over many months to plan for the storage and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across the United Kingdom.

PHE has well established ordering and distribution mechanisms which have been built over many years of successful delivery of vaccines for the national immunisation programme. These have been enhanced to accommodate for the challenging storage temperatures for some of the COVID-19 vaccines. This has been in combination with an increased level of service for all UK locations and flexibility to manage urgent delivery requirements.

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[910622\]](#)

What plans he has to train healthcare professionals in communicating the (a) safety and (b) effectiveness of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We offer our thanks to all healthcare professionals for their exceptional work on the front line administering vaccines to those who are most vulnerable.

Safety is absolutely paramount in any vaccination programme. Public Health England have produced comprehensive training and information materials for COVID-19 vaccinators. These include information about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as key messages for healthcare professionals to convey to those being vaccinated.

All vaccinating staff involved in the deployment programme must complete training that includes modules on the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Communicating about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine is also a component of the process for gaining informed consent.

Kate Osborne:

[\[910630\]](#)

What progress he has made on the (a) administration and (b) distribution of covid-19 vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are delighted that over 2.2 million of the most vulnerable people in the country have now received the first dose of their COVID-19 vaccine.

We are on track to deliver our commitment of offering a first vaccine to everyone in the most vulnerable groups by the middle of next month.

There are already more than 2,700 sites across the United Kingdom already offering vaccines to those at risk by age and clinical priority.

As set out in the comprehensive UK vaccines delivery plan, by the end of January, everyone in England will be within 10 miles of a vaccination site, or, for a small number of highly rural areas, the vaccine will be brought to them via mobile teams.

■ Disease Control

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[130754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made of the effect of the transition of functions from the Health Protection Agency to Public Health England on the England's preparedness for infection surveillance and control.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) was established in 2013 as an executive agency of the Department. PHE brought together multiple different bodies including the Health Protection Agency to provide comprehensive national surveillance programmes for both infectious and non-communicable diseases and to strengthen preparedness plans.

The United Kingdom's infectious disease surveillance system will be further strengthened by the creation of the new National Institute for Health Protection in 2021, which will bring together the expertise of PHE, alongside NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Unit, to ensure the UK has the best capability to monitor and control infectious diseases and respond to health protection incidents.

■ Doctors: Sussex

Andrew Griffith:

[\[133323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional doctors have been recruited to (a) Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust and (b) Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust since December 2019.

Helen Whately:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups but not staff working in primary care, local authorities or other providers.

Year-on-year figures are usually provided due to changes in the number of doctors throughout the year being linked to the recruitment and training cycles. The following table shows the change in the number of doctors employed in Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust from both September 2019 and December 2019 to September 2020, full-time equivalent.

HCHS DOCTORS	WESTERN SUSSEX HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST	SUSSEX COMMUNITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
Change since December 2019	45 (6.1%)	4 (6.2%)
Change since September 2019	60 (8.4%)	4 (6.7%)

Source: NHS Digital NHS HCHS workforce statistics

■ Eating Disorders: Children and Young People

Jim Shannon:

[\[132919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the increase in the number of children and young people being admitted to hospital with eating disorders during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Our aim is to deliver swift access to treatment for 95% of children and young people with a suspected eating disorder within one week for urgent cases and within four weeks for routine cases by April 2021. NHS England has announced the roll out of the first episode rapid early intervention for eating disorders model in 18 sites across the country for young people aged between 16 and 25 years old with eating disorders. This model advocates treatment within two to four weeks and aims to contact patients within 48 hours of referral.

Children and young people's community eating disorder teams have remained open throughout the pandemic. During the pandemic all teams shifted to digital working including delivering assessments and therapy via online delivery tools when clinically appropriate while maintaining face to face appointments for urgent cases.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Gavin Robinson: [\[133885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of banning the advertising of hybrid nicotine-based products.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made recently. Product standards and requirements of e-cigarettes, including how they are advertised, is regulated by the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (TRPR).

The Department will be carrying out a post implementation review of TRPR, and this will include a public consultation on the regulations which will be published shortly.

The consultation will provide an opportunity to comment on the current advertising regulations for e-cigarettes.

■ Fires: Air Pollution

Olivia Blake: [\[134282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of (a) wood burning stoves and (b) bonfires on public health.

Jo Churchill:

In the United Kingdom burning wood and coal in open fires and stoves accounts for 38% of fine particulate matter emissions. Exposure to particulate matter is associated with respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease, and lung cancer. There is emerging evidence for associations with dementia, low birth weight and type 2 diabetes. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-air-pollution/health-matters-air-pollution>

Public Health England is reviewing the evidence on the association between indoor and outdoor exposure to solid fuel burning within the home and respiratory outcomes in adults. There is currently little evidence linking exposure to indoor or outdoor coal or wood burning with respiratory diseases in children. This does not mean there are not health effects, but that there is currently no strong scientific evidence showing this.

■ Foetal Tissue

Jim Shannon: [\[131269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies on consent regarding the transportation and use of human fetal tissue and gametes of the (a) Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, the Human Tissue (Quality and Safety for Human Application) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, (b) Quality and Safety of Organs Intended for Transplantation (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 and (c) Blood Safety and Quality (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Jim Shannon: [\[131270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies on human fetal tissue and gametes intended for human application of the Human Tissue (Quality and Safety for Human Application) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Jim Shannon: [\[131271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies on fetal tissue tracing of The Human Tissue Act 2004.

Helen Whately:

The Human Tissue (Quality and Safety for Human Application) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 amend the Human Tissue (Quality and Safety for Human Application) Regulations 2007 and regulate the quality and safety of activities concerning human tissues and cells intended for use in human application. These regulations apply to pregnancy remains to the extent they are used for human application. The Human Tissue (Quality and Safety for Human Application) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 do not make any changes to the consent requirements in this area. There will be some changes to the coding requirements, but there remains an underlying requirement to ensure traceability. Traceability of relevant material remains a key factor under the Human Tissue Act 2004, and any establishment working with human tissue under the purposes outlined in the legislation will need to be able to evidence this.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 amend the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 and regulate the quality and safety of activities concerning gametes and embryos. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 have not changed the safety and quality standards regarding transportation of human gametes under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (as amended).

■ Genito-urinary Medicine

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[134268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to bring forward legislation to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for women.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government has mandated local authorities in England to commission comprehensive open access sexual health services. Ensuring equal access to sexual and reproductive health services for both men and women will be a key theme of the new sexual and reproductive health strategy.

Development of the strategy was paused at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However work is now underway and we plan to publish this in 2021.

■ Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements

Caroline Nokes: [\[132872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish details on how to apply for the new Global Health Insurance Card.

Edward Argar:

Details on the new United Kingdom Global Health Insurance Card were announced on 11 January, in recognition of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the European Union.

Current European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs) will remain valid until the expiration date on the card and do not need to be replaced immediately. Expired EHICs will be able to be replaced with the new Global Health Insurance Card.

To apply for the new Global Health Insurance Card, as now, UK residents will be able to apply online.

If a UK resident is travelling and they do not have their card, they are still entitled to necessary healthcare should it be required. In these circumstances they should contact the NHS Business Services Authority for a Provisional Replacement Certificate.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Catherine West: [\[133099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that heart failure patients have access to specialist care in the event of future covid-19 outbreaks.

Jo Churchill:

During the COVID-19 pandemic the National Health Service has continued to treat people with and without COVID-19.

The recovery of non-COVID-19 services, including cardiac services, is a continued priority for 2021/22. Local teams are working hard to restore services, including for patients with heart conditions, and to provide diagnostic tests and treatments to as many people as possible this winter.

■ Hospices: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[109194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans are in place to protect staff and patients in hospices from covid-19; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing weekly testing for staff in hospices in line with the policy in care homes.

Helen Whately:

Hospices have made an incredible contribution during this difficult time going beyond their provision of end of life care, reducing pressure on the wider health and care system and supporting patient choices and outcomes.

The Government has helped hospices get the equipment they need to protect staff and patients. Personal protective equipment push pallet arrangements have been in place since May, providing regular equipment deliveries via central delivery points. The equipment delivered in this way is free of charge to hospices.

The Department is aware that routine asymptomatic testing for hospice staff is a key concern in the sector and is looking urgently at this issue. Anyone working in healthcare with symptoms can already access testing as a priority, including hospice staff.

■ Hospitals

Darren Henry:

[\[119413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to upgrade (a) A&E departments and (b) intensive care units prior to winter 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

We have announced £450 million of funding in 2020/21 for upgrades to accident and emergency (A&E) departments at over 120 trusts and covering over 190 sites.

Funding was awarded on the condition that schemes bring substantial improvements to A&Es this winter. £600 million of investment has also been delivered to address critical infrastructure risk across the National Health Service estate. The majority of this funding has been provided to acute trusts to mitigate risks to healthcare delivery and patient safety.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[133217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to revise covid-19 restrictions on patient visiting in hospitals.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no planned revisions to COVID-19 restrictions on patient visiting in hospitals. NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue its ongoing review of guidance and revise as necessary. The health, safety and wellbeing of patients, communities and staff remain the priority.

■ Hospitals: East Midlands**Claudia Webbe:** [\[133286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will be provide further funding, in addition to the £450 million announced in January 2020, to support the reorganisation local hospital services in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust recently received £2 million to upgrade the accident and emergency department at Leicester Royal Infirmary as part of our recent investment to improve infection control and increase capacity.

On 2 October 2020, the Prime Minister also confirmed the five hospitals in the Midlands which are part of the 40 new hospitals to be built by 2030. This will include University Hospitals of Leicester, rebuild at Leicester Royal Infirmary and Glenfield as well as new facilities at Leicester General. Individual allocations for trusts will be determined once the respective final business cases have been reviewed and agreed.

■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review**Cat Smith:** [\[133918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2020 to Question 908883 and the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 122771 on Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, when he plans to update Parliament on his Department's response to that review; and for what reason an update was not provided before the end of 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

It was not possible to secure a date to update Parliament before Christmas due to parliamentary timetabling. However, I refer the hon. Member to my Written Ministerial Statement ([HCWS692](#)) of 11 January 2021.

■ Kettering Hospital

Mr Philip Hollobone: [\[910602\]](#)

If the Minister of State for Health will meet with (a) representatives of Kettering General Hospital and (b) hon. Members for north Northamptonshire to review redevelopment plans at Kettering General Hospital.

Edward Argar:

I would be delighted to meet with my hon. Friend, hon. Members from North Northamptonshire and his local hospital trust at the earliest possible opportunity.

■ Malnutrition

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[133906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been diagnosed with malnutrition on admission to hospital since December 2019.

Jo Churchill:

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) database indicates that there were 701 finished admission episodes (FAEs) with a primary diagnosis of malnutrition and 7,966 FAEs with a secondary diagnosis between December 2019 and October 2020 which is the latest data available.

However, it should be noted that HES data is based on a count of hospital episodes rather than numbers of patients, one patient may account for more than one hospital episode. Additionally, data from April 2020 onwards is provisional at this time.

Attachments:

1. Count of Finished Admission Episodes [Copy of 10997_PQ133906.xlsx]

■ Maternity Services: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett: [\[133707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many maternity wards there were in hospitals in the Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Department does not hold information requested.

■ Members: Correspondence

Emma Hardy: [\[117353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letter of 13 November 2020 from the Leader of Kingston upon Hull City Council, Stephen Brady OBE, on additional support for the city due to high levels of covid-19 infection.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: We replied to Mr Brady's letter on 8 December 2020.

John Penrose:

[\[132836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will plans reply to the letters of 15 July 2020 and 13 August 2020 and telephone call of 7 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on dentists, raised on behalf of his constituent John Pays.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member's letter on 10 August 2020.

■ **Mental Health Act 1983 Independent Review**

Jeff Smith:

[\[910623\]](#)

What plans he has to implement the recommendations of the final report of the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983, published on 6 December 2018.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We remain committed to publishing our white paper which will set out the Government's response to Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 and pave the way for reform of the Act.

We will publish our white paper very shortly.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Esther McVey:

[\[132895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to dialectical behaviour therapy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are committed to continuing our investment in expanding and transforming mental health services in England and to investing an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24. This means a further 380,000 more adults a year accessing specialist National Health Service treatment, which includes dialectical behaviour therapy by 2023/24.

Since 2019/20 NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working with Health Education England to provide new training places for staff to undertake courses in evidence-based psychological therapies, including dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) courses. Along with continued year-on-year investment in DBT training so that more trained staff can provide therapies over the course of the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement and Health Education England are supporting all mental health providers to improve timely access for patients in need of DBT by bringing down waiting times.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children**

Kate Osborne:

[\[134204\]](#)

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 children's mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Children and young people's mental health services have remained open throughout the pandemic offering digital and remote access to maintain support and accept new referrals. This will continue over the winter ensuring children, young people and parents can access appropriate support whether face to face, via the telephone or via digital means.

The National Health Service has also provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week all-age crisis lines across the country. The Department has given more than £10 million of grant funding to the voluntary sector and funded the £8 million wellbeing for education return scheme to support children's mental health.

■ Mental Health Services: Coronavirus**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[134041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Downing Street press conference of 5 January 2021, if he will confirm whether £12 billion has been allocated to NHS mental health care during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We are putting over £12 billion a year into mental health services in England, with investment set to rise still further by an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24.

We have also awarded over £22 million in cash grants to mental health, ambulance, social care, learning disabilities, autism and dementia charities to ensure they could meet increased demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while continuing their day-to-day activities to help those in need.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance**Apsana Begum:**[\[131503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the non-renewal of local Mental Health Support contracts in Poplar and Limehouse constituency, whether he has plans to provide funding to local authorities in order to keep such services open.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The public health grant to local authorities in England was £3.279 billion in 2020/21. Local authority funding, through the public health grant for 2021/22 will be maintained, meaning local authorities can continue to invest in prevention and essential frontline health services, including services that support public mental health. It is for local authorities to make funding decisions for public health services based on local population priorities, in line with the conditions attached to the grant including having regard to reducing health inequalities.

■ Mental Health Services: Internet**Esther McVey:****[132896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what provisions the NHS has made to deliver dialectical behavioural therapy online.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service has worked hard to keep mental health services including dialectical behavioural therapy open during the pandemic, using technology such as online where needed. Talking therapies will continue to be made available remotely so people can access help safely from home.

To support mental health services, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published guidance for providers which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/guidance-managing-capacity-and-demand-within-inpatient-and-community-mental-health-learning-disabilities-and-autism-services-for-all-ages/>

This guidance contains advice on maximising the use of digital technologies with considerations applicable across a range of services and settings including the provision of dialectical behavioural therapy.

■ Mental Health Services: Staffordshire**Jonathan Gullis:****[133262]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health support for men to reduce levels of male suicide in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy highlights men, and especially middle-aged and young men, as a group at high risk of suicide, and in January 2019, we published the first cross-Government suicide prevention workplan. It includes sections on tailoring prevention approaches towards reducing suicide risk in high-risk groups such as men.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing £57 million in suicide prevention. This will see investment in all areas of the country by 2023/24 to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services. We have worked with NHS England to ensure that local areas test approaches to reaching and engaging men.

The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Sustainability and Transformation Partnership has received £300,000 in 2019/20 and £300,000 in 2020/21 for suicide prevention.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Neil Coyle:

[\[132936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time is for people seeking talking therapies; and how many people are on talking therapy waiting lists as at 5 January 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The average waiting time between referral and the first treatment session for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services, where treatment started in the latest available period, August 2020, was 15 days for England. Data for January 2021 are not yet available.

■ Neonatal Herpes: Health Education

David Linden:

[\[910626\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to increase awareness of neonatal herpes.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Reducing mortality and morbidity in maternity and neonatal services is a priority for this Government.

The national ambition is to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths and brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after birth by 2025.

The National Health Service website has a dedicated page on neonatal herpes, which sets out how neonatal herpes can be prevented.

■ NHS Test and Trace

Munira Wilson:

[\[127003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £22 billion allocated to NHS Test and Trace is being spent on Serco's national contact tracing system.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: The contract with Serco, for the non-clinical National Health Service call handling service to support the contact tracing, was let for an initial period of three months for the sum of £108 million. The total contract has a maximum value of £410 million to cover the initial period and any required extensions within a maximum period of 12 months to 17 May 2021. Two extensions have so far been agreed within the maximum value, to 31 January 2021.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[133749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will list the 21 companies that Serco has subcontracted to work on NHS Test and Trace.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Serco have worked with the Cabinet Office and the Department to engage a spread of regional and national providers including small

and medium sized enterprises, who have been integrated, trained and supported by Serco to meet the Department's required delivery model. The names of the companies are commercial in confidence.

As the prime contractor, Serco are responsible and accountable for the performance of their sub-contractors in terms of contributing to meeting the agreed service targets and quality standards in the primary contract they hold with the Department.

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Jon Trickett: [\[133680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of frontline NHS employees were born in the EU.

Helen Whately:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ **NHS: Recruitment**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[133258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on increasing (a) recruitment and (b) retention of (i) doctors and (ii) nurses in the NHS.

Helen Whately:

We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/2021 sets out actions to expand and develop our workforce by retaining staff for longer and building on the renewed interest in National Health Service (NHS) careers. The next phase of the NHS People Plan will focus on workforce growth and ensuring it has the right skills mix in place for a flexible and modern NHS.

Through its 'looking after our people - retention programme' which launched in the summer of 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement are supporting employers and managers to value, support and retain their staff both clinical and non-clinical. This is achieved through a new employer portal of guidance and best practice and direct support for systems and organisations across each of the domains of the people promise. Flexible working and the health and wellbeing of staff remain a key focus of the retention initiatives.

■ **NHS: Weather**

Clive Lewis: [\[910607\]](#)

What steps he has taken to prepare the NHS for winter 2020-21.

Edward Argar:

As is the case every year, the Government has worked closely with the National Health Service to prepare for winter pressures, including in those arising from COVID-19.

Those preparations include, but are not limited to, additional funding announced in July of £3 billion to support NHS capacity this winter; alongside £450 million of funding for accident and emergency department and urgent and emergency care upgrades, expansion and infection control measures.

■ Nurses: Protective Clothing

Rosie Duffield:

[\[130803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the suitability of the personal protective equipment made available to community nurses working with patients who have tested positive for covid-19 and nurses working in a hospital setting.

Jo Churchill:

The requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) for community nurses and for nurses working in a hospital setting are set out in the national Infection Prevention and Control manual practice guide. It is consistent with World Health Organization guidance for protecting health and social care workers from COVID-19 and includes the PPE requirements as part of both standard infection control precautions and transmission-based precautions to prevent the risk of transmission of infection, protecting patients and staff alike.

■ Nurses: Students

Bill Esterson:

[\[123580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) safety of student nurses on coronavirus wards and (b) effect on the personal finances of those nurses of being at a high risk of having to isolate and lose the ability to do other part-time work.

Bill Esterson:

[\[123581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of whether student nurses should be paid a band 4 wage while on nurse placement during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: The Government is clear that it is the responsibility of Health Education England (HEE), clinical placement providers and higher education institutions to undertake assessments at a local level to ensure the safety of student nurses in all placement settings. HEE has also led national level work to minimise the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on students on healthcare courses, including ensuring students have appropriate access to personal protective equipment, testing and wellbeing support whilst on placement. The detail of the support available was outlined in a letter sent by the Chief Nursing Officer for England and the Chief Nurse for Health Education England to all nursing students on 13 November 2020.

In terms of financial support, all eligible nursing students will continue to receive payments from the student loans company and also access the Learning Support Fund from the NHS Business Services Authority, which includes a non-repayable grant of at least £5,000 for eligible students, travel and dual accommodation expenses and parental support. In exceptional circumstances, whereby a student is required to self-isolate due to COVID-19, the NHS Business Services Authority is able to use discretion on a case by case basis to decide whether the student is eligible to additional support through the exceptional hardship grant.

Clinical placements provide supervised training. Student nurses are not paid but receive financial support to train. In March 2020, at the start of the pandemic, temporary opt-in paid student nursing placements were arranged to help with the COVID-19 pandemic response. Since the initiation of the opt-in paid placements, the Government was clear that this was a temporary arrangement, and that at the appropriate time, normal placements would resume.

■ **Obesity: Health Services**

Alex Norris:

[\[131419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to resume (a) tier 3 obesity services and (b) tier 4 obesity services that have been disrupted by the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Decisions regarding current provision of tier 3 and 4 weight management services, along with other elective activity, are made at a local level, reflecting varying pressures on local health systems and availability of capacity, including use of the independent sector. Additional waiting list data has been made available to systems and hospitals to support restoration of services, including weight loss surgery. NHS England and NHS Improvement have facilitated access for the National Health Service to independent sector provision to maximise capacity for displaced elective cases.

Through 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' we are delivering a range of measures on weight management, including expanding weight management services to help more people get the support they need and making conversations about weight in primary care the norm. Further details about these measures will be available shortly.

■ **Obesity: Surgery**

Jim Shannon:

[\[130738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on regional variation in the provision of weight loss surgery for obese people; and if he will instruct Clinical Commissioning Groups to work with independent providers to improve provision of that service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jim Shannon:

[\[130739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of instructing Clinical Commissioning Groups to improve provision of bariatric services for obese people in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jim Shannon:

[\[130740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with Clinical Commissioning Groups on the accessibility of bariatric surgery during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not hold data on the provision of weight loss surgery. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning complex obesity services for adults, which include all bariatric surgical procedures and the associated care.

There has been no central assessment or discussions with CCGs on the provision of bariatric services for obese people in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Through 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' we are delivering a range of measures on weight management, including expanding weight management services to help more people get the support they need and making conversations about weight in primary care the norm. Further details about these measures will be available shortly.

■ Parents: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[121183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce financial support for parents who are ineligible for the Test and Trace payment and who need to provide childcare at home while their children are self-isolating or the school has closed due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is for people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for COVID-19 or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

Parents or guardians of children who have to self-isolate because of contact with someone outside their household who has tested positive are not eligible. If a parent and/or guardian needs support because a child has to self-isolate, the NHS Test and Trace service can provide guidance on how to access local support provided by their local authority or by NHS Volunteer Responders.

■ Period Poverty

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[134269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle period poverty.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government Equalities Office has responsibility for the period poverty taskforce. The Department of Health and Social Care, along with other Government departments, is committed to tackling period poverty. To support this, NHS England announced in March 2019 that it will offer period products to every hospital patient who needs them.

■ Physiotherapy: Dudley North

Marco Longhi:

[\[130861\]](#)

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

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to ensuring the continuity of access to non-COVID-19 health services such as physiotherapy. The 'Help Us, Help You' campaign is underway to encourage the public to access the NHS services they need and our message is unequivocal - anyone who is concerned or needs treatment should come forward.

The National Health Service has been allocated an extra £3 billion funding, which includes funding to support the recruitment of additional primary care professionals, such as physiotherapy posts in primary care networks. In Dudley, this recruitment is ongoing with support from the community provider.

■ Prescription Drugs

Cat Smith:

[\[133917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability for the public to respond to the PHE Prescribed Medicines Review: Call for case studies issued on 15 December 2020 by the 8 January 2020 deadline.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have been coordinating implementation of the recommendations of the Public Health England review, 'Dependence and withdrawal associated with some prescribed medicines: An evidence review'. This includes developing a framework to support commissioners to optimise prescribing of dependence forming medicines.

To support the development of the framework, a call for case studies was issued on 15 December 2020. The call was aimed primarily at commissioners, providers and other appropriate organisations such as those in the third sector. The deadline for

submissions has recently been extended to the 29 January 2021 to allow stakeholders more time to respond.

■ Rare Cancers

Jim Shannon:

[\[132916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to enable equitable access to treatment and care for people living with mycosis fungoides and Sézary syndrome, two subtypes of Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma.

Jo Churchill:

T-cell lymphomas are recognised as a rare form of cancer that require pan regional arrangements for referral and treatment. Cancer Alliances have pathways in place to support diagnosis as part of their skin cancer pathways.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Richard Burgon:

[\[126075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications for covid-19 self-isolation support payments have been turned down since that scheme was introduced in (a) Leeds East constituency, (b) Leeds (c) Yorkshire and the Humber and (d) the UK.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 December 2020]: We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing, and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[124808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Welsh Government's social care workforce payment scheme and plans for similar payments in other devolved nations, what steps his Department is taking to recognise the contribution of social care workers during the covid-19 outbreak in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 December 2020]: The social care workforce now more than ever demonstrates unwavering compassion and dedication. We are grateful and proud of everyone working in social care. We want to celebrate the workforce and give them the acknowledgement and appreciation that they deserve. This includes developing the CARE brand to increase visibility and amplify the voice of social care both now and in the future. Alongside the CARE brand, we are providing CARE badges for all employed in social care to wear. We are continuing to explore further ways to recognise the workforce, empower staff and reinforce appreciation across the sector, and are making sure this recognition continues far beyond the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Strokes: Health Services**Sir Robert Neill:** [\[910598\]](#)

What steps he is taking to improve (a) aftercare and (b) rehabilitation for victims of stroke.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan highlighted stroke community rehabilitation as an area with significant scope for improvement. NHS England and NHS Improvement are piloting higher intensity models of stroke rehabilitation at several sites around the country. In addition, investment has been made in the development of integrated stroke delivery networks, delivering improvements across the whole stroke pathway, including rehabilitation and life after stroke services.

■ Stronger Towns Fund**Patrick Grady:** [\[910599\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with (a) the devolved Administrations and (b) Cabinet colleagues on the Barnett consequential of allocations from the Stronger Towns Fund for health and social care.

Edward Argar:

At the Spending Review last year, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government received funding for the Towns Fund, which includes the Stronger Towns Fund. Barnett consequential do apply and are handled through the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and HM Treasury in this context.

■ Suicide**Sir John Hayes:** [\[133651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people under the age of 60 have died by suicide in the last 12 months.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department does not hold the requested data.

■ Surgery: Coronavirus**Craig Whittaker:** [\[126823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) patients and (b) wider society of delayed or cancelled elective procedures in hospitals in England as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 14 December 2020]: Latest statistics show that, since the start of the pandemic, the elective waiting list increased from 4,235,970 in March 2020 to 4,442,107 in October 2020. This compares with a waiting list of 4,446,299 in October 2019. The number of patients waiting over 52 weeks for treatment has risen from 3,097 in March 2020 to 162,888 in October 2020.

NHS England has worked with patient groups and clinicians to ensure that patients who may be subject to delayed or cancelled procedures are provided with support. A national clinical stratification programme has been established to ensure that every patient waiting for surgery by the end of December has a shared decision-making discussion about their treatment.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Grahame Morris: [\[102757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have successfully accessed the £500 self-isolation payment; and what estimate he has made of the proportion of people who are eligible to receive that payment who have received it.

Helen Whately:

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

Caroline Lucas: [\[109278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether parents or guardians who cannot work because they need to provide childcare for a dependent as a result of that dependent being identified as a close contact of somebody who has received a positive covid-19 test are eligible for the £500 self-isolation payment; and if she will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 was introduced on 28 September, to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and will lose income as a result.

If a child or dependent is self-isolating because they have tested positive, other household members will also need to self-isolate and will be able to claim under the scheme, provided they meet the other eligibility criteria. Parents or guardians of children or dependents who have to self-isolate because of contact with someone outside their household who has tested positive are not eligible.

Richard Burgon: [\[110871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have received the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment since it was introduced, broken down by the smallest available geographical unit for which data are available.

Helen Whately:

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

Charlotte Nichols: [\[110925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will extend the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to workers told to self-isolate who are not in receipt of qualifying benefits and who cannot work from home.

Helen Whately:

If a worker is not in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits and cannot work from home, they may be eligible for a £500 discretionary payment, provided they meet the eligibility criteria set by their local authority.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[116642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to continue provide all local authorities with the 5 per cent discretionary top-up to fund the £500 self-isolation payment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2020]: The Government has provided an initial £50 million to local authorities in England to cover the costs of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This includes £15 million for discretionary payments, which is a fixed envelope until 31 January 2021.

Dan Carden: [\[122873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding to enable local authorities to administer (a) discretionary payments and (b) other aspects under the covid-19 self-isolation support schemes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 3 December 2020]: Local authorities have been awarded an initial £50 million to cover the costs associated with this scheme, with £25 million to cover the costs of the main Test and Trace Support Payment; £15 million for discretionary payments; and £10 million for administration costs.

The scheme will run until 31 January 2021 and people may also apply for other benefits if they have to self-isolate, such as Statutory Sick Pay. During this time, we will continue to review the efficacy of the scheme, including the impact of COVID-19 incidence levels.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[130801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who were notified to self-isolate by the NHS covid-19 contact tracing app before recent changes making them eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme will be able to make retrospective applications for the £500 discretionary payment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: From 28 September 2020, anyone who received notification of a positive test result, including app users, could apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment if they met the necessary eligibility criteria. In addition, from 10 December 2020 app users that receive a notification to self-isolate because they

have been in close contact with a positive case of COVID-19 can also apply. However, app users who were notified to self-isolate by the National Health Service COVID-19 app and had completed their isolation period prior to the change in December are not be able to retrospectively claim the Test and Trace Support Payment.

Stella Creasy: [\[131259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Test and Trace Support Payments have been (a) awarded and (b) refused in each (i) geographic region and (ii) employment sector.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing, and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

Dan Jarvis: [\[91759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's covid-19 self-isolating payment scheme announced on 27 August 2020, how many people have applied to that scheme; how many of those applicants received payment from that scheme; how many payments were made within the stated 48 hour timeframe; and what the average waiting time was for payment.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 September 2020]: We are working closely with all 314 lower tier and unitary local authorities to collate information on how the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is progressing and will release information on the number of applications, number of successful applications and amounts paid out in due course.

■ Tobacco: Sales

Steve Brine: [\[132891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the ongoing investigation in accordance with the European Union Commission implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/779, what steps the Government plans to take to enforce the ban on menthol cigarettes after the end of the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

The investigation into certain tobacco products which contain menthol, being carried out in Sweden in accordance with the European Union Commission's implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/779, no longer applies to Great Britain. The Department has asked Public Health England to conduct testing analysis of cigarettes on the Great Britain market as part of its investigation of possible breaches of the prohibition of characterising flavours in the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. Since 20 May 2020 the production or supply of cigarettes with a menthol characterising

flavour in the United Kingdom has been prohibited under Regulation 15 of the 2016 Regulations.

■ UK Lighthouse Labs Network: Procurement

Catherine McKinnell: [\[102812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that public sector procurement in relation to Lighthouse laboratories prioritises local UK firms.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 19 October 2020]: The development of the Lighthouse Labs was a United Kingdom-based response to the COVID-19 pandemic and involved direct contract awards allowed within the procurement regulations. Contracts were placed on due diligence requirements of value for money and meeting service and performance quality standards. We know from the successful entrants that the majority are UK based organisations.

■ Vitamin D

Sir Greg Knight: [\[132775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to help increase the intake of vitamin D during winter months among (a) the general public and (b) people with health vulnerabilities in 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

During the autumn and winter months everyone in the United Kingdom is advised to take a supplement of vitamin D every day to support general health and in particular for bone and muscle health.

A Public Health England marketing campaign ran throughout December 2020 to raise awareness of this advice. The campaign targeted those over 50 years old as well as black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups as two key vulnerable audiences. These groups were reached via advertising on social media and websites, as well as by messages delivered by healthcare professionals on popular BAME radio stations.

In addition, those on the clinically extremely vulnerable list and those in residential and nursing care homes in England have been offered free vitamin D supplements for the winter by the Government.

Duncan Baker: [\[133243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what scientific evidence informed the recommendation of the level for vitamin D supplementations.

Jo Churchill:

United Kingdom vitamin D recommendations are based on advice from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN). The SACN is an advisory committee of independent experts that advises the Government on nutrition-related matters.

In its 2016 report on vitamin D and health, the SACN carried out an extensive and robust assessment of the evidence on vitamin D and a wide range of musculoskeletal and non-musculoskeletal health outcomes, including infection. The SACN report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-vitamin-d-and-health-report>

HOME OFFICE

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Paul Blomfield:

[132878]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many locations under the Seasonal Workers' Pilot scheme were inspected by UK Visas and Immigration in each month from April 2019 to December 2020; and in which of those instances UKVI was accompanied by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold this data in a reportable format.

Information on broader Sponsorship activity can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sponsorship-transparency-data-november-2020>

■ British Nationality: Applications

Hilary Benn:

[133712]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications for British citizenship were concluded within (a) three months, (b) six months, (c) nine months and (d) more than 12 months of those applications being received by her Department in the last 12 months for which information is available.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is committed to routinely publishing data as part of the transparency data in the Immigration Statistics quarterly release. The latest data can be found on Gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-november-2020>

The available data includes performance against the six-month service standard and applications remaining unresolved, it does not break down the timescales for reaching a decision in any further detail.

■ Death Certificates

Mr Richard Holden:

[133252]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the General Register Office plans to introduce an officially-recognised digital version of death certificates.

Kevin Foster:

There is currently no provision in law to issue a death certificate other than in a paper format.

■ Entry Clearances: Overseas Students**Emma Hardy:**[\[133134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether students who arrive in the UK to complete their studies by 6 April 2021 will be eligible for the Graduate Immigration Route.

Emma Hardy:[\[133135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing students who have had to study by distance or via blended learning as a result of the covid-19 outbreak and who may not be able to complete their final semester of the 2020-21 academic year in the UK, to remain eligible for the Graduate Immigration Route.

Kevin Foster:

It is a core principle of the Graduate route that someone must have spent some time studying in the UK.

As we have stated for some time, in light of the impact Covid-19 has had on international students those who began studying overseas in Autumn 2020 and who enter the UK before 6 April 2021 to complete their course will be eligible for the Graduate route if they meet the requirements.

On 24 December we published further guidance confirming those who begin study overseas in January 2021 will also be eligible for the route if they enter the UK to complete their course before 27 September 2021 and meet the requirements.

Any period of distance learning in the current academic year will not count against eligible students who graduate after 2021, providing they complete their course in the UK under the Student route. Those who do not complete their studies in the UK will be ineligible.

■ Immigrants: Sleeping Rough**Caroline Lucas:**[\[131225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will reverse the current plans for rough sleeping to become grounds for refusal or cancellation of permission to be in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Secretary of State has no plans to reverse the Immigration Rule which makes provision for the discretionary refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the grounds of rough sleeping. It will be used sparingly and only as a last resort where a person sleeping rough refuses offers of support and engages in persistent anti-social behaviour.

A person is expected to leave the UK if their leave is cancelled or refused. If they do not choose to leave voluntarily the Home Office may enforce their removal. They will not be subject to deportation action which is reserved for foreign national offenders with serious and persistent criminality as well as for reasons of national security.

The new rule is not intended to criminalise rough sleeping or penalise those who inadvertently find themselves without a roof over their head for a short period of time.

■ Immigration: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[133709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that urgent requests to expedite outstanding applications to remain in the UK are considered in a timely manner during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When urgent requests to expedite applications are received, UKVI will make an assessment of the circumstances of each. If there are compelling or compassionate reasons behind the request, they will work with Commercial Partners to expedite and bring ahead of the caseworking queue.

■ Immigration: EEA Nationals

Apsana Begum:

[\[131493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for citizenship from EEA citizens have been rejected since 30 September 2020 due to the applicant not holding comprehensive sickness insurance.

Kevin Foster:

No such applications have been refused or rejected on this basis.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Layla Moran:

[\[134091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department will accept applications from EU citizens under the EU Settlement Scheme who arrive in the UK after the 31 December 2020 deadline due to the prevention of travel by the covid-19 travel ban.

Kevin Foster:

Travel is and was permitted from the EEA and Switzerland for the purpose of taking up residence in the UK, subject to complying with the relevant public health regulations in each nation.

■ Immigration: Windrush Generation**Apsana Begum:** [\[131500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the outcome of her review of the compliant environment; and whether that review includes the effect of the No Recourse to Public Funds condition.

Priti Patel:

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

■ Migrant Workers**Sir Robert Syms:** [\[131172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign nationals from (a) inside and (b) outside the EU were relocated for work purposes into the UK in 2019 by each of the visa categories prescribed by the Government; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The available published data shows the numbers of visas granted in each work route but does not provide any information on where the applicant resided (inside / outside the EU) or if the individual was "relocating". There is also no guarantee these visas are used once issued.

Data on visas granted by category can be found in Vis_D02 at:

[entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-sep-2020.xlsx](#)

■ Migrant Workers: Coronavirus**Sir Robert Syms:** [\[131173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, what assessment she has made of whether travel restrictions during the covid-19 pandemic have reduced the number of professional staff being relocated to the UK for the purpose of taking up professional employment; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

In the period in question, the relocation of non-EEA national personnel by a multinational business to a UK branch or subsidiary of that business was facilitated primarily through the Tier 2 (Intra-Company Transfer) category of the Immigration Rules.

The most recent published migration statistics can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics>.

■ Migrant Workers: Visas**Sir Robert Syms:****[131168]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many individuals were relocated into the UK using the intra-company visa system in the most recent period for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The available published data shows the numbers of visas granted in each work route but does not provide any information on where the applicant resided (inside / outside the EU) or if the individual was "relocating". There is also no guarantee these visas are used.

Data on visas granted by category can be found in Vis_D02 at:

[entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-sep-2020.xlsx](#)

■ New Businesses: Visas**Sir Robert Syms:****[131169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of individuals in who were granted start-up visas in 2019 earned over £73,900 per annum; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is responsible for this question, not the Treasury.

The Home Office is unable to provide the statistical answer to this question as it asks for information which is not obtainable from our systems.

The latest published migration statistics (Sept 2020) that are available, can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2020>

■ Overseas Students: Visas**Emma Hardy:****[133133]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a longer term study visa to make the UK more attractive to international students.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has already announced the launch of the Graduate route in Summer 2021 which will enhance our offer to international students.

Students undertaking a degree at undergraduate level or above at a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance will be able to stay and work or look for work for two years (three years for PhD students) after successfully completing their course.

■ Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme

Paul Blomfield: [\[132881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many labour providers supplying workers under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme had their licenses revoked in each year from 2006 to 2013.

Kevin Foster:

Unlike the current Seasonal Workers Pilot, the Scheme Operators for the old Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme were not subject to sponsor licencing requirements.

Paul Blomfield: [\[132882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many workers were affected by breaches of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme in each year from 2006 to 2013.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold this data in a reportable format.

Information on broader historical SAWS activity can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257242/migrant-seasonal-workers.pdf

■ UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services

Catherine West: [\[134035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many appointments UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services are available each week at Core sites which do not require a fee.

Kevin Foster:

UKVI continue to work closely with Sopra Steria to monitor progress against their plan to ensure sufficient capacity at their service points in the UK to service projected demand forecasts and for increases to service point capacity to be flexed upwards or downwards where required. As a result the number of appointments available each week varies based on weekly capacity. This is monitored through Key performance indicators.

Provision of sufficient capacity to meet demand is measured against KPI metrics. The KPI for free appointments is 56% of total appointment availability and assures business capacity made available to customers at UKVCAS service points. This metric is designed to ensure, within capacity provided, more than half of all appointments at core sites (Cardiff, Croydon, Belfast, Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester) will be free to access by our customers.

Details on the relevant performance indicators to measure appointment availability has been published and can be found in Schedule 7 of the UKVI Front End Services contract available here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/ec5031ea-021e-471a-86cf-af540e8d8efa> (opens in a new tab)

The specific KPI level can be found at the following page:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-performance-indicators-kpis-for-governments-most-important-contracts>

■ UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[134034]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to assist people who are unable to attend UKVCAS centre appointments as they are shielding.

Kevin Foster:

UKVI and Sopra Steria Limited reopened UKVCAS in June in locations with COVID-19 secure measures in place.

If anyone needs to attend a physical UKVCAS appointment but is unable to travel because of COVID-19, they should contact UKVI through the Coronavirus Immigration Hotline (CIH) which can be reached via email or on the phone, on 0800 678 1767.

Further details for customers impacted by COVID-19 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>

■ Visas: LGBT People

Stuart C McDonald:

[132946]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of spouse/partnership visa applications in each of the last three years have been for same sex partners (a) in total and (b) in relation to (i) Uganda, (ii) USA, (iii) China, (iv) Brazil, (v) Pakistan and (vi) Australia.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visa applications in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the number of spouse/partnership visa applications are published in table Vis_D01 of the Entry clearance visa detailed datasets

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/managed-migration-datasets>

which include nationality breakdowns. The data does not show whether the application was from a same sex partner as these do not have a separate visa endorsement.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate up to September 2020. Information on future Home

Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.
https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance

The data from the table mentioned above are outlined below.

Entry clearance visa applications as a partner or spouse

	2017	2018	2019	2020 JAN TO SEP
Family: Partner ¹ total all nationalities	38,590	39,749	39,503	18,577
of which:				
Australia	726	848	761	358
Brazil	500	521	555	206
China	992	940	982	298
Pakistan	7,715	7,909	7,845	3,638
Uganda	124	166	167	51
United States	2,540	2,744	2,649	1,269
Family: Partner (for immediate settlement) total all nationalities	409	269	218	86
of which:				
Australia	40	3	0	0
Brazil	3	1	0	0
China	3	0	0	0
Pakistan	4	6	0	0
Uganda	0	0	1	0
United States	13	2	1	0

Source: Home Office, Immigration Statistics year ending September 2020 Visa Table Vis_D01

Table notes:

'Family: Partner' includes partners, spouses, Fiancé(e)s and proposed civil partners

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[132947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect on the willingness of an applicant for a same sex spouse/partner visa to submit the application of the processing of that application being out-sourced to a local company; and whether applications may be allowed to bypass that local company in certain circumstances.

Kevin Foster:

Commercial Partners have no involvement in visa decision-making, which is undertaken by UKVI Decision Makers only, and are unable to influence a visa decision outcome in any way.

Where Commercial Partners provide front end services to UKVI customers, customers also have the option of either uploading their supporting documents prior to their appointment or having these scanned by a commercial partner representative during the appointment.

UK Visas and Immigration also monitor the performance of the Commercial Partners who deliver services on behalf of the Home Office to ensure they comply with contractual service standards on applicant confidentiality, including providing equal treatment to all customers through The Equality Act 2010.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review

Apsana Begum:

[\[131497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timescale is for fully implementing the recommendations of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review.

Priti Patel:

The Permanent Secretary and I are committed to deliver lasting and meaningful change across the entire Home Office so that it represents all the communities it serves.

Work continues at pace to implement the findings of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review and Parliament will be updated on further progress in the new year.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Free Zones

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to improve the bid assessment proposals for freeports in response to the findings of the Public Accounts Committee on the towns fund selection process in its report Selecting towns for the Towns Fund, published 11 November 2020.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: My Department and the Treasury have developed a robust approach to assessing Freeport bids. We consulted publicly on the objectives of the Freeports policy and have set out clearly in the Freeports Bidding Prospectus what these are and how bids will be assessed against them. This includes explicitly stating (in Section 5) how information requested from bidders will be marked, how these marks will be weighted, and how bids will qualify for the appointable list. Finally, we have published (also in Section 5 of the Bidding Prospectus) the factors Ministers will consider when assessing this list and have committed to publishing the rationales for successful bids' selection.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[131242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the essential information required from bidders set out in his Department's document entitled, Freeports: bidding prospectus, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the 500 word limit for bidders to set out how they will meet the minimum standard of security and infrastructure required in customs and tax sites before being able to operate as a Freeport.

Luke Hall:

The word limits set out in Section 5 of the Freeports Bidding Prospectus have been carefully calibrated to give bidders the best chance to show the strengths of their proposals. We have given bidders the room to convey the key information we need to assess bids robustly, whilst ensuring that submitting a bid is feasible within the 12-week bidding period.

Successful bidders will then be invited to develop a business case for regeneration funding, to work with HMT and HMRC to review and confirm the boundaries of their proposed tax sites, and to begin the HMRC-run authorisation process for customs site operators, ensuring proposals remain of a high standard as they move into implementation.

Local Government**Layla Moran:**[\[130208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many meetings (a) he and (b) his Ministers have held (i) in 2020 and (ii) since Article 50 was triggered with the elected leaders of local authorities on preparations for the end of the transition period.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) continues to lead the Government's significant and regular engagement with councils and local government sector bodies, including the Local Government Association, on preparations for the end of the transition period.

The Local Government Secretary and the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government host regular teleconferences for local government leaders and chief

executives, with other ministers from across government also present to answer questions.

Ministers from MHCLG regularly speak to and meet with mayors, both bilaterally and as part of the M9 Group of Mayors.

MHCLG also continues to discuss priorities and support measures with councils in each of the nine English regions

MHCLG publishes details of ministers' meetings with external organisations regularly on Gov.uk. January to March 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-january-to-march-2020>

April to June 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-april-to-june-2020>

■ **Local Government: Debt Collection**

Navendu Mishra: [\[130253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities have used debt collection companies since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Department does not collect data on the use of debt collection companies by local authorities.

■ **Local Government: Sustainable Development**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[130646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is making available to local authorities to enable them to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into their strategies and services.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) include objectives that directly or indirectly related to local government functions, including with respect to social equality, the environment, and economic growth. Local authorities are supported in this regard by the Local Government Association, who provides detailed guidance and advice, including planning, engaging and implementing actions in support of the SDGs.

■ **Neighbourhood Development Plans: Horden**

Grahame Morris: [\[133788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, further to email correspondence of the hon. Member for Easington of 28 September 2020 and 25 November 2020, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using the UK

Shared Prosperity Fund or the Levelling Up Fund to support the Neighbourhood Renewal Plan prepared by Durham County Council in relation housing issues in Horden.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The Government is supporting the regeneration of towns and communities by targeting further investment at places most in need. The new Levelling Up Fund will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. The Fund will be open to all local areas and allocated competitively. We will prioritise bids to drive growth and regeneration for places in need, those facing particular local challenges, and areas that have potentially benefitted less from Government investment in recent years. We will publish a prospectus for the fund and launch the first round of competitions later this year. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will also help to level up and create opportunity across the UK for places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers. The Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework in 2021 and confirm its funding profile at the next Spending Review.

■ **Road Signs and Markings**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[131201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with (a) Ministers in the Department for Transport and (b) local authority leaders on road signs marking historic county boundaries in line with the Government's guidance on Celebrating the historic counties of England dated 16 July 2019.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The historic counties are an important element of our traditions which support the identity and cultures of many of our local communities. The non-statutory guidance of 16 July 2019 is designed to encourage a greater level of activity to celebrate the historic counties by setting out what local authorities can currently do in relation to these activities and referencing the relevant guidance and regulations, . The decision on whether to mark historic county boundaries on road signs is for each local highway authority, or, in the case of the Strategic Road Network, for Highways England, to consider.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will match existing financial support for research infrastructure, skills programmes and research intensive businesses provided by European Structural and Investment Funds.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK.

Funding for the UKSPF will at least match receipts from EU structural funds, on average reaching around £1.5 billion per year. Its funding profile will be set out at the next Spending Review.

To help local areas prepare over 2021-22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, the Government will provide £220 million additional funding to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE■ **Soya Beans: Imports****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[133093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of banning imports to the UK of soy from illegally deforested land.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

In November, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) tabled a new 'due diligence' requirement under the Environment Bill to tackle illegal deforestation.

This would require certain businesses to only source legally produced commodities where there is "forest risk" (those commodities that can lead to deforestation), conduct due diligence on their supply chains and report on it annually.

Whether specific commodities, including soya, are in scope will be determined through secondary legislation, on which DEFRA will consult further.

JUSTICE■ **Rape: Police Cautions****Alex Davies-Jones:**[\[134273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have received a police caution for rape in England and Wales in each year since 2015.

Chris Philp:

The Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 placed new restrictions on the use of Cautions for Indictable only offences (such as Rape) for offenders over 18. This restricted their use to exceptional circumstances, and only with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Ministry of Justice has published information on police cautions issued for rape offences, up to December 2018, in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, available [here](#):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802314/outcomes-by-offence-tool-2018.xlsx

Using the data tool above, type 'rape' in the 'Offence' filter. Select all options (19C-H, using 'Select Multiple Items' tickbox) in order to see police cautions for all rape offences. Number of cautions issued can be identified for each year from 2008 to 2018 in Row 23.

The figures relate to defendants for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

The Out of Court Disposals framework is currently being reformed following the announcement of the Lord Chancellor in the Sentencing White Paper in September 2020:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918187/a-smarter-approach-to-sentencing.pdf. Legislation will be brought forward in due course.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Divisions: Electronic Voting

Caroline Lucas:

[\[133774\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, whether he has requested data from party whips on the number of backbench votes being cast by individual party whips during proxy voting in the House of Commons; whether he has made an assessment of the effect on (a) scrutiny of the Government by backbench hon. Members and (b) the power of whips over voting decisions of backbench hon. Members of (i) continuing with the proxy voting system and (ii) allowing hon. Members to vote remotely in divisions during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown restrictions; if he will make it his policy to reinstate electronic voting in divisions for the duration of the national lockdown period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

It is the Government's view that the current arrangements for proxy voting are working well and are a better alternative to remote voting. Details of all proxy votes are readily available through the House service to all members and the public. Proxy voting has significantly reduced the overall number of people who are required to vote in person in the division lobbies and it is also flexible as members can choose their own proxy, irrespective of party. This strikes the right balance between ensuring a robust form of physical voting, which is not dependent on technology and individual members' wifi connections, while ensuring that very few members have to vote in person, thus ensuring safety.

It is vital that members' votes are cast in accordance with their individual will and, as set out in the proxy voting scheme agreed by the House, members who are eligible to vote by proxy must agree with the member nominated as their proxy when the proxy vote will be cast and how it will be exercised. The member designated as a proxy is expected to act in strict accordance with the instruction given by the absent member, ensuring the voting decisions of backbench members are upheld.

The Government has taken a number of actions to ensure that MPs can work from home more readily where possible. Measures are in place in both Houses, including virtual participation in all Chamber proceedings and as we have said throughout the pandemic, the Government continues to keep the approach in Parliament under review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Government

Stephen Farry:

[\[134274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals on its commitments arising from the New Decade, New Approach deal.

Mr Robin Walker:

Since the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) deal was reached in January 2020, the UK Government has made good progress on implementing its commitments. For example, regulations to bring Union flag flying days into line with guidance in the rest of the UK came into force in December 2020. We are committed to delivering on other important language, culture and identity commitments in the coming months.

The Government plans to bring forward legislation to address outstanding NDNA commitments when Parliamentary time allows. This will include legislative changes on reforming the Petition of Concern, altering the Codes governing Ministerial accountability and conduct, and establishing certain other provisions to increase the sustainability of the institutions.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence is leading on UK-wide legislation to further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into law. This legislation is being developed in close consultation with the Northern Ireland Office, other UK Government departments and the devolved administrations.

In addition, in 2020 the UK Government legislated to establish a Victims Payments Scheme, which will provide acknowledgement payments to those permanently injured in Troubles-related incidents through no fault of their own. The UK Government is also committed to bringing forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles in a way that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services: Exhaust Emissions****Simon Jupp:**[\[133304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to financially support coach operators in converting their fleets from Euro V to Euro VI emission standards.

Rachel Maclean:

We are committed to ensuring transport plays its part in reaching our net zero targets, and as such we are considering how to support all modes of transport. This includes working with the coach industry to support the increase of zero emission vehicles in their fleets.

■ Department for Transport: Public Inquiries**Lee Anderson:**[\[134149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 June 2020 to Question 62617 on Department for Transport: Public Inquiries, if he will publish the existing (a) statutory and (b) non-statutory public inquiries undertaken by his Department.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department does not have any statutory or non-statutory inquiries presently taking place.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[133908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government plans to take to reduce the disruption to key workers who have had vital driving tests cancelled since 2020 due to the covid-19 outbreak and are now at risk of being unable to work.

Rachel Maclean:

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, driving tests have been suspended in all areas of England, Scotland and Wales.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is not currently offering a critical worker service in England or Scotland. In Wales, the DVSA is responding to requests only from the Welsh ambulance trust for the testing of ambulance drivers.

In England and Wales, essential delegated bus and emergency service testing will continue where they are identified as an operational priority by bus companies and the emergency services.

The DVSA is in discussions with all Governments to address critical worker services in England, Scotland and Wales.

■ Motor Vehicles: Sales**Lee Anderson:**[\[134155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department is making on responding to its consultation entitled Consulting on ending the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans which closed on 31 July 2020; and how he plans to align the outcomes of that consultation with the Government's ambition to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 as set out in the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution published in November 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government announced the outcome of the consultation in the PM's Ten Point Plan. We are going further and faster to decarbonise transport by phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe. Between 2030 and 2035, new cars and vans can be sold if they have the capability to drive a significant distance with zero emissions [for example plug-in or full hybrids]. The meaning of 'significant zero emission capability' will be defined by consultation in 2021. Alongside the new phase out dates government has pledged a further £2.8 billion package of measures to support industry and consumers to make the switch to cleaner vehicles. The Government's written response to the consultation will be published in due course. We will publish a clear delivery plan in 2021.

■ Motor Vehicles: UK Trade with EU**Alan Brown:**[\[133942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, when the Working Group on Motor Vehicles and Parts is due to first meet.

Alan Brown:[\[133943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, what the selection process will be for the appointment of UK Government representatives to the Working Group on Motor Vehicles and Parts.

Alan Brown:[\[133944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to page 15 of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, published on 24 December 2020, how many (a) EU representatives and (b) UK Government representatives will sit on the Working Group on Motor Vehicles and Parts.

Rachel Maclean:

The procedure for establishing this working group has yet to be agreed between the UK and EU authorities, including setting the terms of reference, its membership and the frequency of meetings. The process for selecting UK representatives will be determined once these aspects are agreed, although it is our expectation that UK

delegates will be government officials with the relevant expertise in the development and enforcement of technical regulations for motor vehicles.

■ Motorcycles: Training

Andrew Rosindell: [\[133733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the expiry date of Compulsory Basic Training certificates for motorcyclists, who may be reliant on motorcycles for essential travel and unable to take a full motorcycle license test as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no current plans to extend the two-year validity period of a Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) certificate. It is important that learners have the skills to be competent and safe riders and have up to date road safety knowledge as they prepare to take their test. To extend the validity period would require regulatory change.

Minimising the risk to road safety has always been a priority in our response to COVID-19. Ensuring riders have the current relevant knowledge and hazard perception skills is a vital part of the training of riders, who are most at risk of being involved in an accident on the road.

■ Roads: Accidents

Lilian Greenwood: [\[133804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is planning for the publication of reported road casualties in Great Britain for the year ending June 2020 to be delayed until March 2021.

Lilian Greenwood: [\[133805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which 10 police forces were unable to provide casualty data to his Department leading to the delay in the planned publication of that data in November 2020.

Lilian Greenwood: [\[133806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which of the 10 police forces which were unable to provide casualty data to his Department leading to the delay in publication of that data in November 2020 operate CRASH, the new casualty reporting system.

Lilian Greenwood: [\[133807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage police forces that have not yet adopted the CRASH system to do so.

Rachel Maclean:

The publication date for Reported road casualties in Great Britain, provisional estimates for the year ending June 2020 has now been confirmed as 28 January 2021 and pre-announced via Department's forthcoming publications schedule:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics#forthcoming-publications>

This publication has been delayed from the initially scheduled date of November 2020 in response to delays in the submission of data to DfT from some police forces whose ability to process their respective records has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2020, at least one month of data was missing for the following forces, none of which has adopted the CRASH system: Avon and Somerset, Derbyshire, Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, Lincolnshire, North Wales, Northamptonshire, South Wales, Thames Valley and Wiltshire.

CRASH is provided free to police forces in England and Wales who wish to use it. We continue to engage with the forces not using CRASH to understand the barriers to adopting the system. We anticipate new forces will be moving to using CRASH in 2021. However, this is a decision for Chief Constables as the Home Office does not mandate the use of specific police IT systems.

■ UK Trade with EU: Customs

Gavin Newlands:

[\[132992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the average length of delay at the border to hauliers exporting to the EU under the terms of the new trade deal with the EU compared to customs union membership.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Now that that transition period has ended EU authorities require additional paperwork and checks when goods are moved from the UK to the EU. Border readiness checks are undertaken both in the EU and within the UK (to ensure that freight can enter the EU after it has left the UK). These additional checks take time and there will inevitably be a certain proportion that are not border ready (i.e. have the correct documentation), which may result in some disruption. DfT analysis has focused on a Reasonable Worst Case Scenario for planning purposes, which can be found here. Note that this is not an estimate but a scenario used for contingency planning purposes. As yet it is too early to use observed data to provide an estimate, as freight volumes have been low, as they usually are in early January.

TREASURY

■ Air Pollution

Ruth Jones:

[\[134137\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to tackle toxic air.

Kemi Badenoch:

We are determined to tackle air pollution given its significant negative impact on public health, the economy and the environment. Air quality has improved

significantly over recent decades and will continue to improve thanks to the action we have already taken.

The Government has committed £880m to support Local Authorities deliver their Air Quality plans. Alongside this, the Government has also recently announced a £2 billion package to create a new era for cycling and walking – the largest ever boost for cyclists and pedestrians – which includes £225 million in 20/21 to help local authorities create more cycle lanes and reallocate road space.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Scott Mann:

[\[133986\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress he has made on the duty review for alcohol announced in the spring Budget 2020; and what assessment he has made of the potential economic merits of lowering the duty on spirits.

Kemi Badenoch:

A call for evidence was held in 2020, which closed on 29 November. The Government is now analysing the responses provided and will provide further updates on the duty review in due course.

Alcohol duties are kept under review and the impact of a change to spirits duty is considered at each fiscal event, including its effects on the economy.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Paul Maynard:

[\[133770\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the £594m discretionary fund announced to support businesses impacted by the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown will be accessible to (a) airlines, (b) airports, (c) ground handlers and (d) other aviation businesses.

Kemi Badenoch:

As per the Chancellor's announcement on 5 January, local authorities in England will receive a £500 million top-up to the £1.1 billion which they have already received for the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). We encourage local authorities to use their ARG allocations to set up a discretionary grant scheme, for example to make payments to businesses which are affected by the lockdown, but which are not legally closed themselves. Local authorities can also use the ARG to support businesses indirectly including by providing additional guidance and support for businesses in their areas.

Local Authorities are responsible for determining the precise eligibility for the Additional Restrictions Grant in their areas, based on their assessment of local economic need.

The announcement on 5 January also includes £729 million of funding for the devolved administrations as part of the unprecedented upfront funding guarantee. The total of the guarantee is reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects all additional

funding and was most recently increased by £800 million to £16.8 billion on 24 December.

■ **Beer and Public Houses: Coronavirus**

Julian Sturdy: [\[133831\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of lowering the tax burden on pubs and small breweries to support recovery after the covid-19 lockdown.

Kemi Badenoch:

Alcohol duties are kept under review and any announcements would be made at the next fiscal event.

■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Julian Sturdy: [\[133824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the need for support during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown for business in the coach and minibus sector, which do not qualify for Government grants.

Kemi Badenoch:

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

In addition, local authorities will receive an additional £500 million discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding (worth £20 per head of population) which they have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Local authorities have a significant amount of discretion when it comes to deciding which businesses receive payments from the ARG; we encourage them to use their allocations to set up discretionary grant schemes using this funding, e.g. for businesses who are affected by closures but who are not legally closed themselves. The coach sector may be able to benefit from these schemes. We encourage businesses to contact their local authority for more information on the ARG.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Henry Smith: [\[132860\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ensure that future covid-19 business support grant schemes distributed by local authorities are based on the number of businesses and employment in an area rather than a per capita population figure.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Additional Restrictions Grant, which is allocated on a per capita basis, is only one part of the Government's comprehensive support package for businesses and local authorities during this time. The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) is allocated on a per-business basis and provides businesses in England which are legally required to close due to national or local restrictions with up to £3,000 per month of closures, depending on their rateable value. Businesses which are legally required to close are also eligible for one-off grants worth up to £9,000, depending on their rateable value.

In addition, through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open), local authorities which were subject to restrictions on socialising (in particular a ban on indoor household mixing) before the latest lockdown was announced received additional funding so that they could make grants of up to £2,100 per month to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses which were able to remain open, but which were experiencing a severe reduction in demand due to restrictions on socialising. This funding is also calculated on a per-business basis.

Given that both population and business densities create pressures on local authorities, by providing some funding per-head and some per-business we are achieving a fair balance.

Kim Johnson:[\[134237\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the merits of reintroducing the (a) £10,000 through the Small Business Grant Fund and (b) targeted Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund of up to £25,000 to assist businesses forced to close during the January 2021 lockdown.

Kemi Badenoch:

The additional support announced on 5 January is worth £4.6 billion and comes on top of the £1.1 billion already provided to local authorities through the Additional Restrictions Grant, as well as the existing Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) which is worth over £1 billion per month under current restrictions. Businesses could receive up to £18,000 over the next three months to the end of March if they are required to close due to COVID-19-related restrictions.

In addition to the grant schemes, we have made available a wider package of support which includes an extension of the furlough scheme until April; an extension of the COVID-19 loan schemes until March; a business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure business properties; mortgage holidays; enhanced Time to Pay for taxes; and VAT cuts and deferrals.

Kim Johnson:[\[134238\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the merits of a German -style scheme where Government pays a certain percentage of revenue lost, for a business effected by covid-19 restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury regularly monitors global economic developments, including the policy response of other economies, and their impact on the UK as part of the normal process of policy development. It is not for the UK Government to comment on other countries policies.

■ Climate Change**Ruth Jones:**[\[134136\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to tackle climate change.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Chancellor's announcements at the Spending Review support the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution to help the UK achieve net zero by 2050.

The Spending Review commits to spend £12 billion of public investment, kickstarting our transition to net zero and boosting the UK's global leadership on green infrastructure and technologies ahead of COP26 next year.

The Ten Point Plan will support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs in the UK, and spur over three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

The Government uses a range of levers to meet its environmental objectives. For example, the Chancellor has announced the UK government's intention to issue its inaugural green gilt in 2021, subject to market conditions. The green gilt will help to finance projects that are critical to achieving the UK's ambitious environmental and climate goals, particularly its commitment to Net Zero by 2050.

The Treasury has launched the Net Zero Review to explore how the transition to a net zero economy will be funded, and where the costs will fall. The Review will look at options for a balance of contributions between households, businesses and the taxpayer, and how to maximise economic growth opportunities from the transition.

■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[131248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library copies of correspondence in which he sought epidemiological advice on the Eat Out To Help Out scheme before the announcement of that scheme.

Kemi Badenoch:

The hospitality sector was one of the worst affected by the lockdown and the Eat Out to Help Out scheme was intended to support 129,000 businesses and help protect almost 2 million jobs, disproportionately occupied by workers who are young, female and BAME. By midnight 31 August, there had been 100 million meals claimed for as part of the scheme.

The scheme was designed in a safe and responsible manner to aid business owners who worked hard to implement the social distancing guidelines and make their premises safe. All businesses eligible for the support under the scheme were required to implement all applicable health and safety measures, including social distancing guidelines and Covid-secure guidance. The scheme was also designed to boost demand when it is typically lowest – during the week, Monday-Wednesday – rather than at the weekend when some restaurants will face excess demand. It did not include spend on alcohol due to its public health impact, which has significant economic and social costs.

The government considers the effect of all measures in aggregate, including the support scheme and targeted restrictions required, based on a range of epidemiological evidence and the expert advice of SAGE. Public Health England's National COVID-19 Surveillance Reports over August and the early part of September showed that only a small fraction of incidents investigated were linked to restaurant settings. These reports are available on the government's website.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[\[133826\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the need for Government support during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown for businesses in the (a) wedding industry and (b) wider events sector that do not qualify for currently available grants.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like the wedding industry and wider events.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups, and other government departments to understand the long-term effects of Covid-19 across all key areas of the economy.

Some businesses that are not eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes or from the one-off grants for closed businesses may still benefit from the £1.6bn of discretionary funding (the Additional Restrictions Grant) which has been allocated to local authorities to support their local businesses.

In addition, the Chancellor has extended Government loan schemes until the end of March 2021, and introduced 'Pay as You Grow' options for businesses which have taken out loans through BLS or CBLS, giving a longer repayment period and allowing further flexibility on repayments. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) have also been extended until the end of April 2021.

Eligible events and businesses may have also benefit from business rates relief, a moratorium on commercial tenant evictions and the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund supporting thousands of cultural organisations including theatres, music venues, comedy clubs and festivals.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the events and wedding industry, as we respond to this pandemic.

■ Exports: VAT

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[133905]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the UK's fashion and textile sector of the decision to end the VAT Retail Export Scheme.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 11 September 2020, the Government announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers) following the transition period. The following rules were implemented on 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) can purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances apply to passengers entering Great Britain from any destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain has not been extended to EU residents and has been withdrawn for all passengers.
- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods has been removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May 2020. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with industry stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government has also met and discussed these changes with many stakeholders following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

On 25 November 2020 the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) set out their assessment of the fiscal impact of the withdrawal of the VAT RES.

Factoring in a higher-than-usual elasticity of 1.9 to account for spending on luxury goods, the OBR estimate that the withdrawal of the VAT RES will result in a significant direct Exchequer saving of around £400 million per year, once passenger numbers recover from the impacts of Covid-19. Based on the 1.2 million users of the

scheme who received a refund in 2019, this includes an assumption that approximately 20,000 – 30,000 fewer tourists visit Great Britain a year. That is 0.07% of the 40 million visitors to the UK in 2019.

The OBR also looked at this package in the round when assessing the indirect impact on the economy – including the effects of extending duty-free sales – alongside the substantial support provided to the economy and retail industry.

■ Financial Services

Alison Thewliss:

[\[132995\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on (a) jobs, (b) investment and (c) profitability in the financial services sector.

John Glen:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement gives legal certainty for financial services firms, with commitments on market access and fair treatment. The Agreement supports firms providing cross-border financial services. Beneficial provisions ensure UK service suppliers travelling to the EU for short trips do not face undue barriers like work permits, and UK business visitors are permitted to stay in the EU for 90 days in any 180-day period. We have also agreed commitments on visa facilitation for professionals engaged in cross-border trade.

It is the first free trade agreement the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas, which will provide benefits for jobs, investment and profitability in the financial services sector. The Agreement also establishes a stable foundation for us to develop a constructive and engaged relationship with the EU on financial services, as sovereign equals. Importantly we have also agreed with the EU that we will establish an MoU setting out the parameters for our regulatory cooperation.

The government has also taken further action which complements the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and will facilitate the retention of jobs, investment in, and profitability of the financial services sector. To promote openness and provide clarity and stability for industry, the Government announced multiple equivalence decisions for EEA Member States where it made sense for the UK to do so.

The UK has long been a global hub, leader and pioneer in financial services and the Government has an ambitious strategy to strengthen our world-leading financial centre now that we have left the EU. This is centred upon building long-lasting financial partnerships around the world, maintaining the high regulatory standards that make the UK an attractive place to do business, and being at the forefront of innovation so we can create and seize opportunities in the markets of the future.

On 9 November, the Chancellor also set out plans to bolster the dynamism, openness and competitiveness of the sector – including issuing the UK's first ever Sovereign Green Bond, becoming the first country in the world to make TCFD-aligned disclosures mandatory, reviewing the UK's listings regime to attract the most innovative firms, and leading the global conversation on new technologies like

stablecoins and Central Bank Digital Currencies. The announcements have been praised by industry for being supportive, pragmatic and positive.

■ Financial Services: UK Trade with EU

Alison Thewliss: [\[132996\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to seek a future agreement with the EU on financial services.

John Glen:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union gives legal certainty for financial services firms in line with recent EU precedent and provides a stable foundation for us to develop a constructive and engaged relationship with the EU on financial services, as sovereign equals. Alongside the Agreement, the UK and EU made a joint declaration that we will establish structured regulatory cooperation for financial services and agree by March 2021 a Memorandum of Understanding to provide a framework for this cooperation.

Alison Thewliss: [\[132997\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he had with Cabinet colleagues on including financial services in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

John Glen:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement includes provisions on financial services, with important commitments on market access and fair treatment in line with recent EU precedent. The Government was clear throughout the negotiations that the Agreement should promote financial stability, market integrity, and investor and consumer protection for financial services, providing a predictable, transparent, and business-friendly environment for cross-border financial services business.

Ruth Jones: [\[134139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on UK GDP of the treatment of financial services in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

John Glen:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement will help unlock investment and protect high value jobs right across the UK, from financial services through to car manufacturing. And, we will now take full advantage of the fantastic opportunities available to us as an independent trading nation, striking trade deals with other partners around the world.

For financial services specifically, the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement gives legal certainty, with commitments on market access and fair treatment. It provides a stable foundation for us to develop a constructive and engaged relationship with the EU on financial services, as sovereign equals. Importantly we have also agreed with the EU that we will establish an MoU setting out the

parameters for our regulatory cooperation. It is the first free trade agreement the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas, which will provide benefits for jobs, investment and profitability in the financial services sector.

The government has also taken further action which complements the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and will facilitate the productivity and profitability of the financial services sector. To promote openness and provide clarity and stability for industry, the Government announced multiple equivalence decisions for EEA Member States where it made sense for the UK to do so.

The UK has long been a global hub, leader and pioneer in financial services and the Government has an ambitious strategy to strengthen our world-leading financial centre now that we have left the EU. This is centred upon building long-lasting financial partnerships around the world, maintaining the high regulatory standards that make the UK an attractive place to do business, and being at the forefront of innovation so we can create and seize opportunities in the markets of the future.

■ Government Assistance

Alex Sobel:

[134101]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the changes to state aid rules as a result of the UK leaving the EU.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has published guidance on the subsidy control obligations that the UK will be subject to post-EU Exit. This sets out further detail on the subsidy control obligations that now apply in the UK, and how compliance with these rules should be approached.

A copy of this guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities>

■ Holiday Accommodation: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[133823]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the need for Government support during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown for self-catered accommodation owners, who do not qualify for Government grants.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout this crisis, the Government has sought to support businesses, jobs and public services up and down the UK. That is why it has spent over £280 billion to make a package of support available for businesses which has included billions in wage support, loans, tax deferrals, Business Rate reliefs and general and sector-specific grants.

Following the implementation of the latest national lockdown in January, the Government announced additional funding for businesses worth £4.6 billion across the UK. This includes a £500m payment to local authorities, to top up their allocation from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), which has already provided local authorities with £1.1 billion.

This funding will ensure that local authorities can provide discretionary grants to businesses, such as self-catered accommodation owners, which are not eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grants but which are nonetheless experiencing a severe impact on their business due to the national lockdown. These businesses may also be eligible for further aspects of our generous support package outlined above.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[\[133822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the need for support during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown for (a) breweries and (b) other businesses within the hospitality supply chain that do not qualify for covid-19 Government grants.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that breweries, and other businesses within the hospitality supply chain have been acutely disrupted by recent necessary restrictions to hospitality businesses. Throughout the crisis the Government's priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods. The Government has acted to deliver support to these businesses through:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has supported 1.4 million jobs across the hospitality sector, and has been extended until the end of April 2021.
- Local Authorities (in England) have been given an additional £500 million of discretionary funding to support local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted. Local Authorities have discretion to determine how much funding to provide to businesses and exactly which businesses to target.
- A VAT deferral 'New Payment Scheme' whereby businesses which deferred their VAT due between March and June until March 2021 will have the option of making 11 payments spread throughout the year rather than one lump sum.
- Access to affordable, Government backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for and larger firms, along with the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises.
- A reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors.

- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England, saving around 350,000 ratepayers a combined £10bn.

Breweries have and will continue to benefit directly from Government support schemes, and indirectly from the support offered to the pubs and restaurants they supply, protecting jobs in the industry. The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the sector and to work with businesses and representative groups to inform our efforts to support this sector.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Carla Lockhart:

[\[133298\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress has been made on the implementation of the Levelling Up Fund; and whether that fund will be administered by the (a) Northern Ireland Executive, (b) UK Government or (c) local authorities in Northern Ireland.

Kemi Badenoch:

As set out at the Spending Review, the new Levelling Up Fund will be worth £4 billion for England, and will attract up to £0.8 billion for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the usual way. It will invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery. More broadly, the Government is committed to levelling up all parts of the UK, with the Spending Review setting out both new UK-wide interventions and an additional £900 million Barnett funding for the Northern Ireland Executive.

■ Local Restrictions Support Grant

Alex Sobel:

[\[134108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Local Restrictions Support grant will be available for (a) coach operators, (b) tour operators, (c) fairgrounds, (d) tour guides and (e) language schools.

Kemi Badenoch:

Eligibility for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (and the new one-off cash grants of up to £9,000) will depend on businesses' individual circumstances. Businesses in England are eligible if they:

- occupy property on which they pay business rates (and are the ratepayer)
- have been required to close because of the restrictions
- have been unable to provide their usual in-person customer service from their premises

Businesses which are not eligible for these grants for closed businesses, for example because they are not legally required to close or because they do not occupy business premises, may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). We recently increased the funding available under this scheme to £1.6 billion across England. It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for the ARG

based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

In addition to the grant schemes, we have made available a wider package of support including an extension of the furlough scheme until April; an extension of the COVID-19 loan schemes until March; a business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure business properties; mortgage holidays; enhanced Time to Pay for taxes; and VAT cuts and deferrals.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis:

[\[133857\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the financial situation of recipients of the mortgage holiday scheme's payment of mortgage breaks appearing as missed payments on credit checks; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

On 20 March 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published guidance on what it expects mortgage lenders to do for consumers facing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19.

As part of this guidance, the FCA set out that the consumer's credit score should remain unaffected by taking out a mortgage payment holiday. This has been achieved through the masking of the arrears status on the credit file. This remains the case for all borrowers accessing up to six months of mortgage payment holidays – borrowers can apply for a payment holiday until 31 March 2021.

HM Treasury and the FCA have been working closely with lenders and the credit reference agencies on this matter throughout the crisis and will continue to do so to ensure the best outcome for consumers and lenders.

■ Pay

Alison Thewliss:

[\[132998\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on (a) UK wages and (b) trends in the National Living Wage.

John Glen:

This is the first free trade agreement the EU has ever reached based on zero tariffs and zero quotas. It is an excellent outcome for families and businesses in every part of the UK. Businesses will be able to continue to trade smoothly, selling to their customers in the EU. From financial services through to automotive manufacturing, the deal protects high quality jobs and investment right across the UK. People will be able to continue to buy goods from Europe tariff-free, protecting consumer prices.

The Government remains committed to its longer-term target for the National Living Wage to reach two thirds of median earnings by 2024, provided economic conditions allow.

■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[134212\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support he plans to provide for hairdressers who have had to pay national insurance, pension contributions and other additional furlough costs on top of rent for several months without income and who face losing their businesses as a result of further lockdowns.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on businesses and workers in the beauty industry across the UK.

In response to the new restrictions, the Chancellor announced further support to businesses on top of the support already announced in the Winter Economy Plan and our previous economic responses. These support measures are carefully designed to complement each other to ensure we protect jobs and livelihoods.

This support includes a new one-off grant of up to £9,000 to support businesses in England which are legally required to close. This comes in addition to the existing monthly grants for closed businesses of up to £3,000 per month. Local authorities will also receive an additional £500m, to a total of £1.6bn, of discretionary funding to allow them to support their local businesses.

As measures to control the virus change, it is right that government support should also evolve. Because of this, we continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review.

■ Service Industries: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[134195\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide additional support to the hospitality and night time sector during the second wave of the covid-19 outbreak.

Matt Vickers:

[\[134260\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support the hospitality sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's hospitality sector and night-time businesses, and recognises that the hospitality sector has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Throughout the crisis the Government's priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods. The Government is delivering support to this sector and these businesses through:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which has supported 1.4 million jobs across the hospitality sector and has been extended until the end of April 2021.
- Cash grants of up to £3,000 for businesses forced to close. In addition, the Government has announced one-off top up grants worth £4 billion for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property. The Government expect over 600,000 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure business premises in England to benefit from these grants. Previously, the Small Business Grant Fund; Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund; and the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund all provided around a million business properties with over £11.6 billion worth of grants.
- Local Authorities (in England) have been given an additional £500 million of discretionary funding to support their local businesses. This builds on the £1.1 billion discretionary funding which local authorities in England have already received to support their local economies and help businesses impacted.
- An additional £1,000 Christmas grant for 'wet-led pubs' who missed out on business during the busy Christmas period.
- A VAT deferral 'New Payment Scheme' whereby businesses which deferred their VAT due between March and June until March 2021 will have the option of making 11 payments spread throughout the year rather than one lump sum.
- Access to affordable, Government-backed finance through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBLS) for larger firms, along with the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises.
- A reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors.
- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England, saving around 350,000 ratepayers a combined £10 billion.

The Government is continuing to collect evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry and work with businesses and representative groups to ensure that support provided is right for this industry and the economy as a whole.

■ Travel Agents: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[\[133825\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the need for Government support during the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown for businesses in the travel agency industry, which do not qualify for Government grants.

Kemi Badenoch:

Businesses are eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed) if their main form of in person business is legally closed.

Businesses that are ineligible for LRSG (closed) may be able to benefit from the Additional Restrictions Grant. The Government recently increased the funding available under this scheme to £1.6 billion across England. It is up to each local authority to determine eligibility for this scheme based on their assessment of local economic need; however, we encourage local authorities to support businesses which have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but which are ineligible for the other grant schemes.

■ UK Trade with EU: Financial Services

Emily Thornberry:

[\[132815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the loss of passporting rights under the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on the (a) ability of UK financial services exporters to operate in the EU and (b) profitability of UK financial services exporters.

John Glen:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement gives legal certainty for financial services firms, with commitments on market access and fair treatment. It provides a stable foundation for us to develop a constructive and engaged relationship with the EU on financial services, as sovereign equals. Importantly we have also agreed with the EU that we will establish an MoU setting out the parameters for our regulatory cooperation.

The Agreement facilitates firms providing cross-border financial services. Beneficial provisions ensure UK service suppliers travelling to the EU for short trips do not face undue barriers like work permits, and UK business visitors are permitted to stay in the EU for 90 days in any 180-day period. We have also agreed commitments on visa facilitation for professionals engaged in cross-border trade.

UK-based financial services firms have carried out extensive preparations to ensure they can continue doing business with EU customers. These preparations include establishing new legal entities in the EU, ensuring clients have completed the documentation necessary to trade with those entities, and inserting standard contractual clauses to contracts to enable personal data transfers from the EU to the UK.

The UK has long been a global hub, leader and pioneer in financial services and the Government has an ambitious strategy to strengthen our world-leading financial centre now that we have left the EU. This is centred upon building long-lasting financial partnerships around the world, maintaining the high regulatory standards that make the UK an attractive place to do business, and being at the forefront of innovation so we can create and seize opportunities in the markets of the future.

On 9 November, the Chancellor also set out plans to bolster the dynamism, openness and competitiveness of the sector – including issuing the UK's first ever Sovereign Green Bond, becoming the first country in the world to make TCFD-aligned disclosures mandatory, reviewing the UK's listings regime to attract the most

innovative firms, and leading the global conversation on new technologies like stablecoins and Central Bank Digital Currencies. These present new opportunities for UK financial services exporters, and the announcements have been praised by industry for being supportive, pragmatic and positive.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Chris Loder:

[\[134162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support unpaid carers during the covid-19 outbreak; and what plans she has to support unpaid carers in the future.

Justin Tomlinson:

This Government recognises and values the vital contribution made by carers each and every day in supporting some of the most vulnerable in society including pensioners and those with disabilities. The support that carers provide has been even more vital during the Covid-19 pandemic when other support services may have been reduced or even closed and the caring role became even harder due to the need to self-isolate or shield the person they care for.

Unpaid carers may be able to apply for Carer's Allowance if they meet the qualifying conditions, such as providing 35 hours of care a week. To ensure that carers already in receipt of Carer's Allowance do not inadvertently stop receiving it because of changes to patterns of care, we have allowed emotional support to count towards the 35 hours of care being provided by the carer as well as relaxing the rules around breaks in care. We have extended these provisions until 12 May 2021 in recognition that carers need extra flexibility in the way they provide care during the current emergency.

Between 2020/21 and 2025/26 real terms expenditure on Carer's Allowance is forecast to increase by nearly a third (around £1 billion). By 2025/26, the Government is forecast to spend just over £4bn a year on Carer's Allowance.

As of May 2020, there were 1008 carers in the West Dorset constituency that were receiving Carer's Allowance and in 2019/20 we spent approximately £3.6 million on Carer's Allowance there. A further 673 carers had a claim to an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance.

Carers have access to the full range of social security benefits according to their circumstances. Income replacement benefits help people and households on lower incomes, and can include a carer premium, currently £37.50 a week. An equivalent additional amount applies in Pension Credit. Universal Credit also includes a carer element at the rate of £162.92 per monthly assessment period. These amounts recognise the additional contribution and responsibilities associated with caring and mean that lower-income carers can receive more money than others who receive these benefits. Between the existing carer-specific support, and the temporary Covid-

19 uplift, 270,000 carer households receiving Universal Credit have benefitted from up to an extra £2,990 this financial year.

During the pandemic, the Government has also, for example:

- provided funding to Carers UK to extend their support phoneline;
- provided funding to Carers Trust to make onward grants to provide support to unpaid carers experiencing loneliness during the pandemic;
- produced a leaflet to help carers identify themselves on discharge from hospital;
- published guidance specifically for carers and young carers, which includes further information about sources of support including looking after their own health and wellbeing;
- under the current lockdown restrictions carers can arrange for another family member or friend to provide respite care so that they can take a break where this is reasonably necessary. Certain households can also form a support bubble with another household. This includes one person of any age living with one or more disabled persons of any age who require continuous care. This also includes a similar household but with other non-disabled persons also living in the household as long as there is no more than one non-disabled adult in the household. Further, one or more adults living with a child under 5 with a disability requiring constant care can also form a support bubble.

■ **Disability: Coronavirus**

Ruth Jones:

[\[133182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect on disabled people of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Hayes:

[\[134005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to support disabled people affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to supporting disabled people affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people using existing and new data sources.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is publishing a rolling programme of data and articles relating to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, with specific outputs on disabled people in Great Britain.

The Department has had discussions with charities, disabled people's organisations and individuals to understand the range of experiences disabled people have had during the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify the support needed.

The Government is ensuring that disabled people continue to have access to employment support, disability benefits, financial support; food, medicines, as well as accessible communications and updated guidance.

The Government continues to provide disability employment support through initiatives such as Access to Work, Disability Confident, the Work and Health Programme, Intensive Personalised Employment Support, and other forms of support that disabled people need to retain, adapt and move into employment.

The Cabinet Office Disability Unit works with disability stakeholders and across Government Departments to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered in the UK Government's response to COVID-19. We are clear that consideration of equality impacts must be integral in all key policy decisions. All equality and discrimination laws and obligations continue to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People this year taking into account the impacts of the pandemic on disabled people. The strategy will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects and phases of life.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**

Angela Crawley: [\[133937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support is available to people who have been diagnosed with long covid.

Justin Tomlinson:

People who are under State Pension Age and have a disability or health condition that affects their ability to work can apply for New Style Employment and Support Allowance (NS ESA), subject to the wider eligibility criteria.

Where an individual is not furloughed, and they are sick or incapable of work, they may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay from their employer subject to satisfying entitlement conditions.

In addition, where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to receive Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances. Those with long term health conditions may also be eligible for help with the additional costs that can arise from a long-term health condition or disability through Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance, depending on their age.

Angela Crawley: [\[133938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of (a) employment support allowance and (b) personal independence payment as a result of a long covid diagnosis.

Justin Tomlinson:

In relation to your question on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Information on lower level medical conditions is not currently available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The available information on the number of Employment and Support Allowance claimants by high level medical conditions is published here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

In respect of your question on Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the information you requested is not held by the Department. A specific diagnosis code for Long Covid does not exist in the PIP Computer System. Claimants who experience Long Covid symptoms will have a disability recorded that links with the claimant's functional needs.

Statistics on the number PIP Claims with Entitlement broken down by disability for each month from April 2013 – October 2020 is published on Stat-Xplore:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Equipment Plan

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS700\]](#)

I wish to inform Parliament that the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence has written to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee with our 2020 update on the affordability of the Defence Equipment Plan, covering the period 2020/21-2029/30. His letter and the supplementary tables have been placed in the Library of the House and published online. This more concise update takes the place of the usual Equipment Plan financial summary report and maintains continuity of financial reporting ahead of implementing the outcomes of the Spending Review and Integrated Review. I welcome the continued engagement of the National Audit Office (NAO) who have today published their independent assessment of our plans.

Last month, the Prime Minister announced a once in a generation modernisation of the Armed Forces including £16.5 billion additional spending on Defence over the next four years. I am determined that we seize this opportunity to modernise the Armed Forces to meet today's threat whilst taking hard decisions to put defence on a sustainable footing. To do so will require a transparent approach to taking these decisions, inviting robust scrutiny of our plans and recognising where we could be doing more to deliver better value for our spending.

In this context, today's update on the affordability of our plans as they were in April 2020, are a reminder of the challenge ahead and the need for decisive action now to ensure that we match our ambition and resources.

Over the year to April 2020, our central estimate of the shortfall in funding for equipment spending increased from £3 billion to £7 billion over 10-years, with potential for this to be greater if risks materialise and we take no action to intervene. This increase was largely the result of three sources of increased costs:

Deferral of spending on some projects to save money in the short-term while allowing decisions about their future to be taken in the context of the Integrated Review;

There were more limited opportunities to reduce the cost of established projects than in previous years and projects were more confident in delivering milestones and achieving their spending forecasts; and

Risks materialising including less favourable foreign exchange rate forecasts and additional non-discretionary spending in high-priority areas including the nuclear enterprise that we were not able to fully offset through savings.

The settlement we have received in the recent Spending Review means we are now in a position to tackle the root causes of these issues. We are already using the findings of the NAO's assessment of the Equipment Plan alongside our work on

these issues to improve our approach to implementing the outcomes of the Spending Review and ensure that our plans are affordable and deliverable.

I am pleased to see that the NAO has recognised the progress we are making in some areas, including management of efficiencies. Our ambitious transformation programme will build on this progress.

I expect our 2021 edition of the Equipment Plan financial summary to present the implications of the Spending Review and Integrated review for equipment spending and on progress in improving the management of our plans.

■ **Supply at No Cost of Lightly Armoured Patrol Vehicles to the Lebanese Armed Forces**

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS702\]](#)

The UK intends to supply a fleet of vehicles at no cost to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), in recognition of our strong relationship in tackling the shared terrorist threat.

At present the LAF do not have the capability to fully patrol Lebanon's border with Syria and have requested the UK's assistance in providing suitable equipment to fulfill this requirement. The UK has agreed to supply 100 surplus Army Revised Weapon Mounted Installation Kit Plus (RWMIK+) vehicles in response to a request from the Lebanese Commander in Chief.

The supply of these vehicles will greatly enhance the LAF's capacity to mount long distance patrols across rugged mountainous terrain and allow their Land Border Regiments (LBRs) to more effectively counter the threat of armed smugglers and extremists trying to enter Lebanon.

The 100 Revised Weapon Mounted Installation Kit Plus (RWMIK+) vehicles, valuing £1,502,000, are surplus to the needs of the British Army. The logistical costs of collating and then transporting the vehicles to Lebanon will be borne by the Conflict Stability and Security Fund, and training in the operation of the vehicles will be borne by the Defence Acquisition Fund (South).

Delivery of the RWMIK+ to Beirut is expected to commence in January 2021.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (1 September 2020 to 30 November 2020)**

The Minister of State for Security (James Brokenshire):

[\[HCWS698\]](#)

Section 19(1) of the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (the Act) requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of every relevant three-month period on the exercise of her TPIM powers under the Act during that period.

The level of information provided will always be subject to slight variations based on operational advice.

TPIM NOTICES IN FORCE (AS OF 30 NOVEMBER 2020)	3
Number of new TPIM notices served (during this period)	0
TPIM notices in respect of British citizens (as of 30 November 2020)	3
TPIM notices extended (during the reporting period)	1
TPIM notices revoked (during the reporting period)	1
TPIM notices revived (during the reporting period)	0
Variations made to measures specified in TPIM notices (during the reporting period)	3
Applications to vary measures specified in TPIM notices refused (during the reporting period)	0
The number of subjects relocated under TPIM legislation (during this the reporting period)	3

Two individuals have been charged with breaching their TPIM notices in this period.

The TPIM Review Group (TRG) keeps every TPIM notice under regular and formal review. Fourth quarter TRG meetings were held on 14 and 15 December 2020.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ The Second Report on the Use of the Petition of Concern Mechanism in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):

[\[HCWS701\]](#)

I am today laying before both Houses of Parliament the second report by the UK Government on the use of the Petition of Concern mechanism in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

As part of the New Decade, New Approach deal upon which devolved government was restored in Northern Ireland on 11 January 2020, the UK Government committed to undertaking such a report every six months.

This report covers the period from 10 July 2020 to 11 January 2021, during which no Petition of Concern has been lodged against any motion in the Assembly.

The next UK Government report on the use of the Petition of Concern will cover the period from 11 January 2021 to 10 July 2021.

The report notes that full implementation of the Petition of Concern reforms in New Decade, New Approach will require Westminster legislation. The Government will bring

forward such legislation when parliamentary time allows, after which the Assembly will be able to reflect the detail of the reforms in its standing orders.

TRANSPORT

■ International Travel Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):

[\[HCWS696\]](#)

Last week the Prime Minister announced that the Government had made the difficult but necessary decision to introduce a new national lockdown.

Both globally and domestically we are seeing significant increases in levels of coronavirus, including the emergence of worrying new strains. It is therefore imperative that we ensure we are doing all we can to protect travel, reduce the risk of imported infections, including from new variants, and protect our NHS while national lockdown and vaccinations take effect.

We already have strong safeguards in place, including a requirement for mandatory 10-day self-isolation for the vast majority of arrivals and our Travel Corridors system remains critical in managing the risk of imported cases from high-risk countries. We also successfully launched the test to release scheme last month which provides passengers with the option to reduce self-isolation, through isolating for five days after they have left a destination not on the Travel Corridors list and then taking a test. Pre-departure testing does not remove the public health need for international arrivals travelling from non-exempt countries to isolate for 10 days or opt into test to release.

However, as a result of increasing instances of COVID-19 around the world, including the emergence of new variants, we are now taking additional steps to add a further layer of protection to safeguard public health.

From 04:00am on 15 January we will be introducing pre-departure testing requirements for all inbound passengers to England. Passengers arriving by ship, plane or train will have to take a test up to 3 days before departure and provide evidence of a negative result before they travel.

This will be an additional requirement that applies to all passengers, including those travelling from a Travel Corridor country, other than those on a very short list of exemptions. This extra layer of protection is in addition to existing self-isolation requirements.

We will establish the standards that tests must meet in regulations. This will include that the test must be of a diagnostic-standard test such as a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, and could in some cases include LAMP and Lateral Flow tests within set limits. We will provide clear guidance and advice to passengers regarding testing standards and capacity.

Guidance will be available to passengers and carriers on what to look for to assure tests and the results provided meet the standards required.

We will keep test standards and innovative testing technologies under review.

In addition, we will also set out the information passengers will need to have with them at check-in and the UK border to show they have had a qualifying negative test. This will include set data fields which test result certificates must include. All information on test requirements will be made available to passengers and transport operators through guidance on gov.uk.

The current advice for those across the UK remains that you must stay at home and not travel abroad unless it is for a permitted exempt reason. The requirements apply equally to visitors from other states and British Nationals, and carriers may deny boarding if passengers are not in receipt of a qualifying negative test. British Nationals that need consular assistance should contact the nearest consulate, embassy or high commission.

If British Nationals test positive for Covid -19 while abroad they should not travel and should follow the local relevant guidance on self-isolation.

Transport operators will be required to check that a passenger has proof of a negative test result before they board their flight, train or ferry, and may deny boarding where appropriate to reduce numbers of non-compliant individuals arriving in England. Border Force will also conduct further checks upon arrival.

If a passenger arrives in England without a pre-departure negative test result they will be fined. We will amend the International Travel Regulations so that fines, starting at £500, can be levied on non-compliant passengers. Operators will also be fined for transporting non-compliant passengers.

Passengers travelling to England from the Common Travel Area (the United Kingdom, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey), will not be in scope of the regulations.

Children under the age of 11 will also not be required to complete pre-departure testing.

There will be a very restricted number of exemptions, including hauliers to allow the free flow of freight, and air, international rail and maritime crew.

Certain limited reasonable excuses for not undergoing testing will also be permitted, for example, lack of testing infrastructure in the departure country. This will apply to three overseas territories - St Helena, Ascension Island and the Falklands.

Arrivals from three additional countries will be considered to have a reasonable excuse not to comply due to lack of testing infrastructure. However, for these countries this will only apply for a specific, time limited window. This includes:

- Antigua and Barbuda – until Thursday 21 January 04.00
- St Lucia – until Thursday 21 January 04.00
- Barbados – until Thursday 21 January 04.00

If passengers are arriving from one of the above three countries after the time limited window has ended, they will be required to meet all pre-departure testing requirements.

Further details on exemptions and reasonable excuses will be set out in regulations and in guidance. We will keep exemptions and reasonable excuses under regular review.

We will be making detailed guidance available to both passengers and transport operators to support the implementation of these changes.

Measures are likely to be in place until the end of the current lockdown, although a review will take place before the end of that period.

The Government recognises the continued challenges that the pandemic poses, both for individuals and for businesses.

We have worked closely with the international travel sector during the course of the pandemic and will continue to do so as we emerge from lockdown and are able to encourage people to travel again with confidence. We are also continuing to implement recommendations set out in the Global Travel Taskforce Report to support the safe recovery of international travel.

The delivery of a safe, effective vaccine is also the best way to protect the most vulnerable, save thousands of lives and support the removal of many of the restrictions and return to international travel. We are already making great progress, including having currently vaccinated more people than the rest of Europe combined.

In the immediate term our priority has to be on safeguarding public health and the NHS. With the addition of pre-departure testing requirements, our already robust system to protect against imported cases of coronavirus is further strengthened and will provide the greatest overall protection against the risk of transmission during travel to England and after arrival.

■ Transport Update

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[\[HCWS697\]](#)

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This Statement concerns the application made under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed alteration and upgrading by Highways England of the existing M25 Junction 10 Roundabout.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on the M25 Junction 10/A3 Wisley Interchange Development Consent Order application on 12 October 2020 and the original deadline for a decision was 12 January 2021.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 12 May 2021 (an extension of 4 months) to enable the Secretary of State to consult further on the application including on the question of appropriate provision of Replacement Land to compensate for the proposed Special Category Land to be compulsorily purchased under the Development Consent Order.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

TREASURY

■ **Public Service Pension Scheme Indexation and Revaluation 2021**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):

[HCWS699]

Public service pensions continue to be among the very best available.

Legislation governing public service pensions requires them to be increased annually by the same percentage as additional pensions (State Earnings Related Pension and State Second Pension). Public service pensions will therefore be increased from 12 April 2021 by 0.5 per cent, in line with the annual increase in the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2020, except for those public service pensions which have been in payment for less than a year, which will receive a pro-rata increase. This will ensure that public service pensions take account of increases in the cost of living and their purchasing power is maintained.

Separately, in the career average public service pension schemes introduced in 2014 and 2015, pensions in accrual are revalued annually in relation to either prices or earnings depending on the terms specified in their scheme regulations. The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 requires HMT to specify a measure of prices and of earnings to be used for revaluation by these schemes.

The prices measure is the Consumer Prices Index up to September 2020. Public service schemes which rely on a measure of prices, therefore, will use the figure of 0.5 per cent for the prices element of revaluation.

The earnings measure is the Whole Economy year on year change in Average Weekly Earnings (non-seasonally adjusted and including bonuses and arrears) up to September 2020. Public service schemes which rely on a measure of earnings, therefore, will use the figure of 2.4 per cent for the earnings element of revaluation.

Revaluation is one part of the amount of pension that members earn in a year and needs to be considered in conjunction with the amount of in-year accrual. Typically, schemes with lower revaluation will have faster accrual and therefore members will earn more pension per year. The following list shows how the main public service schemes will be affected by revaluation:

SCHEME	POLICE	FIRE	CIVIL SERVICE	NHS	TEACHERS LGPS	ARMED FORCES	JUDICIAL	
Revaluation for active member	1.75%	2.4%	0.5%	2%	2.1%	0.5%	2.4%	0.5%