



Daily Report

Wednesday, 13 January 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 January 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:48 P.M., 13 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Rape: Prosecutions

Alex Davies-Jones:[\[134626\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, on how many occasions since 2010 the CPS has decided that a prosecution for rape is not in the public interest where the perpetrator has confessed.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service ('CPS') collects data showing the outcome of charging decisions, including cases flagged as rape where a decision not to prosecute was taken for public interest reasons. However, the CPS has no central record of the number of cases or suspects where a confession to the offence of rape (or any other offence) has been admitted. This information could only be obtained by an examination of CPS case files, which would incur disproportionate cost.

The table below therefore shows the number of rape-flagged suspects where a no prosecution decision for public interest reasons was the outcome. The proportion of decisions where no further action is taken due to public interest reasons is fewer than 2% of all decisions. However, data on cases in which a confession has been admitted is not available.

	NO PROSECUTION - PUBLIC INTEREST
2010-2011	128
2011-2012	88
2012-2013	91
2013-2014	98
2014-2015	93
2015-2016	109
2016-2017	84
2017-2018	65
2018-2019	60
2019-2020	51

Data Source: CPS Case Management Information System

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY■ **BiFab: Insolvency****Chris Elmore:**[\[130794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the potential closure of Burntisland Fabrications Limited.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has recently spoken to the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary regarding the unfortunate recent developments at Burntisland Fabrications Limited.

Recognising the impact of these developments on those who are employed at the firm and their families, the UK and Scottish governments have created a joint working group, which has already met twice. While the immediate future of the business is a matter for the administrators, the working group will position both governments to stand ready to work with potential new investors, with a view to securing a strong future for the site.

■ **Biodiversity and Climate Change: Research****Chi Onwurah:**[\[130723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the effect of reducing the Official Development Assistance budget on the UK's ability to influence international research on tackling climate change and biodiversity loss.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As part of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy relevant government departments have worked together to ensure the UK is a force for good across the globe. We will spend more than £10 billion next year alone to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health.

The Government's commitment to research and innovation is clearly demonstrated through the recently published R&D Roadmap, and the £400m uplift in R&D spending announced in the Spending Review. International collaboration is central feature of a healthy and productive R&D sector.

We recently reaffirmed our commitment to doubling UK's International Climate Finance to £11.6bn in the years 2021-2025. The UK plays a crucial role in addressing the global challenge of climate change, responding to the needs of developing countries.

Layla Moran:[\[130830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in the Official Development

Assistance on the UK's ambition to support research to tackle (a) climate change, (b) biodiversity loss and other global challenges.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government remains committed to international development and will continue to provide £10 billion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2021-22 to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health.

The Government's commitment to research and innovation is clearly demonstrated through the recently published R&D Roadmap, and the £400m uplift in R&D spending announced in the Spending Review. International collaboration is a central feature of a healthy and productive R&D sector.

We are committed to doubling UK's International Climate Finance (ICF) to £11.6bn in the years 2021-2025. Our ICF helps to reduce deforestation and carbon emissions, for instance through our £200m+ investment to support green recovery across Africa, Asia and Latin America since June 2020.

■ **Bookshops: Coronavirus**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[131439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that independent bookshops receive the support they need to help them to reopen in areas under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

Paul Scully:

The Government has published clear COVID-Secure guidance which outlines the measures which need to be put in place for shops to open safely in all tiers. We continue to review this guidance as the situation evolves.

Following the introduction of national restrictions, independent book shops must close. All shops can continue to offer click and collect, and delivery services which will help businesses keep trading.

The Government continues to offer a comprehensive support package for small businesses which independent bookshops can access, including one-off top up grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 per property to help businesses through to the Spring, an extension to the Coronavirus Job retention Scheme to the end of April 2021, extension to the existing Loan Schemes to the end of March 2021, and cash grants of up to £1,500 per 2-week closure period, for businesses which are closed during local or national restrictions.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[131440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing urgent support to independent book shops that have not been able to re-open after the first and second covid-19 lockdowns to ensure their survival.

Paul Scully:

The Government continues to offer a comprehensive support package for small businesses which independent bookshops can access, including the extension to the Coronavirus Job retention Scheme to the end of April 2021, extension to the existing Loan Schemes to the end of March 2021, and cash grants of up to £1,500 per 2-week closure period, for businesses which are closed during local or national restrictions.

Independent book shops can continue benefitting from 100% business rates relief for the financial year 2020/21.

Following the introduction of new national restrictions, independent book shops can continue to offer click and collect, and delivery services which will help businesses keep trading.

Stephen Morgan:[\[131441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the contribution of local independent book shops to local knowledge and culture within communities; and what steps he is taking to support that contribution during and after the imposition of tier 3 local covid alert level restrictions.

Paul Scully:

Independent retailers, including book shops, play a valuable role in our communities.

The Government continues to offer a comprehensive support package for small businesses which independent bookshops can access, including the extension to the Coronavirus Job retention Scheme to the end of April 2021, extension to the existing Loan Schemes to the end of March 2021, and cash grants of up to £3,000 per month for businesses which are closed.

Following the introduction of new national restrictions, independent book shops can continue to offer click and collect, and delivery services which will help businesses keep trading.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[130643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support businesses in areas under (a) tier 2 and (b) tier 3 covid-19 restrictions that are affected by (i) curfews and (ii) other restrictions on trading.

Paul Scully:

Substantial grant support is being made available for businesses that are required to close or which are severely affected by restrictions put in place to tackle Covid-19 and save lives. England is now under country-wide restrictions. Businesses that are required to close will be eligible for grants of up to £1,500 per 14-day period of closure. A further one off grant to closed businesses of up to £9,000 will also be made to support businesses through Spring.

A further £500m is being made available in discretionary support via local authorities on top of £1.1bn already allocated to them in November 2020.

For the period where Tiers 2, 3 and 4 restrictions were applicable in certain local authorities, businesses required to close were eligible for grants of up to £1,500 for each 14-day period of closure. The level of support depended on the rateable value of the business hereditament in question.

For businesses that are not required to close but which are severely affected by the restrictions, further funding has been made available to local authorities to provide discretionary grants via the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open). This funding is available to local authorities in all tier 2 and tier 3 areas.

In recognition of the particular challenge faced by wet-led pubs in tier 2, tier 3 and tier 4 over the Christmas period, an additional £1,000 grant is being paid.

This grant support is part of a substantial package of support for businesses. The Coronavirus Job Retention has been extended until April 2021 and the deadlines for the government's business loan schemes has been extended until the end of January 2021 giving businesses an additional 2 months to make applications.

■ **Catering: Coronavirus**

Marco Longhi:

[\[131491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons caterers are not able to resume teaching lessons in their home in areas under tier 3 covid-19 restrictions.

Paul Scully:

From 6 January, a national lockdown applies in all of England. The message is to stay at home. Training can be provided online or through other means of remote learning.

■ **COP26 Youth and Civil Society Advisory Council**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[131230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will place in the Library the Terms of Reference of the COP26 Youth and Civil Society Advisory Council.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department is working closely with the Cabinet Office Central COP26 Unit. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and COP President Designate set up a Civil Society and Youth Advisory council to support the UK's efforts as the incoming COP26 presidency to achieve greater climate action and deliver an inclusive summit.

We have already committed to depositing the minutes from each of these meetings in the Libraries of the House as part of our wider commitment to ensure transparent engagement. The second meeting took place on 16 December and we will place

these minutes, along with the Terms of Reference for the group, in the Libraries in due course.

■ **Energy: Coronavirus**

Sarah Champion:

[134438]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to provide support to people with energy costs during the covid-19 lockdown.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department secured a voluntary agreement with energy companies on 19th March 2020 to support customers impacted by Covid-19. The voluntary agreement remains in place, requiring suppliers to support those struggling with energy bills, and take necessary action to keep them on supply.

The Government has launched the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, that makes £170m available to local authorities in England to provide support for vulnerable households with food, heating and energy costs, water bills and other associated essentials, this winter.

The Government continues to provide a significant package of financial support for households impacted by covid-19 including the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit that will continue through to March 2021 and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme and the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme that have been extended until the end of April 2021.

■ **Environment Protection: Job Creation**

Marco Longhi:

[130862]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many jobs the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution will create in the Dudley North constituency.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Spanning clean energy, buildings, transport, nature and innovative technologies, the Ten Point Plan will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to unlock three times as much private sector investment by 2030. In doing so we will support a further 90,000 green jobs across the UK by 2024, and up to 250,000 by 2030, building on the 460,000 jobs that already exist in the low carbon economy today.

Support for green jobs across the UK, including the West Midlands, will be delivered by:

- Investing £1 billion to make our homes, schools and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient, supporting around 50,000 jobs across the UK
- Doubling the Green Recovery Challenge Fund with an extra £40 million

- Backing our world-leading automotive sector, including in the West Midlands, the North East and Wales to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles, and transforming our national infrastructure to better support electric vehicles. To support this acceleration, nearly £500 million will be spent in the next four years for the development and mass-scale production of electric vehicle batteries, and other strategic technologies as part of our commitment to provide up to £1 billion. This will boost international investment into our strong manufacturing bases, and safeguard 169,000 jobs in the automotive sector.

The Energy White Paper, published in December, drives forward the Ten Point Plan commitments, reaffirming how clean energy means green jobs and economic growth for the whole country. Leading up to COP26, we will set out further ambitious plans across key sectors of the economy – including our Heat and Buildings Strategy and the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy.

■ Fireworks: Safety

Alexander Stafford:

[\[131522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to ensure that unsafe fireworks are (a) not imported into and (b) not sold to the public in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring consumers are kept safe. There is a comprehensive legislative framework regulating the manufacture, storage, supply, possession and use of fireworks.

Local Authority Trading Standards work at the border and with retailers to ensure fireworks imported and sold are safe, and they have powers to enforce against those who place unsafe or non-compliant fireworks on the market, including those imported illegally or via the internet.

Local Trading Standards (and local fire and rescue authorities in metropolitan counties) can also take action against those selling fireworks without an appropriate licence.

■ Fireworks: Sales

Alexander Stafford:

[\[131520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to restrict the public sale of 1.3G effect fireworks.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[131521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the change of the level of sales of louder 1.3g-effect fireworks.

Paul Scully:

There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that aims to reduce the risks and disturbances to people and animals. Existing legislation controls the sale, availability and use of fireworks, as well as setting a curfew and noise limit. Current legislation limits noise from fireworks available to consumers to a maximum of 120 decibels.

The Government remains committed to promoting the safe and considerate use of fireworks through an effective legislative framework and through non-legislative measures.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards is also carrying out research on the varying levels of noise associated with different types of firework and I will consider the outcome once available.

Housing: Construction**Gavin Robinson:**[\[134447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his policy is on retrofit solutions for publicly funded housing.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government remains committed to the ambition set out in the Clean Growth Strategy, that as many homes as possible are improved to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C by 2035, where practical, cost-effective, and affordable.

At the Summer Economic Update, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer provided up to £50m for a UK-wide Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator, to support jobs, improve energy efficiency and reduce bills for social tenants whilst demonstrating the benefits of the Whole House Retrofit approach to reduce costs overall. At the recent spending review the chancellor announced £60 million in 2021/22 for the SHDF in England.

The Government has also recently published the Social Housing White Paper where we committed to review the Decent Homes Standard to consider how it can better support the decarbonisation and energy efficiency of social homes. This will apply to England only, with the Devolved Administrations setting their own standards in social housing.

Housing: Insulation**Dan Jarvis:**[\[134433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure pensioners' properties are installed with insulation to tackle cold-related illnesses.

Dan Jarvis:[\[134434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Ministers in the Department for Health and Social Care on

the potential effect on the reduction of cold-related illnesses from the installation of insulation in pensioners' properties.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Officials in DHSC and BEIS have had discussions on these matters. We recognise the link between ill health and fuel poverty and we are aware of the benefits of insulating properties for all, including pensioner households.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes remains the most sustainable long-term solution to tackling fuel poverty, and therefore in reducing the impact of ill health exacerbated by cold homes.

The Energy Company Obligation is a GB wide energy efficiency scheme worth £640m per year until March 2022 and is focused on low-income and vulnerable households. Households with a resident in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit are eligible.

The Green Homes Grant, launched in September 2020, is a £2 billion programme which will help improve the energy efficiency of homes in England. Of this, around half is specifically for low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households, including those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit. The Green Homes Grant consists of a voucher scheme and a Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD). The primary purpose of the LAD scheme is to raise the energy efficiency rating of low income and low EPC rated homes (those with D, E, F or G). Funding is available through LAD to support the retrofit of existing domestic dwellings for all tenure types.

■ **Imports: Ethics**

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[130679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that UK businesses do not use (a) cotton from Xinjiang and (b) other unethically sourced products.

Paul Scully:

The UK has taken a leading international role in holding China to account for its human rights violations in Xinjiang, including in respect of credible evidence of forced labour. As set out in our National Action Plan for the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights, the Government's clear and strong expectation is that businesses act responsibly to ensure their products are sourced ethically, that they conduct due diligence on their supply arrangements to ensure this, and that they are transparent about where their materials and products are sourced from.

The Government has issued guidance and Ministers and officials hold regular meetings with businesses and industry stakeholders to underline the need for vigilance against any supply chain abuses.

■ Local Restrictions Support Grant: Holiday Accommodation

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[131335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether self-catering holiday lets are eligible for support through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Scheme covering the period of national restrictions in November 2020 where an existing booking was being honoured starting before 31 October 2020 when the covid-19 lockdown restrictions were announced and continued beyond 5 November 2020 in line with the Coronavirus Update statement on 2 November 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) is available to all businesses in England that have been required to close due to local or national COVID-19 restrictions.

There are three key considerations when a Local Authority determines the eligibility of a business for a grant under the LRSG (Closed):

- Is the business the business rate payer of a hereditament that appears on the rating list?
- Is the main service of that business required to close due to the restrictions?
- Is the business able to self-declare that it meets all scheme conditions, including eligibility and State aid requirements?

Where an organisation meets all of these criteria, it is considered eligible to receive a grant through the mandatory LRSG (Closed) scheme.

Local authorities are responsible for making decisions on whether a business qualifies for a grant. In doing so they must take into account guidance released by government Statutory Instruments (including exceptions).

■ Nuclear Power: Finance

Caroline Lucas:

[\[131222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his ministerial statement on the Energy White Paper, on 14 December 2020, if he will publish the modelling for the statement that regulated asset base funding model for new nuclear power could drive down costs for consumers in the long run.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The RAB model shares the cost with consumers from the start of construction, reducing the amount of interest owed on loans and return owed on equity, which could cut the cost for consumers over the lifetime of the plant. The House will be kept informed as we progress the options for funding and financing new nuclear projects in the UK.

■ Nuclear Powered Vessels

Caroline Lucas:

[\[131219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what duties a coastal local authority has in the event that a nuclear-powered vessel is granted safe haven on its coast.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Radiation (emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 place duties on Local Authorities in relation to radiation emergencies. In the event that a nuclear-powered vessel is granted safe haven on its coast, a Local Authority would be responsible for assessing the risk and putting in place plans to respond to a radiation emergency involving the nuclear-powered vessel.

■ Nuclear Powered Vessels: Accidents

Caroline Lucas:

[\[131220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will issue guidance on the response of coastal local authorities in relation to (a) public health, (b) marine, shoreline and coastal zone pollution and (c) other matters in the event of a nuclear accident involving a nuclear-powered vessel off their coastlines; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 defines the roles and responsibilities for those organisations (including Local Authorities) that would be involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to put in place emergency preparedness and response plans for different emergency types within its jurisdiction. These plans should be proportionate and commensurate to the consequences and to the likelihood of the risk occurring. In addition, Regulation 22 of the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPiR19) places a duty on all Local Authorities to have arrangements to provide information about any kind of emergency involving ionising radiation and is not limited to emergencies occurring on nuclear or radiological premises. As part of their emergency arrangements, Local Authorities would convene a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) which would take overall responsibility for the multi-agency management of the emergency.

BEIS is available to support Local Authorities in the development of emergency plans through participation in local resilience fora such as the Local Authority Nuclear Working Group (LANWG).

■ Post Offices: Closures

Justin Madders:

[131315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) directly managed, (b) retail outlets and (c) outreach Post Office Branches have been closed at any point since 2000.

Paul Scully:

The management of the Post Office network, including the number and type of branches open and closed at any one time, is an operational matter for the Post Office, and therefore the Government does not hold this information.

It is, however, a requirement under Provision 11 of the Postal Services Act 2011 for the Post Office to publish an annual report about the Post Office branch network and customer accessibility. This report is also laid before Parliament.

The Post Office Network Reports are available online and the most recent report as of March 2020 can be found here: <http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/secure-corporate/our-network/post-office-network-reports/>.

■ Post Offices: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett:

[134343]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many post offices there were in the Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Paul Scully:

The number of post offices that were in the Yorkshire and the Humber region was 1005 in March 2010 and 948 in March 2020.

■ Renewable Energy: Manufacturing Industries

Chris Elmore:

[130797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the share of UK manufacturing content in renewable energy developments that are supported by the public purse.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is eager to deliver supply chain investment and increase the share of UK manufacturing content in renewable energy projects supported by Contracts for Difference (CfD) contracts. We have confirmed our intention to align the Supply Chain Plan process with government priorities, and we are currently consulting¹ on proposals to introduce consequences for non-delivery of commitments that developers put forward in their Supply Chain Plans, which are approved before they enter the CfD Allocation Round. We are also strengthening the Supply Chain Plan monitoring process to support compliance.

These measures should be seen alongside my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement on £160 million of new funding towards investment to upgrade ports

and infrastructure and long-term ambitions to increase renewable energy capacity in the next CfD auction, which, together, will support new UK content, jobs and investment.

I have also convened offshore wind Industry roundtables to understand the supply chain and support investment to meet the industry's commitment to deliver 60% UK content by 2030. The sector will explore what the future opportunities will be in high-value components for nacelle assembly, floating offshore wind and operations and maintenance and report back in March.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/contracts-for-difference-cfd-changes-to-supply-chain-plans-and-the-cfd-contract> - Closing date 18th January 2021

■ Research: Finance

Grahame Morris:

[134413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the regional distribution is of institutes receiving funding through Government sources for the development and application of New Approach Methodologies.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs). The NC3Rs works nationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice and regulations on animal research. Across the UK, the NC3Rs has invested £71 million in research through grants to universities, and almost £27 million in contracts through its CRACK IT Challenges innovation scheme to UK and EU-based institutions, mainly focusing on new approaches for the safety assessment of pharmaceuticals and chemicals that reduce the use of animals.

■ Research: International Cooperation

Layla Moran:

[130831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the potential effect of the reduction in Official Development Assistance on the UK's support for the development of an international research culture to address (a) climate change, (b) biodiversity loss and (c) other global challenges.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government remains committed to international development and will continue to provide £10 billion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2021-22 to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health.

The Government's commitment to research and innovation is clearly demonstrated through the recently published R&D Roadmap, and the £400m uplift in R&D spending announced in the Spending Review. International collaboration is central feature of a healthy and productive R&D sector.

We recently reaffirmed our commitment to doubling UK's International Climate Finance to £11.6bn in the years 2021-2025. The UK plays a crucial role in addressing the global challenge of climate change, responding to the needs of developing countries.

■ **Shipping: Nuclear Power**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[131218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what insurance cover the UK holds in respect of nuclear accidents involving nuclear-powered civilian or military vessels passing through or close to the UK exclusive economic zone, territorial waters or coastal waters.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The public purse is uniquely able to finance restitution of damaged assets or deal with other risks. The Ministry of Defence maintains arrangements to respond to any defence-related nuclear incidents, no matter how unlikely. The UK does not operate any nuclear-powered civilian vessels.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Energy**

Afzal Khan:

[\[131467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what grant funding is available to the social housing sector for (a) the installation of solar panels and (b) energy efficiency improvements.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The 2019 Conservative manifesto committed to a £3.8billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund over 10 years.

The Summer Economic Update announced a £50 million fund to demonstrate innovative approaches to retrofitting social housing at scale and upgrading the energy performance of poorer-performing homes. A further £60 million has been allocated at the Spending Review (SR) to continue the development of the scheme into next year, in line with manifesto commitments, and further funding will be confirmed at the multi-year SR.

■ **Travel Agents: Coronavirus**

Justin Madders:

[\[131318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Office of National Statistics on Coronavirus and the impact on output in the UK economy: October 2020 that travel agent output is 89.9 percent less than in February 2020; and what plans he has to introduce specific support for the travel agency and tour operator sector.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the travel sector has been particularly hard hit by COVID-19. We are regularly assessing the impact on tourism businesses and are continuing to engage across Government and with stakeholders - such as the Association of British Travel Agents and Association of Independent Tour Operators - to assess how we can most effectively support the recovery of travel and tourism across the UK.

On top of our wider economic support package, we have provided business rates relief and one-off grants for eligible hospitality and leisure businesses. We have also cut VAT for tourism and hospitality activities from 20% to 5% until the end of March, and we have confirmed that the Government will protect refund credit notes if ATOL-protected packages are cancelled as a result of COVID-19.

Water Power**Martyn Day:**[\[130783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with the APPG for Marine Energy on the UK Marine Energy Council's submission to the Department for BEIS: Call for Evidence.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently met with the APPG for Marine Energy to discuss broadly the Marine Energy Council's proposals for potential support for marine energy technologies.

Water Power: Finance**Martyn Day:**[\[130781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of further investment in tidal stream and wave technology and project developers as part of the Government's strategy to reach Net Zero by 2050.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recently ran a Call for Evidence inviting views on what scope there is for marine technologies across the UK, including examining what additional support could move technologies towards commercialisation. This concluded on 30th September 2020 and we are currently reviewing the responses received.

Martyn Day:[\[130782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of refining the pot structure of the Contracts for Difference round to include a reserved amount of funding for marine projects to compete for.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

In November, the Government confirmed changes to the pot structure for the Contracts for Difference scheme to introduce a new, third pot for offshore wind ahead of the fourth Allocation Round scheduled to take place in late 2021. The Government considers this approach will allow auction parameters to be set across pots in a way which better reflects project characteristics. Wave and tidal stream projects remain eligible to compete in pot 2 for CfD auctions. We will publish specific allocation round parameters in advance of the next auction; typically, five to six months in advance. This will include the details of whether any technology-specific minima will apply.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus**Sajid Javid:**[\[131232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to assess the potential merits of easing covid-19 restrictions on weddings through the use of (a) pilot schemes and (b) further consultation with the UK Weddings Taskforce.

Paul Scully:

The Government is keen to allow larger wedding receptions and celebrations to take place as soon as it is safe. Weddings by their nature bring families and friends together in a single group for extended periods of time, are highly social, and particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19.

Through vaccination and testing we hope to increase the number of attendees when the scientific evidence shows that it is safe to do so.

I am planning to meet with the UK Weddings Taskforce early in the New Year.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**Chris Elmore:**[\[130795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Offshore wind manufacturing investment support: request for information from potential manufacturing sites, published 02 October 2020, whether existing offshore wind manufacturing sites are eligible for support under the offshore wind manufacturing investment support scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Any site, including expansions to existing sites, are eligible to apply for support under the scheme providing they meet the criteria set out in the scheme's Guidance documentation.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Customs: Standards**

Gavin Newlands: [\[132994\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that there are minimal delays at the border due to non-tariff barriers to trade.

Dave Doogan: [\[133194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that there are minimal delays at the border as a result of non-tariff barriers to trade.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government has provided comprehensive guidance on the new arrangements for trade with the EU. We are working closely with the devolved administrations, operational partners, industry groups and transporters to minimise any potential disruption. The Border Operating Centre is operating around the clock to pull together all the necessary sources of information to track what is happening at the border.

■ **Death Certificates: Coronavirus**

Sir David Amess: [\[134328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many death certificates cited covid-19 as a (a) primary cause and (b) contributory cause of death in each month since November 2020.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. Response to PQ134328 [PQ134328 - Response.pdf]

■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

Cat Smith: [\[134490\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to voter ID pilots, where voters will be able to collect their local elector ID from in the event that they do not possess photographic ID.

Chloe Smith:

Our democracy is based on integrity and the potential for voter fraud in our electoral system undermines this. We will continue to work with the Electoral Commission, charities and civil society organisations to make sure that reforms, including the provision of a local elector identity document, are delivered in a way that is inclusive for all voters.

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

■ Honours

Sarah Owen:

[134601]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish data on the demographics of those who have received honours in the last five years.

Sarah Owen:

[134602]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of there being zero individuals of Chinese and South East Asian heritage on the New Year's Honours list 2021.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the honours system is fully representative of UK society. Data on gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation is collected by asking recipients to complete a diversity survey. A summary of this data is published alongside each New Year and Queen's Birthday Honours List and can be found at www.gov.uk/honours/honours-lists.

A breakdown of ethnicities of honours recipients is also published twice a year on the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. The declared ethnicity data for recipients included on the New Year Honours List 2021 will be published in due course.. Overall the most recent honours list saw 14.2% of recipients declaring a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background - the highest ever.

Honours recipients can choose to report their own ethnicity using the 2011 Census categories. Data is published for the following five aggregated ethnic groups because the number of honours recipients is small and the data is provided anonymously:

- Asian
- Black
- Mixed
- White
- Other

Roughly around 10% of recipients do not provide any diversity information when accepting their honour.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Stephen Kinnock:

[132929]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the Great Britain to Northern Ireland movement of goods occupying UK-EU export quotas under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Penny Mordaunt:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not usually disclosed.

DEFENCE■ **China: Military Aircraft****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[134370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any of the second-hand airframes purchased for AWACS will be sourced from China.

Jeremy Quin:

In common with all 737 Next Generation airliners, the first two airframes to be modified to become RAF Wedgetail AEW Mk1 aircraft were manufactured by Boeing in the United States. They were initially operated by commercial airlines based in China and Hong Kong, and were then acquired by Boeing from the commercial market via a broker. The use of second-hand airframes provides a significant schedule and cost benefit to the programme, which will enable this vital capability to be introduced sooner than would have been the case if new airframes had been manufactured.

■ **Clyde Naval Base****Dave Doogan:**[\[134571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gross figure was for his Department's expenditure on maintenance and support for the UK's at sea nuclear deterrent at HMNB Clyde in (a) 1990, (b) 1995, (c) 2000 and (d) 2020.

Jeremy Quin:

The gross expenditure figure relating to the maintenance and support of the UK's nuclear deterrent at Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde for the years in question are not held in the format requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost, as they are made up of many components covered by different contracts from funding across several business units, and not held centrally.

■ **Commonwealth War Graves Commission****Stephen Morgan:**[\[134538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2020 to Question 123741 on Commonwealth War Graves Commission, what progress his Department has made on that matter.

Johnny Mercer:

The new employment arrangements for the thirty UK staff based in Belgium and France who are directly employed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are being implemented by the Commission. Twenty-one staff will remain in Europe,

seven will return to positions in the UK, and two will be retiring. The Commission are providing all the staff with financial support to assist with the transition to the new arrangements and are currently considering options to improve the support package.

■ **Cybercrime: Finance**

Owen Thompson:

[133981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Government financial support for measures to safeguard against cyber threats to democratic process.

James Heappey:

The Government is committed to investing in cyber capabilities to protect the UK from modern threats both online and in the physical world. Defence Ministers and officials routinely discuss a range of business, including cyber issues, with HM Treasury counterparts.

■ **Defence Equipment**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[133724]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the Defence and Equipment Plan, 2020-30.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Equipment Plan 2020-2030 was published on 12 January 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-defence-equipment-plan-2020>

■ **Military Aid: Coronavirus**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[134251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the armed forces are working at the NHS headquarters in Skipton House London (a) to assist with the rollout of the covid-19 vaccine and (b) in total.

James Heappey:

The total number of Armed Forces personnel currently working at the NHS headquarters in Skipton House is 31. 27 of these are assisting with the rollout of the COVID 19 vaccine.

■ **Military Bases: Scotland**

Dave Doogan:

[134567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many establishments his Department operated in Scotland in (a) 1990, (b) 1995, (c) 2000, (d) 2005, (e) 2010, (f) 2015 and (g) 2020.

Jeremy Quin:

At the end of 2020 the Ministry of Defence operated 110 establishments in Scotland.

Historic information on the number of establishments operated could be provided only at disproportionate cost. This is because individual 'establishments' can range from small individual structures to large bases and past data records would require individual searches.

Dave Doogan:[\[134568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many civilian and uniform personnel his Department employed in establishments in Scotland in (a) 1990, (b) 1995, (c) 2000, (d) 2005, (e) 2010, (f) 2015 and (g) 2020.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has produced personnel statistics by region since 2010 but not by individual establishments. UK Service Personnel and MOD Civilians stationed in Scotland for 2015 and 2020 can be found in Table 5.1a of the MS Excel Annual Location Statistics publication published 1 April 2020 at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-uk-regular-service-and-civilian-personnel-annual-statistics-2020>

UK Service Personnel and MOD Civilians stationed in Scotland for 2010 can be found in Table 5.1a of the MS Excel Annual Location Statistics index, at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/location-of-all-uk-regular-service-and-civilian-personnel-quarterly-statistics-index>

■ Military Exercises**Owen Thompson:**[\[133982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to end UK engagement in training programmes with the militaries of countries under internally oppressive and undemocratic regimes.

James Heappey:

The Defence Training we provide to foreign nations will always stress the need to respect International Law and the importance of adhering to international standards, for example with regard to human rights, human security, transparency and corruption, and civilian oversight and control of the Armed Forces.

All of our international Defence Engagement is informed by an assessment of the potential impact of providing assistance on risks relating to human rights and International Humanitarian Law and consideration of what measures might be necessary to mitigate such risks.

■ Ministry of Defence: Expenditure

Dave Doogan:

[\[134570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gross amount is of expenditure by his Department in (a) 1990, (b) 1995, (c) 2000, (d) 2005, (e) 2010, (f) 2015 and (g) 2020.

Jeremy Quin:

The information requested is provided in the following table:

FINANCIAL YEAR	EXPENDITURE (£BILLION) ^[1]
1989-1990	£20,755
1994-1995	£22,519
1999-2000	£22,572
2004-2005	£29,524
2009-2010	£37,425
2014-2015	£35,850
2019-2020	£41,024

The Net Cash Requirement (NCR) has been provided to give a consistent time series. Due to accounting processes changing overtime, the NCR is the most accurate way to give these figures allowing for comparison over time.

[1] These figures are in current prices and have not been adjusted for inflation.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land

Luke Pollard:

[\[134115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the proportion of land owned by his Department that is wooded.

Luke Pollard:

[\[134116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to increase tree cover on land owned by his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Estate contains approximately 19,500 ha of woodland. This equates to approximately 8% of the total land owned by the Department.

Ministry of Defence (MOD) Officials are working closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Forestry Commission to ensure suitable MOD land is included within Government tree planting programmes. Specific areas for new woodland are currently being finalised in Long-Term Forest Plans.

■ Ministry of Defence: Scotland**Dave Doogan:** [134569]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the gross amount was of expenditure by his Department in Scotland in (a) 1990, (b) 1995, (c) 2000, (d) 2005, (e) 2010, (f) 2015 and (g) 2020.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence publishes annually the regional expenditure with UK industry and supported employment publication, available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-regional-expenditure-with-uk-industry-and-supported-employment-index>

In the 2014-15 financial year £1,505 million[1] was spent with Scottish industry. The figures for 2019-20 are due to be published on 21 January 2021.

The Ministry of Defence previously provided estimates on both regional expenditure and employment within the UK Defence Statistics (UKDS) publication. However, within the UKDS bulletins, the inclusion of the regional breakdowns were not given in every year's release. Where they are present, due to differing methodologies used before and now, historic figures are also not directly comparable to more recent published figures.

In addition, Scotland is home for the Royal Navy's entire submarine service, a significant RAF presence including the P8 maritime patrol aircraft at Lossiemouth where in due course they will be joined by our incoming E7 fleet. Half of the UK's Typhoon's are based in Scotland. A strong Army presence contributes to around 10,000 regular personnel based in Scotland.

[1] This figure is in constant 2018-19 prices and has been adjusted for inflation using GDP deflators from HM Treasury (September 2019).

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff**Kenny MacAskill:** [134596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff have been on (a) secondment and (b) internship to his Department from (i) the Scottish Government and (ii) Crown and Prosecutor Fiscal Service in each year since 2011; how long on average each such position was held for; and what role each such member of staff performed.

Johnny Mercer:

The information is not held in the requested format.

■ Nuclear Weapons: Finance**Mr Kevan Jones:** [133723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much of the £10 billion contingency for the strategic nuclear deterrent has been drawn down in each year since that programme commenced.

Jeremy Quin:

Further to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 11 January 2021 to question 130653, I can inform him that £315 million was drawn down in Financial Year (FY) 2018-19 and £390 million in FY2019-20.

Attachments:

1. Trident Submarines: Finance [Hansard Extract UIN 130653.docx]

■ Saudi Arabia: Training**Martyn Day:**[\[134500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Deposited Paper DEP2020-0835 committed on 9 December 2020, which Saudi bodies and/or units have benefited from training funded by the streams referred to in that paper during each financial year since 2016-17.

James Heappey:

The UK Armed Forces provides training to security partners internationally and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one such partner. Pursuant to the funding streams mentioned in Deposited Paper DEP2020-0835 committed on 9 December 2020, we have provided training advice and assistance to the Royal Saudi Air Force, Royal Saudi Land Forces, Royal Saudi Naval Forces, Border Guard, Saudi Arabia National Guard, Joint Incident Assessment, Security Forces and Joint Forces Command. Unfortunately, we do not hold sufficient information to detail this by financial year.

Martyn Day:[\[134501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Deposited Paper DEP2020-0835 committed on 9 December 2020, how many Saudi personnel at each rank have benefited from training funded by the funding streams referred to in that paper in each of the last five financial years.

James Heappey:

We do not hold full details of the Saudi personnel numbers and ranks who have received training, advice and assistance, pursuant to Deposited Paper DEP2020-0835 committed on 9 December 2020 as these are held by the host nation.

■ Sri Lanka: Military Aid**John Healey:**[\[134338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2020 to Written Question 11516 on Sri Lanka: Military Aid, whether an Overseas Justice and Security Assistance assessment was completed before HMS Montrose visited Colombo in April 2019 as part of her deployment in the Indian Ocean.

John Healey:[\[134339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2020 to Question 11516 on Sri Lanka: Military Aid, whether an Overseas Security and Justice

Assistance assessment was completed before the HMS Montrose provided assistance to the Sri Lankan Navy in April 2019.

James Heappey:

An Overseas Justice and Security Assistance (OSJA) assessment was completed before HMS Montrose visited Colombo and engaged with the Sri Lankan Navy in April 2019. We regularly review and update our OSJA's to ensure that human rights and International Humanitarian Law risks are considered prior to providing justice or security sector assistance.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Cinemas: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[134616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 14th December 2020 to Question 127515, what additional funding allocations he plans to make available for cinemas seeking financial relief as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government recognises the significant cultural and economic value of cinemas, and has supported them through both sector-specific and economy-wide measures. In the first round of the £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund, more than 200 independent cinemas have so far received funding from a £30m pot. This funding was administered by the BFI on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, as part of the biggest ever single investment in this country's cultural sectors.

Grants have been awarded to cinema sites in every corner of the country, with cinemas outside London benefitting from 78% of funding to date. Further to this, we announced in December that cinemas will be able to apply for another £14 million in grants as part of the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund in 2021. This will support cinemas as they transition back to a viable and sustainable way of operating in the months ahead. Cinemas have also been eligible to apply to the second round of Arts Council England's Repayable Finance scheme, with a total of £100m available.

Cinemas have been able to benefit from the further extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 30 April 2021, which sees employees receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. In addition, the government has supported cinemas through the VAT cut on tickets and concessions and a business rates holiday. In light of recent tightening in restrictions, businesses in England that are forced to close will receive up to £3,000 for each 28 day period affected. We have also recently announced that businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors can apply for a one-off grant worth up to £9,000 per property.

■ Data Protection

Stephen Farry:

[134277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what further steps the Government needs to take to achieve data adequacy recognition from the EU.

Mr John Whittingdale:

We continue to talk to the Commission about their plans to finalise their adequacy assessment of the UK.

Once draft decisions are published by the Commission, the process will then move into an EU procedural phase before they are adopted. The European Data Protection Board of Member State regulators will issue a non-binding opinion on the decisions, and the European Parliament also has the right to scrutinise them. The draft decisions will then be subject to approval by the relevant EU Council working group (the Article 93 Committee) and the College of Commissioners. The UK will continue to engage constructively where necessary throughout the process until it reaches its conclusion.

The EU's adequacy assessments, underway since March 2020, ascertain whether UK data protection standards are 'essentially equivalent' to the EU's. Given we have an existing data protection framework that is equivalent to the EU's, we see no reason why the UK should not be awarded adequacy and we expect the process to be concluded promptly.

The EU left insufficient time to adopt data adequacy decisions for the UK before the end of the transition period. We have therefore agreed with the EU a time-limited 'bridging mechanism' which will allow personal data to continue to flow as it did previously whilst EU adequacy decisions for the UK are adopted.

■ Public Libraries: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett:

[133706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many libraries there were in the Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Caroline Dinanage:

The Libraries Taskforce published the public libraries in England extended dataset on 11 January 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-libraries-in-england-basic-dataset#history> This provides details of static libraries (statutory and non-statutory) in England as at 1 April 2010 and 1 July 2016. Data on mobile libraries was inconsistent and incomplete, and therefore was not included in this dataset.

Details of the number of libraries as at 31 December 2019 has been collected by Arts Council England and will be published shortly.

The following table lists the number of static libraries in each local authority within the Yorkshire and Humber region.

LOCAL AUTHORITY	1 APRIL 2010	1 JULY 2016
Barnsley	17	15
Bradford	35	33
Calderdale	22	22
Doncaster	26	25
East Riding of Yorkshire	23	23
Kingston upon Hull	14	14
Kirklees	26	24
Leeds	50	35
North East Lincolnshire	10	8
North Lincolnshire	15	15
North Yorkshire	42	42
Rotherham	15	15
Sheffield	29	28
Wakefield	27	19
York	15	15
Total	366	333

■ Social Media: Freedom of Expression

Ben Bradley:

[134111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is able to take to protect the right to free speech from censorship by social media platforms.

Caroline Dinenage:

The UK is committed to upholding freedom of expression online. Our new online safety laws will safeguard pluralism and ensure internet users can continue to engage in robust debate online.

Under the new regulatory framework, both Ofcom and in-scope companies will have duties relating to freedom of expression, for which they can be held to account. The largest social media platforms will be required to have clear and accessible terms and conditions, and to enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. Furthermore, new obligations for transparency and user reporting will enable users to more effectively understand and appeal content removal. This will both empower

adult users to keep themselves safe online, and protect freedom of expression by preventing companies from arbitrarily removing content.

■ **UK Safer Internet Centre: Finance**

Ruth Jones:

[\[134142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) availability and (b) adequacy of funding for the UK Safer Internet Centre after the transition period.

Caroline Dineneage:

The UK Safer Internet Centre plays an important role in improving online safety in the UK, particularly for children. We are very supportive of the work of the Centre and they are a valued member of the UK Council for Internet Safety, which provides guidance to the government on child safety online.

The Centre has applied for further funding from the European Commission's Connecting Europe Facility programme for the calendar year of 2021 and we await formal confirmation from the Centre regarding its outcome.

■ **Youth Centres: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Jon Trickett:

[\[134344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many youth centres there were in the Yorkshire and the Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Youth services are provided by local authorities and the data concerning the number of youth centres there were in the Yorkshire and Humber region in (a) 2010 and (b) 2020 is not held by my department.

EDUCATION

■ **Apprentices**

Kate Green:

[\[134426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprentices are unable to complete their training as a result of backlogs in functional skills tests.

Gillian Keegan:

We do not currently hold the data in the format requested.

Apprenticeship data for the first quarter of the 2020/21 academic year will be published on 28 January 2021.

The department is committed to supporting apprentices to complete their functional skills qualifications and their apprenticeship. Where functional skills assessments have been disrupted, we have been clear that training providers, employers, and awarding organisations must work together in the best interests of apprentices.

To ease immediate pressures, we have extended legacy functional skills qualifications to 31 July 2021. We have also extended, until March 2021, the flexibility which removes the requirement for level 2 apprentices to attempt level 2 functional skills.

In addition to wider programme flexibilities, we have expanded the examination support service to include apprenticeship training providers. These providers can now use this service to book COVID-19-secure exam space and invigilators and claim additional funding where this exceeds their normal delivery costs.

We continue to work closely with Ofqual, awarding organisations, and sector representatives to monitor the situation and agree how we can, together, identify and support apprentices that are unable to take their functional skills exams.

The departmental guidance about providing apprenticeships during the COVID-19 outbreak is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response>.

■ Children: Computers

Gill Furniss:

[134519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he has made on the provision of laptops to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

This includes over 560,000 laptops and tablets that have already been delivered to schools, trusts and local authorities in 2020.

The Department will have dispatched over 750,000 devices in total by the end of this week.

Laptops and tablets are owned by schools, trusts or local authorities who can lend these to children and young people who need them most during the current COVID-19 restrictions.

The Department has 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.

Families will benefit from this additional data until July 2021. Schools are able to request free mobile data uplifts via the [Get Help with Technology](#) service. Further information on the Get Help with Technology service is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The Department has already provided over 54,000 4G wireless routers, with free data for the academic year, and continues to provide 4G wireless routers where children need to access remote education.

Support is also available for schools to get set up on Google or Microsoft platforms. These platforms bring together the school community, pool resources and give pupils the opportunity to work with their peers remotely. As of 5 January 2021, 6900 schools have applied to the Department's digital platforms programme that forms part of the Get Help With Technology programme.

The EdTech Demonstrator Programme is in place to promote effective use of devices, including ways they can be used to promote greater accessibility to the curriculum.

■ Children: Wirral

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[134469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the percentage of children in Wirral eligible to attend school under the current government guidance; and what assessment has he made of the public health implications of that percentage of children attending school.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[134470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the percentage of children in Wirral eligible to attend school under current Government covid-19 guidance; and what assessment has he made of the risk to teachers and support staff of that number of children attending school.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[134471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the percentage of children under the age of 12 in Wirral eligible to attend school under the current Government guidance; and what assessment has he made of the public health implications of that percentage of children under the age of 12 attending school.

Nick Gibb:

During this period of national lockdown, schools should allow only vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers to attend. All other pupils and students should not attend and should learn remotely until February half term.

Every school will have a different number of children of critical workers who need to attend. It is important that on site provision is provided for these pupils, and there is no limit to the numbers of these pupils who may attend. Schools should not limit attendance of these groups.

Limiting attendance does not suggest that schools and colleges have become less safe for young people. Instead, limiting attendance is about supporting the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities. Overall social contact across areas and the country is being reduced, rather than individually by each institution.

The new variant appears to affect all ages, but we have not seen any changes in the severity of the disease among any age groups, including children and young people. Most children and young people have no symptoms or very mild illness only. As cases in the community rise, there will be an increase in the number of children with COVID-19, but only very rarely will they require admission to hospital.

Under the national lockdown, the expectation is that everyone should work from home where possible. School leaders are best placed to determine the workforce that is required in school, taking into account the updated guidance for those staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable. The expectation is that those staff not attending school will work from home where possible.

For vulnerable children and young people, the children of critical workers, and their teachers who should still attend school or college, as they did in March to July, the system of protective measures means that any risks are well managed and controlled.

The Department publishes national level data on pupil attendance weekly: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Data relating to the current school term will be published on 19 January.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[134507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the criteria is for reopening schools and educational settings during the covid-19 outbreak in England.

Nick Gibb:

Head teachers, teachers, and staff of schools and other education settings have been doing an extraordinary job to remain open, keep settings safe, and provide education for vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers.

We know that receiving face to face education is best for children's mental health and for their educational achievement. We have resisted restrictions on attendance at schools and other education settings since the first lockdown but, in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we now need to use every lever at our disposal to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible. Limiting attendance during the national lockdown is about supporting the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities.

During the period of national lockdown, schools, colleges and wraparound childcare and other out of school activities for pupils and students should allow only vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers to attend. All other pupils and students should not attend and should learn remotely until February half term. Early years provision should continue to remain open and should continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetable hours.

Only university students doing medical, clinical and healthcare related subjects, including nursing, social care, dentistry and veterinary studies should return to face to face teaching as planned. Most students should not return to university and should study from their current residence, where possible, until at least mid-February.

On an exceptional basis, universities should consider supporting the return of students who may need to return earlier for other reasons, for example, students who do not have access to appropriate accommodation, facilities, studying space, or that need to return for health reasons.

We will continue to review the restrictions on schools, colleges and universities and will ensure that children and young people return to face to face education as soon as possible.

■ **Extended Services: Coronavirus**

Andrew Gwynne:

[131205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to meet with sector representatives from the wraparound and holiday childcare sector to discuss the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Andrew Gwynne:

[131206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the closure of wraparound and holiday childcare services on the ability of key workers to attend work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The department does not hold a central register of all wraparound provision and so does not routinely collect data on the number of providers in operation.

However, ensuring sufficiency of childcare provision for critical worker parents and carers remains a government priority. This is why we have ensured that wraparound childcare providers, and other providers of out-of-school activities, can continue to remain open for the children of critical workers during the current national lockdown to allow critical worker parents or carers to work or to search for work, to undertake training or education, or to attend a medical appointment or address a medical need. Vulnerable children and young people can also continue to access wraparound childcare and other out-of-school settings during the national lockdown. The guidance on protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out of school settings during the COVID-19 outbreak will shortly be updated to outline the measures providers should put in place to ensure they are operating as safely as possible if they continue to offer face-to-face provision during the national lockdown. It is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Schools may also continue to open up or hire out their premises for use by external wraparound childcare providers, such as after-school or holiday clubs, that offer

provision to children of critical workers and/ or vulnerable children. We have also ensured that schools that operate their own breakfast and after school clubs can continue to run wraparound provision for those attending school full-time. Doing so, will support critical workers to undertake their jobs, and help to safeguard the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people. We are encouraging schools that can, to maintain their wraparound childcare provision for this reason, and we will be publishing guidance to support them in doing so shortly.

The department has engaged and met with representatives from the wraparound childcare sector on a regular basis, since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 and protective measures on the sufficiency of childcare provision, and will continue to do so. In addition, our Real-time assessment of community transmission (REACT) teams, comprising education and social care staff from both the Department for Education and Ofsted, are working closely with local authorities and will act as a valuable source of intelligence on the sufficiency of wraparound childcare places for the children of critical workers, and for vulnerable children and young people during the current national lockdown.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[134391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to fairly assess GCSE and A-Level students who were scheduled to retake their exams in 2021 and having left their school or college are no longer able to receive a teacher assessment.

Nick Gibb:

The Department concluded a successful Autumn exam series, allowing pupils who were unhappy with the grades they received in Summer 2020 the opportunity to sit them again. The Department understands, however, that some pupils may have decided to wait until the Summer 2021 series to take their exams.

In light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department will not be asking pupils to sit GCSE, AS and A level exams this summer as planned. It is important therefore that there is a clear and accessible route for private candidates, and those not in school this year, to be assessed and receive a grade.

A rapid consultation on how to fairly award all pupils a grade that ensures they can progress to the next stage of their lives will be launching shortly. The Department will continue to engage with a range of relevant stakeholders when developing plans for our policy on GCSE, AS and A level assessments in 2021, as will the exams regulator Ofqual. A full equalities impact assessment, informed by the results of the consultation, will be published in due course.

■ Higher Education: Admissions

Sir John Hayes:

[\[133654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to incentivise young people to enrol in non-university routes of higher education.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[133655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made in (a) reducing the number of young people going to university, (b) increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships and (c) redirecting funding from Russell Group universities to providers of technical education.

Gillian Keegan:

Higher and further education are different routes on the same journey to skilled employment and both should be valued. It is vital that a fair and open post-16 education system offers genuine opportunity and levelling up, with equity of technical and academic routes.

We will therefore be establishing a high-quality system of higher technical education where learners and employers can have confidence in high-quality courses that provide the skills they need to succeed, whether they are taught in a further education college, a university, or an independent training provider.

We have also introduced employer-designed T Levels, which will boost access to high-quality technical education for thousands of young people so they can progress to the next level, whether that is getting a job, going on to further study or an apprenticeship. The first three T Levels are now being taught in 44 providers across the country, with further courses being introduced in more providers over the next three years.

Apprenticeships are a high-quality path to a skilled career, and we have been making reforms to drive up the quality of apprenticeships. The transition to employer-designed apprenticeship standards is driving up quality and delivering the skills that employers need. There are now over 590 employer-designed standards across a broad range of industries and levels, including 138 standards at degree-level, providing people of all backgrounds with a choice of high-value technical training alongside traditional academic routes. Starts at higher levels (4 and above) increased by nearly 10% to 82,500 in 2019/20, compared to 75,100 in 2018/19. To encourage employers to take on new apprentices following the COVID-19 outbreak we have introduced new financial incentives for employers - an extra £2,000 for each apprentice under 25 and £1,500 for apprentices over 25.

We have been increasing investment in technical education including up to £500 million a year once fully rolled out for T Levels and, starting this year, £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) in the National Skills Fund to deliver new opportunities to generations of adults who may have been previously left behind.

We are also investing £1.5 billion to upgrade the further education estate so that it has the buildings and facilities needed to deliver high quality technical education and we are planning to invest up to £290 million of capital funding to establish 20 Institutes of Technology. Every region in England will have access to one of these Institutes of Technology, which will be unique collaborations between further education colleges, universities and businesses offering higher technical education and training in key sectors such as digital, construction, advanced manufacturing, and engineering.

■ Knives: Crime

Colleen Fletcher:

[134460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support schools to educate their students about the dangers of carrying a knife.

Nick Gibb:

The new subjects of Relationships Education (for primary aged pupils), Relationships and Sex Education (for secondary aged pupils), and Health Education (for all pupils in state funded schools) are being taught from this academic year. The content of the statutory guidance for the new subjects can help address the underlying causes of knife crime.

Pupils should be taught how to build positive and respectful relationships and appropriate ways of resolving conflict. The guidance includes a clear statement that pupils will be taught that resorting to violence is never acceptable. Pupils need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way.

Health Education should also support a school's whole-school approach to fostering pupil wellbeing and developing pupils' resilience and ability to self-regulate. This integrated, whole-school approach to the teaching and promotion of health and wellbeing has the potential to positively impact on behaviour and attainment. Pupils should be taught about the benefits of hobbies, interests and participation in their own communities as well as the importance of physical activity. This can help focus on alternative activities pupils can engage in.

Issues around knife crime can also still be taught as part of a school's wider curriculum. For example, schools can choose to include lessons on weapons awareness and gangs as part of their Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education or Citizenship curriculum, with high quality materials available to schools to support teaching in these areas.

■ Nurseries: Finance

Stuart Anderson:

[130835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support his Department provides to non-maintained nurseries.

Vicky Ford:

Nurseries, childminders and pre-schools, who have provided crucial support throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, are now more vital than ever.

We have provided extra security to nurseries and childminders that are open by paying local authorities for the autumn term for childcare places at the level we would have funded before COVID-19 – regardless of how many children were attending.

Early years settings will continue to benefit from a planned £3.6 billion spending in the 2020-21 financial year on our early education entitlements, paid to local authorities to create free early education and childcare places for children.

On SEND, the £14.4 billion funding package we announced for schools in total across three years between 2019-20 and 2022-23 - includes over £730 million additional funding to be allocated in 2021-22 for high needs, which covers children and young people aged 0 to 25. The additional high needs funding will bring the total high needs budget to over £8 billion next year.

In 2019 the government pledged a new £1 billion fund to help create more high quality, affordable childcare, including before and after school and during the school holidays. We are already delivering on this pledge with a £220 million Holiday Activities and Food Programme to provide enriching activities and a healthy meal for disadvantaged children in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced at the Spending Review a £44 million investment in 2021-22, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers. This will pay for a rate increase that is higher than the costs nurseries may face from the uplift to the national living wage in April.

We continue to ensure early years providers can access the package of additional support provided by the government, which includes business rates relief, income support and job retention schemes.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[134068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to help protect early years practitioners from contracting covid-19.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education has worked collaboratively with Public Health England to develop a system of controls, which when implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, create an inherently safer environment where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced for children and staff.

Settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures.

Settings should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment and draw up plans on re-opening, in the event that they have to close. Settings should have

active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are effective, working as planned, and updated appropriately, for example when any issues are identified, or when there are changes in public health advice.

When conducting risk assessments, settings should ensure consideration is given to staff and children with protected characteristics from groups where a disparity has been shown by the review of disparities in risks and outcomes (for example, age and sex, where someone lives, deprivation, ethnicity and/or people's occupation).

The department has published the 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance, which provides details on the system of controls and how they work in practice. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

The department is working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure rapid asymptomatic testing for all early years staff, to support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement for early years settings to remain fully open.

Furthermore, regarding vaccinations, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme 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.

Under the priority groups for the first phase of vaccine rollout, those over 50 years of age, and all those 16 years of age and over in a risk group, would be eligible for vaccination within the first phase of the programme. This prioritisation captures almost all preventable deaths from COVID-19.

Regarding the next phase of vaccine rollout, the JCVI have asked that the Department of Health and Social Care consider occupational vaccination in collaboration with other government departments. The Department for Education will input into this cross governmental exercise.

■ Race Relations: Curriculum

Andrea Jenkyns:

[133058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that discussions of race-related issues in the curriculum and schools are politically impartial.

Nick Gibb:

All schools must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broad, and which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. We expect all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance.

Schools play an important role in supporting pupils to understand the society in which they grow up and to be prepared for life in modern Britain. Topics relating to race can be covered in a number of areas of the curriculum, such as in citizenship; religious education; Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, and the new subjects of Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE).

In delivering the curriculum, schools should be aware of their duties relating to political impartiality as set out under the Education Act 1996. They must:

- forbid the pursuit of partisan political activities by junior pupils
- forbid the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school
- take reasonably practicable steps to secure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views

The Department has reminded schools about the importance of political impartiality in our guidance to schools on planning their RSHE curricula, which can be accessed via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-your-relationships-sex-and-health-curriculum#ensuring-content-is-appropriate>.

■ Schools: Fire Prevention

Margaret Greenwood:

[132953]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with Zurich Municipal on (a) fire safety in schools and (b) their findings published 5 September 2020 that schools in England are nearly twice as likely to suffer a blaze as other types of buildings; and what his Department's policy is on sprinkler systems in new school buildings.

Margaret Greenwood:

[132954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November 2020 to Question 115702, for what reason his Department has not made an assessment of the effect of school fires on levels of educational attainment; whether his Department plans to start collecting that information; and what assessment he has made of the importance of that information to understanding the wider impact of school fires.

Nick Gibb:

Fires in school buildings are very rare and in the vast majority of cases are confined to the room or object of origin or cause no damage, resulting in minimal or no disruption to education.

Department officials met Zurich Municipal on 14 December 2020. We expect that dialogue to continue early this year, and in due course to be able to gain a better understanding of the impact of fire on schools and pupils, based on the data that underpins the Zurich report, Home Office fire and rescue incident statistics, as well as on the data the Department will continue to collect from its Risk Protection Arrangement.

At present, sprinklers must be fitted in new schools where they are deemed necessary to keep pupils and staff safe. All new school building projects must also comply with building regulations, including on fire safety. The Department is due to launch a full public consultation on Building Bulletin 100 in early 2021, which will consider the implementation of various fire safety measures, including sprinkler systems.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus**

Barbara Keeley: [134386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will update the Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: schools guidance to include guidance for special schools.

Vicky Ford:

We published guidance on the 7 January 2021 setting out how we want all schools, including special schools and specialist post 16 provision, to operate during this new lockdown. This is available here:

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

We will continue to update guidance and support in due course.

Barbara Keeley: [134388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he has issued to special schools on the provision of in-person education for children with education, health and care plans during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The department published 'Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings' in July 2020, and this has been regularly updated. This guidance supports special schools and other specialist provision to provide in-person education for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans. Further information on this guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

Due to the national restrictions introduced on 7 January 2021, we published new guidance setting out how we want all schools, including special schools and specialist post 16 provision to operate during this new lockdown. This is available here:

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

We will continue to update guidance and support in due course, providing more detailed advice and support for special schools.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[131394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether students are exempt from the restrictions on travel between areas in different covid-19 tiers.

Michelle Donelan:

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

To help bring the new variant under control and while the vaccine programme is rolled out, our aim is to minimise the number of students and staff returning to campuses and accessing university facilities.

In practical terms, this means that students doing medical, clinical and healthcare related subjects, including nursing, social care, dentistry and veterinary studies are being prioritised and can return at the start of the spring term, as planned.

Those on teacher training courses and students who must complete externally-accredited examinations, which cannot be completed remotely, can also return to in-person teaching at the beginning of term.

All other students should access learning online until at least mid-February and remain at their current address in line with national measures. Universities will tell students when to return for the spring term.

On an exceptional basis, universities should support students returning for other reasons (for example, students who do not have access to appropriate accommodation, facilities, studying space or who need to return for health reasons). In these circumstances, students may return to campus, but their courses should not resume face-to-face teaching.

Kate Osborne:

[\[134608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional teaching support is available to university students during the January 2021 lockdown period while they do not have full access to their tutors; and what financial support students can access to compensate for lost income from part-time work.

Michelle Donelan:

Due to the national lockdown measures now in place, we must take further steps to reduce transmission, including by significantly reducing the number of students returning to university from their winter break accommodation, and limiting the number of people travelling to and from university facilities. We are now prioritising the return to face-to-face teaching for courses which are most important to be delivered in-person to support the pipeline of future key workers. All other courses should be delivered online until at least mid-February. Our aim is to minimise the number of students who return to university to access university facilities.

The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students regardless of their background have the resources to study remotely. This is more important than ever at the moment with the vast majority of students studying solely online. The Office for Students (OfS), as regulator for higher education (HE) providers in England, has made it clear that HE 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.

The OfS has published guidance on how best to ensure students continue to receive a high-quality academic experience in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out that providers should make all reasonable efforts to provide alternative teaching and support for students that is at least broadly equivalent to the provider's usual arrangements. The OfS will keep this guidance under review to ensure it remains relevant to the developing circumstances of the outbreak.

The OfS is actively monitoring providers to ensure that they maintain the quality of their provision, that it is accessible for all and that they have been clear in their communications with students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout the year. The OfS is also following up directly with providers where they receive notifications from students, parents or others raising concerns about the quality of teaching on offer and require providers to report to them when they are not able to deliver a course or award a qualification. If the OfS has concerns, it will investigate further.

OfS capital grants can be used to address the needs of individual students for remote access to learning, teaching, assessment and the related services of a provider, for example through the provision of equipment or connectivity services, where students would not otherwise be able to secure these.

The government has also worked closely with the OfS to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds. Providers are able to use OfS Student Premium funding worth approximately £256 million for this academic year towards student hardship funds. We are also currently making available up to £20 million of additional hardship funding on a one-off basis to support those that need it most, particularly disadvantaged students.

Students with a part-time employment contract should also speak to their employer about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been set up to help pay staff wages and keep people in employment.

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Grahame Morris:

[134412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will bring forward proposals for a tuition fee rebate for students who have had to study remotely as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

This has been a very difficult time for students, and the government is working with the sector to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies. The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the resources to study remotely. This is more important than ever now, with the vast majority of students studying solely online.

Universities are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees, up to a maximum of £9,250 for approved (fee cap) institutions. The Office for Students (OfS), as regulator for higher education (HE) providers in England, has made it clear that HE 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. The OfS has published information for providers providing practical guidance on how best to ensure students continue to receive a high-quality academic experience. The OfS is actively monitoring providers to ensure: that they maintain the quality of their provision; that it is accessible for all; and that they have been clear in their communications with students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout the year.

Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

The OIA website is available via the following link: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. This is available via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>.

The OfS has also published guidance on student consumer protection during the COVID-19 outbreak which is available via the following link:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-and-consumer-protection-during-coronavirus/>.

■ **Universities: Mental Health Services**

Mick Whitley: [134582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he had with university leaders on the adequacy of the support available to students with mental ill-health.

Mick Whitley: [134583]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with university leaders on the steps they are taking to ensure that students learning remotely continue to have access to adequate mental health support.

Michelle Donelan:

Protecting student and staff wellbeing is vital - these are difficult times and it is important students can still access the mental health and wellbeing support they need. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

It is for higher education providers as autonomous bodies to identify and address the needs of their student body and to decide what mental health and wellbeing support to put in place. At the start of, and throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, I have asked universities to prioritise mental health support, and continue to support their students, which has included making services accessible from a distance. We encourage students to stay in touch with their provider's student support and welfare teams, as these services are likely to continue to be an important source of assistance. Many providers have bolstered their existing mental health services, and adapted delivery mechanisms including reaching out to students who may be more vulnerable.

In October I wrote to Vice Chancellors outlining that student welfare should remain a priority. I have convened a working group of representatives from the higher education and health sectors, specifically to address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have also worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, which has been funded by up to £3 million by the OfS. Student Space is a mental health and wellbeing platform designed to bridge any gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and works alongside existing services. Ensuring students have access to quality mental health support is my top priority, which is why we asked the OfS to look at extending the platform. I am delighted they have been able to extend the platform to support students for the whole 2020/21 academic year.

Students struggling with their mental health can also access support via online resources from the NHS, Public Health England via the Better Health - Every Mind Matters website, and the mental health charity Mind.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Beverage Containers: Recycling

Hilary Benn:

[\[134359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether it is his policy to introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers from 2023; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The government plans to introduce a deposit return scheme for drinks containers subject to further evidence and analysis. On timelines for implementation, we want a timetable that is bold but realistic, given our desire to develop and implement an effective, cost-efficient scheme that works coherently across the UK. We will provide further information on this timetable, along with further details of the proposed DRS, in our forthcoming consultation in 2021.

■ Environment Protection: EU Law

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[134389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of UK environmental protections; and what assessment he has made of the areas in which protections need to be (a) more rigorous, (b) equally rigorous and (c) less rigorous than EU standards.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to leaving the environment in a better state than we found it and has been clear that we will realise the benefits of leaving the EU, including implementing new ways of delivering better levels of environmental protection. The Government continuously looks for opportunities to improve the effectiveness of environmental protections and has already brought forward a number of measures to drive forward standards and to help assess the adequacy of environmental legislation in future.

For example, the Environment Bill sets a new legal foundation for Government action to improve the environment and is part of the wider Government response to the clear and scientific case for a step-change in environmental protection and recovery. As part of the provisions in the Bill, the Government must have an Environmental Improvement Plan which sets out the steps it intends to take to improve the environment and review it at least every five years. The 25 Year Environment Plan will be adopted as the first statutory Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) in the Environment Bill.

The Bill also establishes a new, independent statutory body - the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) - which will have a statutory duty to monitor and report on the Government's progress in improving the natural environment in accordance with the EIP. The OEP's annual report may provide recommendations on how to improve progress towards meeting targets or environmental improvement, to which Government must respond.

In many cases, we will be going further than the EU. For example, the approach taken in the Environment Bill towards environmental principles goes further than the EU by ensuring that Ministers across Government are obliged to consider the principles in all policy development where it impacts the environment. Through the Bill's targets framework, we are seeking to develop a comprehensive suite of targets across the entire natural environment which is novel and not something developed at an EU level. The OEP's enforcement powers are different from those of the European Commission, as the OEP will be able to liaise directly with the public body in question to investigate and resolve alleged serious breaches of environmental law in a more targeted and timely manner.

■ **Seabed: Bomb Disposal**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[134613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that bombs detonated under the ocean uses the deflagration method to protect marine wildlife.

Rebecca Pow:

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

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[133732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on allowing British visitors the right to stay within the Schengen area without a visa beyond 90 days in any 180-day period.

Wendy Morton:

The Government discussed arrangements with the EU for British Citizens travelling to the Schengen Area. Regrettably, the EU consistently maintained that British Citizens

will be treated as Third Country Nationals under the Schengen Borders Code from 1 January 2021. This means that British Citizens will be able to travel visa-free for short stays for up to 90 days in a rolling 180-day period. This is the standard length of stay that the EU offers to nationals of eligible third countries that offer visa-free travel for EU citizens, in line with existing EU legislation.

British Citizens planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State. This may require applying for a visa and/or permit. Information about travel to Europe is available on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/visit-europe-1-january-2021>

■ Developing Countries: Education

Preet Kaur Gill:

[134526]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Research on Improving Systems of Education programme (RISE) funded by his Department, what assessment he has made of the effect of reductions to the aid budget on addressing the learning crisis caused by covid-19 pandemic and strengthening education systems.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO-funded research has improved our global understanding of how COVID-19 is impacting on the lives and learning outcomes of young people in low and middle income countries. The Research on Improving Systems of Education programme (RISE) has done some modelling on the severe impact that school closures may have on learning outcomes across low and middle income countries. COVID-19 represents an unprecedented education crisis. 1.6 billion students were out of education at the peak of school closures and millions of children in the most vulnerable places may never return to school. In response to COVID-19, the FCDO has adapted education programmes in 18 countries and provided over £10 million of new funding to support refugee and displaced children access education in some of the toughest parts of the world.

As set out by the Foreign Secretary, girls' education will remain a priority for UK aid, supporting girls to return to school and complete 12 years of quality education. This focus, and findings from modelling such as those by RISE, will be taken into account as decisions on future ODA spending are made.

■ Developing Countries: Females

Preet Kaur Gill:

[134524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to research funded by his Department from J-PAL affiliates Bandiera, Buehren, Goldstein, Rasul, Smurra, what assessment he has made of the effect of reductions to the aid budget on providing young women with safe spaces when there are school closures.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO-funded research has improved our global understanding of how COVID-19 is impacting on the lives and learning outcomes of young people in low and middle income countries. One JPAL funded study found that providing safe spaces to out-of-school girls reduced teenage pregnancy rates and increased the number of girls returning to school once they reopened.

As set out by the Foreign Secretary, girls' education will remain a priority for UK aid, supporting girls to return to school and complete 12 years of quality education. Since 2015, the UK has supported 15.6 million children, including over 8 million girls, to gain a decent education. We are investing in girls' education around the world, including through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC): the world's largest fund focused on girls' education. For example, the GEC is continuing to reach girls during COVID, providing them with vital support to help them keep safe, support their physical and mental well-being and keep them engaged in learning, both at home and in schools as they re-open.

Supporting girls' safety and return to quality education will remain a priority for UK aid, including as decisions on future ODA spending are made.

■ Developing Countries: Students**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[134523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the findings from the Young Lives at Work Covid Telephone Survey, what assessment he has made of the effect of reductions to the ODA budget on supporting students to (a) return to the classroom, (b) finding work and (c) escaping poverty.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO-funded research has improved our global understanding of how COVID-19 is impacting on the lives and learning outcomes of young people in low and middle income countries. This includes the Young Lives at Work Covid Telephone Survey, with the first two rounds of surveys finding that poorer students have had to find work to support their families and may struggle to return to education. COVID-19 represents an unprecedented education crisis. 1.6 billion students were out of education due to coronavirus at the peak of school closures and millions of children in the most vulnerable places may never return to school. As set out by the Foreign Secretary, girls' education will remain a priority for UK aid, supporting girls to return to school and complete 12 years of quality education. This focus, and findings such as these, will be taken into account as decisions on future ODA spending are made.

■ Iceland: Climate Change and Fisheries**Catherine West:**[\[134515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to strengthen relations with Iceland on (a) sustainable fishing and (b) research and cooperation on climate change.

Wendy Morton:

I signed the UK-Iceland Joint Vision with the Icelandic Foreign Minister on 14 May 2020. It forms the basis for future cooperation on our shared priorities and focusses on seven areas, including sustainable fisheries management and action to tackle climate change.

On 11 November 2020 Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Iceland which aims to boost cooperation on fisheries matters. It came into effect on 1 January. It will establish a UK-Iceland Fisheries Dialogue which will allow both countries to share best practice, including in product innovation and the traceability and marketing of seafood products.

The UK and Iceland are like-minded on climate change and we continue to work closely together on climate-related activities, including research in the run-up to COP26. Under the Joint Vision we plan to have at least one joint initiative to strengthen research collaboration in the field of climate change each year. This may be bilateral or may be undertaken through international mechanisms and fora, such as the Arctic Council or Arctic Circle Assembly. British Embassy Reykjavik are hosting a joint UK/Iceland Arctic Marine virtual science session on 23 February, bringing leading UK and Icelandic scientists and other experts together to look at latest research and discuss future collaboration opportunities.

■ Overseas Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[134050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many employee hours were spent on the 2020 ODA prioritisation process.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: The process by which the First Secretary's cross HMG review to identify savings in this year's ODA budget involved support from central, policy and regional teams in FCO and DFID over the summer of 2020. There is also ongoing prioritisation of programming, as our work continues to respond to dynamic events, such as humanitarian crisis or the COVID-19 response. Therefore it is not possible to calculate the number of employee hours.

■ Overseas Aid: Children**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[133899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) deaf and (b) disabled children throughout the world of the decision to reduce the funding allocated to the Official Development Assistance budget.

Wendy Morton:

Disability inclusion is an important issue for the FCDO and we are committed to supporting a long-term movement of change for people with disabilities around the world. We will continue to embed disability inclusion across all of our work, including

through our Official Development Assistance to fight poverty, improve global health, promote girl's education and achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

We provide direct funding to programmes that support children with disabilities, including those with hearing impairments. For example, through the Girls' Education Challenge, we have helped over 117,000 girls with disabilities receive an education in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. Through UK Aid Direct, we also support Deaf Kidz International to ensure the early detection of deafness and maximise their residual hearing and life-chances, reducing their susceptibility to abuse and discrimination.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion

Andrea Jenkyns:

[133062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the information provided to women undergoing consultation for late-term abortions; and whether women undergoing those consultations are informed that a child could live at 22 weeks outside the womb and feel pain.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not set clinical practice. To support clinical practice, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) has considered the issue of fetal pain and awareness in its guidelines on The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion and Fetal Awareness: Review of Research and Recommendations for Practice, which is available at the following links:

https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/abortion-guideline_web_1.pdf

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/rcogfetalawarenesswpr0610.pdf>

The RCOG have identified the Report 'Fetal Awareness: Review and Recommendations for Practice' should be reviewed, following the recent publication of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Guidance on best practice abortion care.

■ Abortion: Side Effects

Mary Glendon:

[132913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will review the process for completing abortion notification HSA4 forms so that they reflect medical complications following the abortion that occur after the form is submitted, to take into account that women may not report complications immediately, and given that side-effects can occur up to two weeks after the abortion.

Helen Whately:

Under the Abortion Act 1967, any complication known to the registered medical practitioner terminating the pregnancy should be reported to the Chief Medical Officer on the Abortion Notification (HSA4) form. All serious incidents should be reported by the provider to their commissioner, the Care Quality Commission and other relevant organisations in line with the serious incident framework published by NHS England and NHS Improvement at the following link:

<https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/serious-incident-framework/>

Scott Benton:**[133245]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November 2020 to Question 54271, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that advice given during consultation on abortion complications is accurate for the patient in circumstances where there is no in-person examination or ultrasound to determine gestational age.

Helen Whately:

Clinicians will discuss possible complications with the woman during the consultation and women will be provided with written advice and information about possible symptoms, including those which would necessitate urgent review. Women have access to a 24 hour telephone helpline should they have any concerns.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) have issued clinical guidelines for healthcare professionals on 'Coronavirus infection and abortion care'. The guidance sets out the circumstances where women should be asked to attend a clinic for an ultra-sound scan. However it states that "most women can determine the gestational age of their pregnancy with reasonable accuracy by last menstrual period (LMP) alone". The RCOG guidance includes a decision aid for clinicians to use to help determine if an ultra-sound scan is required. This includes detailed questions to identify gestational age.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Yorkshire and the Humber**Jon Trickett:****[134340]**

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

Edward Argar:

This information is not collected centrally.

■ Alzheimer's Disease: Medical Treatments**Jon Trickett:****[133686]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on finding a cure to Alzheimer's disease.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to supporting dementia research. Researchers in the United Kingdom are at the forefront of global efforts to find a cure or a disease-modifying treatment by 2025. The 2020 Dementia Challenge commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over five years was delivered a year early, with £344 million spent over the four years to 31 March 2019. Our dementia research capability includes the £190 million UK Dementia Research Institute, the £43 million Dementias Platform UK supporting experimental medicine studies and the National Institute for Health Research Translational Collaboration – Dementia, which brings together industry, academia and charities to deliver research from which patients will benefit.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[132790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of making a distinction between cases of covid-19 infection among staff and residents in Public Health England guidelines on the re-opening of care homes after a covid-19 outbreak so that care homes whose residents have not had a case of covid-19 infection for 28 days are permitted to take on new residents.

Helen Whately:

Section 3 of 'Admission and care of residents in a care home during COVID-19' provides information to care home providers on the reporting of COVID-19 cases and outbreak management. The guidance is available on GOV.UK. In the instance of a single possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 within the care home, providers should inform their local Health Protection Team (HPT) at Public Health England. It is the role of the HPT to provide advice and support to help the care home manage the outbreak, along with local authority partners.

The HPT may advise implementing restrictions such as the closure of the home to further admissions, recognising this is usually the care home manager's decision in discussion with their commissioners and alerting the clinical commissioning group and local authority. The outbreak can be declared over once no new cases among residents or staff have occurred in the 28 days since the onset of symptoms in the most recent case, which is twice the incubation period.

■ Care Homes: Finance**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[123617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support his Department provides to care homes to help them meet the additional costs of providing (a) increased staffing levels and (b) enhanced protection measures to ensure the safety of residents and staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 December 2020]: From the start of the pandemic, the Government has taken steps to ensure that care home residents and staff are protected. We have provided £1.1 billion of ring-fenced funding for infection prevention measures through the Infection Control Fund and made a further £4.6 billion available to councils to address pressures caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care. On 23 December, the Government announced an additional £149 million to fund costs associated with increased testing, to help ensure the safety of staff and residents.

The Infection Control Fund may be used to cover the additional staffing costs that result from limiting staff to working in one care setting. It may also be used for enhanced infection prevention measures such as ensuring safe visiting. The Government has also committed to the provision of free personal protective equipment for adult social care providers until March 2021.

■ Care Homes: Visits**Jon Trickett:**[\[124119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) advice and (b) guidance provided by the (i) Chief Medical Officer and (ii) Public Health England on the introduction of lateral flow testing as a precautionary measure to enable family members to hug relatives in care homes.

Helen Whately:

The Department has published 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) lateral flow testing of visitors in care homes'. This guidance has been informed by clinical and public health advice provided by Public Health England (PHE) and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer. PHE has provided specific advice on the use of lateral flow devices to enable safer visiting by loved ones to residents in care homes recognising a negative test result is not proof against incursion of infection and that all other appropriate infection prevention and control measures, including use of personal protective equipment, social distancing and use of space are considered by care home managers as part of their risk assessment.

Caroline Lucas:[\[124156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, (a) what assessment he has made of the additional costs faced by care homes of implementing his most recent guidance on care home visits, (b) if he will make the resources available to cover those costs and (c) if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

We understand that for some care homes, implementing processes to enable visiting will incur a financial cost. The Infection Control Fund has provided over £1.1 billion for the care sector to take key steps to improve infection prevention and control, including enabling providers to put in place measures to support safe visiting.

■ Coronavirus: Birmingham**Taiwo Owatemi:** [\[134190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what rate of covid-19 infection will be used to justify the opening of the Birmingham Nightingale hospital.

Edward Argar:

The Nightingale hospital in Birmingham stands ready to provide support to local NHS services and accept patients if needed based on local clinical advice. The National Health Service has flexed hospital capacity throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so, including staffing Nightingale hospitals as needed.

■ Coronavirus: Carers**Margaret Greenwood:** [\[132949\]](#)

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 the (a) mental and (b) physical health of unpaid carers.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[132951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on supporting unpaid carers of the findings of the Caring Behind Closed Doors: six months report published by Carers UK in October 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]:

The Government recognises the vital role unpaid carers play, especially during this difficult period, and acknowledge the issues raised in Carers UK's report. That is why we continue to work closely with carer organisations to support them.

During the pandemic, we have:

- 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;
- funded the See, Hear, Respond service, delivered by Barnardo's to provides rapid support to children, young people and families who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and includes a dedicated young carers hub with helpful resources;
- ensured unpaid carers can continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they need to self-isolate and recognised time providing emotional support as part of the 35 hours a week Carers Allowance care threshold; and

- worked with the Social Care Institute for Excellence to publish guidance on reopening day services which we know provide important respite to carers and provided funding through the Government's Infection Control Fund, which can be used to support day services adopt infection control measures.

■ **Coronavirus: Disability**

Catherine West:

[\[134038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure disabled people can access support services during the covid-19 outbreak without proving their disability.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: Under the Care Act 2014 an individual who appears to have care and support needs is entitled to ask their local authority for a needs assessment to establish whether they are eligible for care and support. If the individual's needs meet the criteria set out in the eligibility regulations, the local authority has a duty to meet those needs, subject to a financial assessment.

The Care Act Statutory Guidance states that "the local authority should base their judgment on the assessment of the adult and a formal diagnosis of the condition should not be required."

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Kate Osborne:

[\[134607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's criteria is for lifting the national lockdown covid-19 restrictions introduced on 5 January 2021; and whether that criteria will be applied more stringently compared with previous lockdowns.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

When making decisions on any COVID-19 restrictions the Government assesses a wide range of data. If our understanding of the virus does not change dramatically, deployment of the vaccine continues to be successful and pressures on hospitals decreases then we hope to be able to start lifting restrictions.

The Government therefore keeps the restriction measures under continual review and will make changes as and when the data and science supports it.

■ **Coronavirus: Hospitals**

Helen Hayes:

[\[134007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the number of (a) NHS and (b) outsourced staff working in hospitals who are experiencing symptoms of (i) long covid or (ii) other longer term health complications caused by covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: No specific assessment has been made on the numbers of either National Health Service staff or outsourced staff working in hospitals who are experiencing symptoms of long COVID or any other long-term health complications caused by COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Licensed Premises**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [\[134421\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason takeaway alcohol sales from pubs and restaurants are not permitted in the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown on the same basis as the previous lockdown; and if he will permit those sales.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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 taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic.

In recognition of the importance of transparency in these unprecedented times, SAGE has been publishing the statements and the accompanying evidence it has reviewed to demonstrate how the scientific understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data emerges and how SAGE's advice has quickly adapted to new findings that reflect a changing situation. Hospitality venues such as cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars and social clubs must close, with the exception of providing food and non-alcoholic drinks for takeaway until 11pm, click-and-collect and drive-through. All food and drink including alcohol can continue to be provided by delivery.

The Government has these restrictions constantly under review.

■ Coronavirus: Schools**Julian Sturdy:****[\[112046\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the medical evidential basis was for his Department's guidance on children resident in households with clinically extremely vulnerable people that children should continue to attend school as normal during the covid-19 outbreak; and what assessment his Department has made of the covid-19 risk to clinically extremely vulnerable parents of their children attending school during the November 2020 lockdown restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

A lack of schooling is known to have a negative impact on children, reducing their life chances and exacerbating physical and mental health issues. This was made clear by the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers in their statement on schools and childcare. Therefore, any decisions on children missing school need to be taken in light of this risk to their overall wellbeing. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that children are much less susceptible to severe illness from COVID-19. This has been

detailed in the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' paper on children, schools and transmission.

■ **Coronavirus: Students**

Emma Hardy: **[130820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many lateral flow tests have been requested by universities for testing students on their return after Christmas; and whether those requests will be fulfilled.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We do not publish data in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Supported Housing**

Helen Hayes: **[133995]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current guidance is on visitation for people in supported living settings.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: As of Wednesday 6 January 2021, a new national lockdown is in place across England. Visits with support bubbles are still allowed. Supported living managers, care/support workers, individuals in supported living environments and their families and friends should follow national guidance on support bubbles and meeting others which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Grahame Morris: **[120030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to identify high risk and vulnerable groups in the community to ensure a quick and effective roll-out of a covid-19 vaccine when one becomes available.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 30 November 2020]: The Government has now accepted the recommendations from the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to authorise three COVID-19 vaccines for use from Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford University/AstraZeneca, and Moderna. This follows months of rigorous clinical trials and a thorough analysis of the data by experts at the MHRA who have concluded that all three vaccines met its strict standards of safety, quality, and effectiveness.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who advise the Government on which vaccine/s the United Kingdom should use and provide advice on prioritisation at a population level. For the first phase, the JCVI has advised that the vaccine be given to care home residents and staff, as well as frontline health and social care workers, then to the rest of the population in order

of age and clinical risk factors. Included in this are those with underlying health conditions, which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

■ **Dementia: Coronavirus**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[113025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on the health and wellbeing of people with dementia of excluding them from the clinically vulnerable list.

Helen Whately:

Keeping people safe throughout this period, especially society's most vulnerable, is the Government's top priority. We recognise the particular challenges that people with dementia and their families are facing at this time, whether that's because of the impact of social distancing measures or because their usual activities or support have been disrupted.

Although dementia is not listed in the definition of clinically vulnerable, people with dementia may fall within the category of 'vulnerable' by, for example, meeting the criteria on age or the other defined health conditions.

We commissioned research through the National Institute for Health Research on how to manage or mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia and their carers living in the community. Concise advice was produced for people with dementia and their carers respectively. These are available at the following link:

<http://www.idealproject.org.uk/covid/>

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**

Justin Madders:

[124216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer question 100432 tabled by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston on 7 October 2020.

Justin Madders:

[124217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 99000 tabled on 4 October 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Justin Madders:

[124218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 89748 tabled on 14 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Justin Madders:

[124219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 87566 tabled on 8 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Justin Madders:

[\[124220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 83847 tabled on 1 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Justin Madders:

[\[124221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 83849 tabled on 1 September 2020 by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers to Questions [100432](#), [99000](#), [89748](#), [87566](#), [83847](#) and [83849](#).

Apsana Begum:

[\[130863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans provide a response to Question 108295, tabled by the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse on 23 October 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 January 2021]: We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's question will be answered as soon as possible.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[134019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to provide a substantive response to Question 124814 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, tabled on 3 December 2020 by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn.

Edward Argar:

We take parliamentary scrutiny incredibly seriously and it is fundamentally important that hon. Members are provided with accurate and timely information to enable them to hold the Government to account. We are working rapidly to provide all Members with accurate answers to their questions, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's question will be answered as soon as possible.

■ **Exercise: Children**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[134435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to encourage exercise among 13 to 17 year olds.

Jo Churchill:

The Government published 'School Sport and Activity Action Plan' in July 2019, to provide children with greater opportunity to do 60 minutes of sport and physical activity every day inside and outside school. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/children-to-have-greater-opportunity-to-access-60-minutes-of-physical-activity-every-day>

In addition, Public Health England (PHE) published the update of 'What Works in Schools and Colleges to increase Physical Activity' in July 2019. This revised document presents a framework of eight principles for schools and colleges to follow when taking a whole school approach to increasing physical activity. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-works-in-schools-to-increase-physical-activity-briefing>

■ Health Professions: Coronavirus**Jon Trickett:****[110055]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS workers have died from covid-19 (a) in total and (b) since 1 August 2020.

Fleur Anderson:**[86180]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff members have died from covid-19 since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jeremy Hunt:**[88276]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many health care workers have died from covid-19 to date.

Jonathan Ashworth:**[88317]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) NHS and (b) social care workers have died from covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: The Office for National Statistics publish mortality data for deaths involving COVID-19 for healthcare workers and social care workers in England and Wales. The last iteration of this release showed that in England there were 305 deaths among healthcare workers and 307 deaths among social care workers registered between 9 March and 12 October 2020 in England, of those aged 20-64 years, using last known occupation. The definition of healthcare workers used will include not only those employed in the National Health Service but wider healthcare sector workers.

■ Hospices: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[133285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £150 million in additional funding to support the hospice sector in response to the covid-19 outbreak that his Department was scheduled to pay in July 2020 has yet to be paid.

Helen Whately:

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement recognise the huge role palliative and end of life care services, including hospices, have played in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This importance was acknowledged in the provision of over £150 million in additional funding to the hospice sector between April and July 2020. The proportion of this additional funding that was scheduled to be paid in July 2020 is currently subject to financial reconciliation.

■ Life Expectancy

Jon Trickett:

[\[910600\]](#)

What progress his Department has made on improving life expectancy levels.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Life expectancy in recent years has been at its highest ever level. However the rate of improvement has stalled and we expect to see the adverse impact of COVID-19 on life expectancy in future. COVID-19 has also highlighted differences in health outcomes between communities and we remain committed to levelling up health outcomes so everyone can enjoy a long, healthy life.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron:

[\[134367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 29 October, 2 December and 16 December 2020 on his constituent with reference JB29672.

Edward Argar:

We are working to provide all Members and external correspondents with accurate answers to their correspondence, as well as supporting the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hon. Member's letter will be answered as soon as possible.

■ Mental Health Services

Esther McVey:

[\[133834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme in response to the effects of the covid-19 outbreak on people's mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Talking therapies delivered by Improved Access to Psychological therapies (IAPT) will continue to be made available remotely so people can access help safely from home and the National Health Service will work to ensure the option of face to face support is provided to people with serious mental health illnesses across all ages where it is clinically safe to do so.

Since April 2020, the IAPT programme has hosted a webinar series on delivering condition specific treatment during COVID-19, including on the role IAPT can play in the treatment of 'long' COVID-19

Furthermore, the NHS have been working with local health systems and Health Education England, to support ongoing trainee recruitment and expansion to ensure the programme can deliver the planned expansion needed to deal with the effects of the pandemic in future years.

■ Mental Health Services: Internet**Esther McVey:**[\[133833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of (a) the accessibility of online talking therapies for patients with mental health needs and (b) the effectiveness of those online therapies compared to face-to-face therapies since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Talking therapies delivered by Improved Access to Psychological therapies services will continue to be made available remotely so people can access help safely from home and the National Health Service will work to ensure the option of face to face support is provided to people with serious mental health illnesses across all ages where it is clinically safe to do so.

At present, we have not accumulated a sufficient number of patients who have completed a course of treatment that would allow the observation of improvement and recovery rates for each consultation medium. However, the recovery target, which states that at least 50% of people who complete treatment should move to recovery, was met in August 2020 where the rate was 51.9%.

■ Mental Health Services: Young People**Lee Anderson:**[\[134150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of provision of mental health support for 16 to 18 year olds.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are committed to improving the mental health provision for 16-18-year olds. We are implementing the three core proposals in the green paper on children and young people's mental health, which will incentivise all schools and colleges to identify and train a senior lead for mental health; create new school and college-based mental

health support teams supervised by trained children and young people's mental health staff; and pilot a four-week waiting time for access to specialist children and young people's mental health services.

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, at least an additional 345,000 children and young people aged 0-25 years old will be able to access support via National Health Service-funded mental health services and school or college-based mental health support teams by 2023/24 and we will extend current service models to create a comprehensive offer for 0-25 year olds that reaches across mental health services for children, young people and adults.

■ **NHS Trusts: Subsidiary Companies**

Karin Smyth:

[\[133931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2020 to Question 120891 on NHS Trusts: Subsidiary Companies, what criteria he will use to measure the benefits to patients of the subsidiary transaction.

Edward Argar:

The measurement of patient benefits in proposals by trusts for forming or changing a subsidiary under NHS England and NHS Improvement's addendum to transaction guidance is through trust board certification and a review process.

As part of the review, the trust board should clearly demonstrate why the formation of trust subsidiaries is the best option for patients, the trust and the local health economy. Plans require the support of key stakeholders in the local health economy, including those from patients to gain their perspective on perceived benefits of any subsidiary.

■ **Nurses: Sussex**

Andrew Griffith:

[\[133324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional nurses 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.

It is usual to provide year-on-year figures 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 nurses and health visitors employed in Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust from both September and December 2019 to September 2020, full-time equivalent.

NURSE AND HEALTH VISITORS	WESTERN SUSSEX HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST	SUSSEX COMMUNITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
Change since December 2019	66 (4.4%)	24 (1.9%)
Change since September 2019	106 (7.2%)	36 (3.0%)

Source: NHS Digital NHS HCHS workforce statistics

■ Palliative Care

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[131175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will increase their investment in (a) palliative and (b) hospice care for 2021 to support people approaching the end of life.

Helen Whately:

As with the vast majority of NHS services, the funding and commissioning of palliative and end of life care, is a local matter, over which individual National Health Service commissioners have responsibility. Local commissioners are best placed to understand the needs of local populations and commission services to meet those needs accordingly.

Following the publication of the NHS Long Term Plan in January 2019, NHS England and NHS Improvement committed to increasing its contribution towards palliative care over the next five years, by match-funding clinical commissioning groups who commit to increase their investment in local children's palliative and end of life care services, including children's hospices. This should more than double the NHS support, from £11 million up to a combined total of £25 million a year by 2023/24.

Sir Edward Leigh: [\[131176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of improved recognition of palliative care needs and services outside hospitals on (a) the standard of palliative care in the UK and (b) annual hospital costs.

Helen Whately:

No specific recent assessment of palliative and end of life care needs and services outside hospitals in England has taken place. As health is a devolved matter, any such action or assessment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be decisions for the respective devolved administrations.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[131195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to indicative budgets from NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, what the average spend was on a palliative care patient in the last year for which figures are available.

Andrew Rosindell:

[131196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS clinical commissioning groups have plans to review or upgrade their palliative care provision.

Helen Whately:

This data is not held centrally.

■ Palliative Care: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[123535]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve the standard of palliative care during the covid-19 outbreak.

Andrew Rosindell:

[123536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the standard of palliative care.

Helen Whately:

No specific recent assessment has been made.

Palliative care providers are routinely inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and assessed on the quality of palliative care they provide. During the pandemic the CQC have suspended these routine inspections to reduce the pressure on health and social care services. The CQC are continuing to monitor providers using patient feedback.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with partners to ensure patients continue to receive high-quality palliative and end of life care during the COVID-19 outbreak. Guidance made available includes the Royal College of General Practitioners specialty guide 'Community Palliative, End of Life and Bereavement Care in the COVID-19 pandemic', published on 22 March. It sets out recommendations to support commissioners and clinicians to maintain high-quality palliative care, while taking into account infection spread and social distancing requirements. This guidance is available at the following link:

elearning.rcgp.org.uk/mod/page/view.php?id=10537

■ Terminal Illnesses: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[134422]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether visiting a person who is terminally ill is a permissible reason for staying away from home overnight under the January 2021 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Visiting a person who is terminally ill is a permissible reason for staying away from home overnight under the January 2021 lockdown restrictions.

HOME OFFICE**■ Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre****Owen Thompson:****[134497]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that people in Colnbrook immigration removal centre are able to access (a) legal representatives, (b) their families and (c) other forms of support.

Chris Philp:

Detained individuals are advised of their right to legal representation, and how they can obtain such representation, within 24 hours of their arrival at an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC), including Colnbrook IRC.

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) operates free legal advice surgeries in IRCs in England. Individuals who are detained are entitled to receive up to 30 minutes of advice regardless of financial eligibility or the merits of their case. There is no restriction on the number of surgeries an individual may attend. If an individual who is detained requires substantive advice on a matter which is in scope of legal aid, full legal advice can be provided if the statutory legal aid means and merits criteria are met. Following a change of operations in line with Government advice on social distancing, the LAA Detained Duty Advice scheme is currently operating by phone. The duty solicitor will directly contact individuals who wish to access this service.

All individuals in IRCs, including Colnbrook, are provided with a mobile phone and have access to landline telephones, fax machines, email and video calling facilities which can be used to contact legal advisers. In exceptional circumstances, and for individuals facing imminent removal from the UK, face to face legal visits can occur where other means of contact (video calling, telephone, email) are not feasible.

Social visits to IRCs and Short-Term Holding Facilities (STHF) are operated in line with Government COVID-19 control measures at a local, regional or national level and are carefully controlled and risk-assessed in line with Government advice on social distancing. Detained individuals are being encouraged to utilise virtual means of social contact including video calling, email and mobile telephone; additional weekly mobile phone credit is being provided to support continued social contact in these unprecedented times.

■ Deportation: Offenders**Owen Thompson:****[134498]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on the deportation of people who are in the process of appealing a criminal conviction.

Chris Philp:

The department's policy is to put deportation on hold where we are aware that a person has appealed their criminal conviction.

■ Home Office: Staff

Kenny MacAskill: [\[134594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff have been on (a) secondment and (b) internship to her Department from (i) the Scottish Government and (ii) Crown and Prosecutor Fiscal Service in each year since 2011; how long on average each such position was held for; and what role each such member of staff performed.

Chris Philp:

This information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Immigration

Tim Farron: [\[130675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to appoint a Migrants' Commissioner.

Priti Patel:

As outlined in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan on 30 September 2020, the Home Office is consulting with the Windrush Cross-Government Working Group on how best to advance this recommendation to ensure the function works independently and effectively.

The Windrush Cross-Government Working Group brings together key stakeholders and community leaders with representatives from a number of government departments.

■ Immigration Removal Centres

Owen Thompson: [\[134499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the compatibility with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights of steps taken by her Department's to remove parents from their children in immigration removal centres.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has a duty to maintain effective immigration control. It may be necessary on occasion to detain a member of the household or another adult who is part of the care arrangements for children, thus separating a family.

Regular reviews of detention consider whether the ongoing detention is a proportionate interference in the Article 8 rights of each member of the family and take account of any new information that is obtained.

When assessing whether children should be removed from their family unit, the impact of the separation is considered carefully. Any information concerning the children that is available or can reasonably be obtained must be considered. The conclusion reached will depend on the specific facts of each case. Detention decision makers are also instructed to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the

welfare of children in accordance with our duties under Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009.

The separation of children from their parents for immigration purposes can be justified in exceptional circumstances for safeguarding reasons where the welfare of the child is compromised by their remaining with a parent, for example to prevent children from being at risk of, or witnessing, disruptive or violent behaviour, or when the Independent Family Returns Panel (IFRP) advises that a separation is in a child or the children's best interests.

Home Office guidance provides that nursing mothers must not be separated from the child they are nursing, and that a child must not be separated from both adults for immigration purposes, or from one, in the case of a single-parent family, if the consequence of that decision is that the child would be taken into care.

■ Police: Recruitment

Catherine West:

[134516]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many new police officers have been recruited since 2019 by region of deployment.

Kit Malthouse:

As part of the drive to recruit an additional 20,000 officers by March 2023, the Home Office now publishes "[Police officer uplift](#)" statistics on a quarterly basis, which include the number of joining officers in each quarter, broken down by joining month, as well as the number of officers that count towards the uplift.

The latest data in this series, covering the period to September 2020, are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-quarterly-update-to-september-2020>

Table U4 of the accompanying data tables contains information on the number of new recruits, by Police Force Area, in each month since November 2019. Breakdowns at lower levels of geography are not collected.

The next release of the "Police officer uplift" statistics is scheduled for release on Thursday 28th January, and will cover the period to 31 December 2020. It will be available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics>

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence

Afzal Khan:

[134551]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of correspondence sent by hon. Members to UKVI receive a substantive response within the 20-day service standard.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visas and Immigration work to a target of responding to 95% of Ministerial correspondence within 20 working days.

Performance has been impacted by an increase in the volume of correspondence received, alongside the need for Ministers and officials to instigate a remote process for drafting and signing correspondence during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. An action plan is currently in place to clear backlogs and drive up performance.

The latest published data on UKVI performance against the service standard which includes data up to and including the end of quarter 3-2020/21 is held at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-november-2020>

■ **Yvonne Fletcher**

Allan Dorans:

[134572]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Prime minister's oral answer on 1 July 2020, Official Report, column 327 and his meeting with the hon. Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock on 29 July 2020 on the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher in 1984, what progress he has made on the release of Government information relevant to that investigation.

Kit Malthouse:

This question repeats a letter the Honorable Member has recently sent to the Prime Minister. This response is in drafting and he will receive a reply by Friday 22nd January 2021.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Environment Protection: Planning**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[134390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the ability of the English planning system to enforce environmental standards.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Local authorities can refuse planning permission for developments that would cause unacceptable harm to the environment. They can also take a range of enforcement actions against any breach of planning conditions imposed to mitigate potential environmental harm.

In the reforms put forward for consultation in the White Paper, *Planning for the Future*, we committed to seeking to strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions so that, as we move towards a rules-based system, communities can have confidence those rules will be upheld. Consultation on *Planning for the future* closed on 29 October 2020, and we are currently considering the responses.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

David Linden:

[\[134532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the moratorium on evictions in England beyond 11 January 2021 during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has extended existing legislation to ensure bailiffs in England do not serve eviction notices, or carry out evictions except in the most serious circumstances, such as anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse perpetrators in the social sector. This legislation will be in place for at least six weeks before being reviewed with consideration taken to the latest public health data. This will mean in practical terms that no evictions will be enforced until March.

To further protect renters, landlords are required to provide 6-months' notice of their intention to seek possession through the courts, except in the most serious cases such as anti-social behaviour, fraud and egregious rent arrears. This means that tenants served notice today will not have to leave until July.

David Linden:

[\[134533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect on levels of homelessness of ending the moratorium on evictions in England on 11 January 2021.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is clear that no one should be without a roof over their head. That is why we are spending over £700 million this year and will be spending over £750 million next year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, further demonstrating the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping.

Renters will continue to be protected from eviction during this new national lockdown period. The Government has extended existing legislation to ensure bailiffs do not serve eviction notices or carry out evictions, except in the most serious circumstances, such as anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse in the social sector. This legislation will be in place for at least six weeks, after which it will be reviewed and consideration taken to the latest public health data. Landlords are also required to provide six months' notice except in the most serious cases such as anti-social behaviour, fraud and egregious rent arrears meaning tenants served notice now will not have to leave until July.

■ Housing: Construction

Helen Hayes:

[\[134003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether all new homes will be required to meet the accessible and adaptable standard following the consultation on raising accessibility standards for new homes.

Christopher Pincher:

Evidence gathered by the consultation on raising accessibility standards for new homes will help Government consider whether to mandate a higher baseline accessibility standard or to reconsider the way existing optional standards are used. We are currently analysing responses and will be publishing a Government response.

Housing: Coronavirus**Helen Hayes:**[\[134004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to prioritise accessible housing for older and disabled people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

Our reforms on housing for older and disabled people progress despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

By law, local authorities must ensure that reasonable preference for social housing is given to people who need to move on medical and welfare grounds, and this will include older and disabled people. In our Social Housing White Paper we said that we will look at how we can improve access to suitable homes for disabled people.

We have recently consulted on how to raise accessible housing standards and we are also significantly reforming the planning system to put a much greater emphasis on design and quality.

Housing: Insulation**Olivia Blake:**[\[134628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to (a) require building owners to cover costs for (i) remedial work related to fire safety and building cladding (ii) fire insurance and (iii) waking watches and (b) increase support for leaseholders to meet those costs.

Christopher Pincher:

a) i) It is unacceptable for leaseholders to have to worry about the cost of fixing historic safety defects in their buildings that they did not cause. Government has repeatedly said that building owners should step up and not pass these costs on to leaseholders, where possible.

Where developers or building owners have been unable or unwilling to pay, we have introduced funding schemes providing £1.6 billion to accelerate the pace of work and meet the costs of remediating the highest risk and most expensive defects – ACM cladding and other unsafe cladding systems like High Pressure Laminates.

ii) The Department is aware that obtaining affordable building insurance for some multi storey, multi occupied buildings can be challenging. The Department is working to consider any potential resolutions.

iii) The new £30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund will pay for the installation of fire alarm systems in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding, which will enable costly interim safety measures such as waking watch to be replaced.

b) The Government is accelerating its work to identify financing solutions that help to protect leaseholders whilst also helping to protect the taxpayer.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[134646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Luton South of 26 November 2020 on Luton Borough Council's financial situation.

Luke Hall:

The letter has been received and a response will be sent shortly.

■ **Water Companies: Planning Permission**

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[134334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make water companies statutory consultees in medium and large scale planning applications; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The list of statutory consultees is under constant review. Whilst particular organisations or bodies might not be statutory consultees on planning applications, they can work proactively with local councils to identify developments where they might have an interest and can comment on proposals within the statutory public consultation period. The decision to grant or refuse a planning application ultimately rests with the local planning authority, who will take into account all relevant planning considerations and not just the advice from one consultee.

Planning practice guidance encourages early engagement between local planning authorities and water/sewerage companies where water quality is likely to be a significant planning concern. Part 8 of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015 - "Miscellaneous – Local Development Orders" states that where a local planning authority has prepared a draft Local Development Order in which the interests of water/sewerage companies are likely to be affected, the authority must consult those companies. Consultation with water/sewerage companies also ensures that the companies' investment plans align with local development needs.

Water/sewerage companies should also be consulted on Local Plans in order to manage water demand locally and help deliver new development.

JUSTICE

■ **Evictions: Yorkshire and the Humber****Jon Trickett:****[134341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the number of evictions was in (a) Hemsworth constituency and (b) the Yorkshire and the Humber region in each year between 2010 and 2020.

Alex Chalk:

The information requested is not held.

The MoJ publish quarterly National Statistics on Mortgage and Landlord possession which includes the volume of evictions conducted by County Court bailiffs only from 2000 onwards. This information is published in the Mortgage and Landlord Possession Tables in table 4.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-july-to-september-2020>

■ **Young Offenders: Sexual Offences****Alex Davies-Jones:****[134625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many youth cautions have been given by the police for a sexual offence in England and Wales in each year from 2015.

Alex Chalk:

There are two types of caution available for children aged 10-17: a youth caution and a youth conditional caution. These can be used as an alternative to prosecution for any offence admitted by a child where there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute. A youth conditional caution has conditions attached - where there is no reasonable excuse for non-compliance with conditions, criminal proceedings may be brought.

The table below shows the aggregated number of both types of youth caution where the principal offence (where there is more than one offence, the principal offence is the more serious) was a sexual offence. 8,552 cautions were issued to children in the year ending March 2019, meaning that cautions where the principal offence was a sexual offence made up around 2% of all cautions issued to children in that year.

	YEAR ENDING MARCH				
Offence type	2015[1]	2016	2017	2018	2019
Sexual offences	303	277	248	151	133

This information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2018-to-2019> in the document "Youth Justice Statistics: 2018 to 2019: supplementary tables", chapter 1, table 1.12.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 significantly modernised and strengthened the laws on sexual offences in England and Wales to provide extra protection to people from sexual exploitation. The sentences available to the courts for offences under the Act are significant and reflect the seriousness of the offending.

The Home Office also publishes the investigative outcomes of crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, including the number resolved through a police caution. This data is published quarterly and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

Any discrepancies between the two sets of data are due to differences in recording practices.

[1] In the year ending March 2016 the offence groups used as the reason for giving a youth caution were updated to match the groups used in crime statistics. Therefore, data broken down by offence group from the year ending March 2016 onwards are not directly comparable with previous data.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Government

Louise Haigh: [\[134494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when the next quarterly update on progress on the implementation of the New Decade, New Approach agreement outlined under Annexe F of that agreement is planned for publication.

Mr Robin Walker:

Following the Implementation Review Meeting on 11 January 2020, the UK Government will work with the Executive and the Irish Government on publishing an update on the implementation of the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Emmanuel Macron

Ruth Jones: [\[134563\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last spoke to President Macron of France; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson:

This information is available on the gov.uk website.

■ First Minister (NIA)**Ruth Jones:**[\[134565\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last had discussions with the First Minister of Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson:

My Rt Hon Friends the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I have had multiple discussions with the First and deputy First Minister about Covid-19 and other matters.

■ Foreign Relations: Republic of Ireland**Ruth Jones:**[\[134562\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last spoke to An Taoiseach; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson:

This information is available on the gov.uk website.

■ WAG First Minister**Ruth Jones:**[\[134564\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last had discussions with the First Minister of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson:

My Rt Hon Friends the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Secretary of State for Wales and I have had multiple discussions with the First Minister about Covid-19 and other matters.

TRANSPORT**■ British Transport Police: Railways****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[133123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the British Transport Police on the deployment of officers on the rail network in (a) England and (b) Tier 4 covid alert level areas whilst covid-19 travel restrictions are in place.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Department for Transport ministers and officials have held regular discussions with the British Transport Police regarding its work to support COVID-19 regulations and Government guidance. This includes discussions regarding BTP's planning for officer deployments to support passenger safety across the GB rail network in line with the prevailing COVID-19 situation.

■ Bus Services

Dan Jarvis: [R] [\[134432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the National Bus Strategy.

Rachel Maclean:

The National Bus Strategy, England's first-ever long-term bus strategy, will be launched in the coming months to ensure buses are prioritised into the future.

■ Bus Services: Disability

Rosie Duffield: [\[134528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility of the disabled person's bus pass to cover peak services.

Rachel Maclean:

Under the terms of The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme a holder of a concessionary bus pass is able to travel between 09.30am and 11.00pm on weekdays and all day at weekends and on Bank Holidays.

This area is kept under review. The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme costs around £1 billion annually so any changes, such as extending the concession to include morning peak time travel, would need to be carefully considered for their impact on the scheme's financial sustainability.

Local authorities in England have the power to offer additional local concessions, such as extending the hours of the concession, and three quarters of authorities already do so.

■ Cycling: Road Signs and Markings

Matt Vickers: [\[134259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to maintain signage for cyclists to ensure their safety.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport sets legislation, in this case the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, prescribing signs for cyclists. The deployment and maintenance of signing for cyclists to ensure their safety is the responsibility of local highway authorities.

■ Cycling: Safety

Paul Blomfield: [\[132875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the promotion of the use of fluorescent clothing by cyclists.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Action 41 of the Government response to the 2018 Cycling and Walking Safety Review committed the Department to commission a package of research to look into the technical, physiological and behavioural issues relating to the visibility and audibility of cyclists with the aim of recommending future interventions.

The Department commissioned NatCen to conduct an evidence review to understand the factors behind collisions involving cyclists where road users failed to look properly, or looked but failed to see a cyclist, and to assess possible interventions to minimise these types of collisions, including the use of high visibility and fluorescent clothing. The review is now largely complete and the Department is due to publish the report shortly.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[134622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to extend the validity of driving theory tests due to the January 2021 covid-19 lockdown.

Rachel Maclean:

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place for road safety reasons; to ensure that a candidate's knowledge is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

It is important that road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point that they drive unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring may have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, their lessons and practice sessions will have been significantly curtailed during recent lockdowns and it is likely that their knowledge base will have diminished.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the training of new drivers, who are disproportionately represented in casualty statistics. Taking all this into consideration, the decision has been made not to extend theory test certificates and learners will need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Karen Bradley:**[\[134425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of public charging points in Staffordshire Moorlands for electric vehicles; and if he will ensure that there are adequate public charging points for such vehicles in the Staffordshire Moorlands ahead of the phasing out of non-electric vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

Our vision is to have one of the best infrastructure networks in the world for electric vehicles (EVs), and we want chargepoints to be accessible, affordable and secure. The transition to zero emission vehicles is supported by a £2.8 billion package of

measures. Of this £1.3 billion is being targeted to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure across the UK. Local authorities are able to take advantage of the £20 million On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), which assists them with the cost of installing chargepoints on residential streets. In addition, in the recent Spending Review Government committed £90 million to fund local EV charging infrastructure, which will support the roll out of larger charging schemes and rapid hubs. Government has recognised that cost is not the only barrier facing local authorities in the provision of public charging points and will publish an electric vehicle infrastructure strategy this year to address the remaining barriers in infrastructure delivery. We are determined to work with industry to ensure that all rural areas like the Staffordshire Moorlands have a joined up and reliable public electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The Government does not keep a record of public chargepoints as many of these are installed and operated privately. Nationally, Government and industry have supported the installation of over 19,000 publicly available charging devices. This includes over 3,500 rapid devices – one of the largest networks in Europe.

■ Ferries: Freight

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[134590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of direct ferry links for haulage from France to the Republic of Ireland on UK businesses.

Robert Courts:

No formal assessment has been made. It is too early to assess the overall effect of recent increases in the services available, but we do not foresee a significant impact on UK businesses.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[134591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of direct ferry links for haulage from France to the Republic of Ireland on the Welsh economy.

Robert Courts:

No formal assessment has been made. It is too early to assess the overall effect of recent increases in the services available, but we do not foresee a significant impact on the Welsh economy. Welsh ports will continue to offer essential and attractive routes between the Republic of Ireland and the Continent.

■ Freight: Republic of Ireland

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[134589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the change in the level of haulage through-traffic from the Republic of Ireland to the EU via Great Britain since the end of the transition period.

Rachel Maclean:

No formal assessment has been made. The Department for Transport does not directly hold data on the level of haulage through-traffic from the Republic of Ireland to the EU via Great Britain since the end of the transition period. The government keeps the flow of goods in and out of Great Britain and the UK under review.

TREASURY**■ Banks and Building Societies: Yorkshire and the Humber****Jon Trickett:**[\[134342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many branches of (a) banks and (b) building societies there were in the Yorkshire and the Humber region in (i) 2010 and (ii) 2020.

John Glen:

The Treasury does not make assessments of the bank and building society branch network. In 2018, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) undertook an analysis of branch closures as part of their Strategic Review of Retail Banking Business Models. This analysis can be found in Annex 1 of the final report.

The decision to close a branch is a commercial issue for the management team of the bank or building society. However, Government believes it is important the impact on communities must be understood, considered and mitigated where possible. That is why the Government continues to be very supportive of the Access to Banking Standard and the commitment it places on banks to minimise the impact of branch closures, including by ensuring that customers are aware of the alternative ways they can continue to access banking services. These include the Post Office, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

In September 2020, the FCA published guidance setting out their expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and other relevant branch services and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is done in a way that treats customers fairly.

■ Buildings: VAT**Mr Steve Baker:**[\[134418\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the VAT rate on building refurbishment works to zero.

Gavin Robinson:

[\[134445\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT on refurbishment, repair and maintenance of buildings from 20 per cent to five per cent.

Jesse Norman:

The Government already maintains a reduced rate of VAT at five per cent, subject to certain conditions, for residential renovations.

Introducing a zero rate of VAT would come at a significant cost to the Exchequer, estimated at about £4 billion per year, which would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, higher borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere. While the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to change the VAT treatment of the repair and renovation of buildings.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[133228\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support the Government is making available to businesses entering Tier 4 covid-19 lockdown areas.

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.

As measures to control the virus change, it is right that government support should also evolve. However, the Tier 4 restrictions introduced in December to control the spread of the virus were broadly similar to those implemented nationwide in November. As such, the existing financial support measures for businesses entering Tier 4 were maintained.

The Government recognises that the latest national lockdown, while necessary to save lives and protect the NHS, will lead to further challenges for businesses. That is why we are providing additional funding for businesses worth £4.6 billion across the UK. All businesses in England which are legally required to close as a result of this lockdown will receive one-off grants of up to £9,000. We are also providing all English local authorities with an additional £500m of discretionary business grant funding.

■ Business: VAT

Drew Hendry:

[\[129061\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the Bank of England on the potential effect of changes to the VAT regime on business cash flows in the final quarter of the tax year 2020-21 in the event that the UK and EU do not reach an agreement on their future relationship at the end of the transition period.

Jesse Norman:

As the Prime Minister set out in his Written Ministerial Statement of 3 February 2020 on the future relationship with the EU, the Government would not agree to measures in areas which go beyond those typically included in a comprehensive free trade agreement, including in the area of taxation. This is why the free trade agreement agreed with the EU will have little effect on changes to the UK tax system.

Nevertheless, the Government remains mindful of business cash flows after the end of the transition period. The Government has already announced that from 1 January 2021, UK VAT registered businesses can account for import VAT on their VAT return for goods imported from anywhere in the world. This means businesses can declare and recover import VAT on the same VAT return, rather than having to pay it upfront and recover it later.

As a matter of routine, HM Treasury continues to work closely with the Bank of England on effects stemming from the UK's relationship with the EU.

■ Children's Play: Facilities**Ian Murray:**[\[134408\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2020 to Question 72196 on Children's Play: Facilities, whether soft play centres are included in the temporary 5 per cent VAT provisions as set out in Revenue and Customs Brief 10 (2020).

Jesse Norman:

Admissions to shows, theatres, circuses, fairs, amusement parks, concerts, museums, zoos, cinemas and exhibitions and similar cultural events and facilities are covered by the temporary reduced rate of VAT for attractions. This is set out in GOV.UK guidance on admission charges to attractions.

Whether the temporary reduced rate applies depends on the facts of each individual case. Generally, where an admission fee is charged for entry to premises that are predominantly dedicated to soft play for children, this would be covered by the reduced rate.

Further detail about the operation of the new reduced rate more generally can be found in Revenue and Customs Brief 10 (2020) on the temporary reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, holiday accommodation and attractions, which can be found on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[134335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will require businesses to actively offer furlough to clinically extremely vulnerable employees.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[134496\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with Secretary of State for Education on ensuring that agencies employing education supply staff use the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme for those staff that are unable to work.

Jesse Norman:

An employer can claim for any employees who were employed and on their PAYE payroll on 30 October 2020. The employer must have made a PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) submission to HMRC between 20 March 2020 and 30 October 2020, notifying a payment of earnings for that employee.

This includes education supply staff who are unable to work and clinically extremely vulnerable people, where they meet these eligibility criteria.

The furloughing of staff through the CJRS is a voluntary arrangement entered at the employers' discretion and agreed by employees. The decision whether an individual firm should put its staff on furlough, or take them off it is one for the employer, in consultation with the employee.

■ **Coronavirus Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund**

Mick Whitley:

[\[130838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the discretionary grant fund allocated to local authorities to provide further assistance to small limited companies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The £1.1 billion of discretionary business support funding made available to all English local authorities through the Additional Restrictions Grant 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) will provide 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.

In addition, through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open), local authorities which are subject to restrictions on socialising (in particular a ban on indoor household mixing) will receive additional funding so that they can make grants of up to £2,100 per month to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses which are able to remain open but which are experiencing a severe reduction in demand due to these restrictions. Local authorities will also receive a 5% discretionary top up to their Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) allocation; local authorities have significant discretion over how they use this top up funding.

Business across the country should also be able to benefit from additional measures in the Government's unprecedented package of support for businesses, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended through to 31 March; the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, which will provide the self-employed

with grants worth up to 80% of trading profits, covering November 2020 to January 2021; and the COVID-19 lending schemes.

■ Duty Free Allowances

Ruth Cadbury: [\[131289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the abolition of (a) the VAT Retail Export Scheme and (b) tax-free airside shopping.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[131290\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received from the hospitality industry on the decision to remove (a) the VAT Retail Export Scheme and (b) tax-free airside shopping.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[131291\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has he made of the effect of the removal of the (a) VAT Retail Export Scheme and (b) tax-free airside shopping on the tourism sector within London.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[131292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) airports and (b) boroughs surrounding airports after the removal of tax-free airside shopping.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[131293\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the removal of the (a) VAT Retail Export Scheme (b) Tax-Free airside shopping on (i) Heathrow Airport (ii) London Borough of Hounslow (iii) London and (iv) the UK.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury ministers have responsibility for tax policy.

Ahead of the end of the transition period, the Government has announced the VAT and excise duty treatment of goods purchased by individuals for personal use and carried in their luggage arriving from or going overseas (passengers). The following rules will apply from 1 January 2021:

- Passengers travelling from Great Britain to any destination outside the United Kingdom (UK) will be able to purchase duty-free excise goods once they have passed security controls at ports, airports, and international rail stations.
- Personal allowances will apply to passengers entering Great Britain from a destination outside of the UK, with alcohol allowances significantly increased.
- The VAT Retail Export Scheme (RES) in Great Britain will not be extended to EU residents and will be withdrawn for all passengers.

- The concessionary treatment on tax-free sales for non-excise goods will be removed across the UK.

The Government published a consultation which ran from 11 March to 20 May. During this time the Government held a number of virtual meetings with industry stakeholders to hear their views and received 73 responses to the consultation. The Government is also continuing to meet and discuss the changes with a variety of stakeholders, including other Government departments, following the announcement of these policies.

The detailed rationale for these changes are included in the written ministerial statement and summary of responses to the recent consultation: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2020-09-11/hcws448> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-consultation-on-duty-free-and-tax-free-goods-carried-by-passengers>. A technical note has also been issued to stakeholders to expand on this document and to respond to issues raised by stakeholders.

The concessionary treatment on tax-free airside sales currently affects airports that fly to non-EU destinations. The extension of duty-free sales to EU bound passengers will be a significant boost to all airports in England, Scotland and Wales, including smaller regional airports which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

On 25 November the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) set out their assessment of the fiscal impact of the withdrawal of the tax-free schemes.

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 estimate that the withdrawal of tax-free airside sales will raise approximately £170 million per year for the Exchequer, after behavioural responses are taken into account and passenger numbers recover from the impacts of Covid-19.

The 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.

The Government also recognises the challenges the aviation sector is facing as it recovers from the impacts of Covid-19 and has supported the sector throughout the pandemic, and continues to do so, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees.

■ Farmers: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[131397\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Welsh government on the need for a support fund for sheep farmers in the event that there is no agreement on the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

Steve Barclay:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement is now in effect. Under this agreement there are no tariffs on the export of UK produced lamb and sheep meat to the EU.

The Government prepared extensively for the possibility of no agreement on the future relationship between the UK and the EU, working closely with the Devolved Administrations, to put in place a range of contingency plans to minimise disruption for the food and farming sectors.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Marco Longhi:

[\[133244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of Government support for hospitality businesses during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether businesses that were ineligible for Government covid-19 support during the first national lockdown may be eligible for support retrospectively.

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[133311\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of Tier 3 covid-19 lockdown restrictions on hospitality businesses; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional support to hospitality businesses in Tier 3 areas.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government understands that this is a very challenging time for the UK's hospitality sector, and it recognises that the hospitality sector has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Throughout the crisis the Government's priority has been to protect lives and livelihoods. The Government has acted to deliver support to this sector 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.
- Businesses forced to close can claim grants of up to £3,000 per month. In addition, on 5th January, the Government announced an extra £4.6 billion to protect jobs and support affected businesses as restrictions get tougher. This includes retail, hospitality and leisure businesses forced to close can claim a one-off grant of up to £9,000. Businesses can receive multiple grants, as they are eligible on a per

premises basis. The Government expect over 600,000 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure business premises in England to benefit from these grants.

- Local Authorities (in England) will also be 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' in tiers 2, 3 and 4 who missed out on business during the busy Christmas period.
- A VAT deferral for up to 12 months.
- 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.

These measures have kept people in work, supported their incomes and supported businesses, delivering one of the most generous and comprehensive packages of support globally. However, as measures to control the virus change, it is right that Government support should also evolve. The Government keeps all policies under review, and will continue to work with businesses and representative groups to inform our efforts to support the hospitality sector.

■ Members: Correspondence

John Penrose:

[\[132835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to the letters of 11 April 2020, 22 May 2020 and 23 June 2020 and telephone calls of 13 August 2020 and 7 November 2020 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on the self employed grant, raised on behalf of his constituent Sarah Aston-Davies.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response was sent to the Member on 5 July 2020 and a further copy has been sent by email.

John Penrose:

[\[132838\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to the letters of 29 July 2020 and 24 August 2020 and telephone call of 7 November 2020 on the Small Breweries' Relief scheme, raised on behalf of his constituent Mr Dave Turner.

Kemi Badenoch:

A response was sent to the Member on 15 September 2020 and a further copy has been sent by email.

Afzal Khan:

[134550]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of 13 November 2020 on outdoor markets.

Kemi Badenoch:

The hon. Member's correspondence has been transferred to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government as this comes under their remit and they will respond to the hon. Member directly.

■ **Plastics: Taxation**

Christian Wakeford:

[130883]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the forthcoming plastic tax has an equitable administrative and economic effect on businesses in the bioeconomy.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 12 November, the Government published the summary of responses to the recent consultation on the detailed design and implementation of the Plastic Packaging Tax. This included confirming the consultation proposal to include compostable and bio-based plastic packaging in the scope of the tax. As set out in the consultation, all packaging, including that which is 100% compostable, will be in scope of the tax if plastic is the predominant material by weight.

As set out in the summary of responses to the consultation, the Government believes that alternative plastics can play a role in addressing plastic waste if used in the right circumstances. However, further evidence is needed on the impact of widespread adoption of such materials, and it is right to include them within scope of the tax at this stage. As part of the Bioeconomy Strategy, the Government is working with industry and the research community to better understand the impact of using bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics. Following the conclusion of the Bioeconomy Strategy, the Government will consider further the treatment of these plastics in relation to Plastic Packaging Tax.

The Government carefully considered the impacts of the tax when making the decisions set out in the summary of responses to the consultation. More information on impacts is available in the Tax Information and Impact Note - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-a-new-plastic-packaging-tax/introduction-of-a-new-plastic-packaging-tax>. To support businesses, HMRC will develop clear guidance and other tools to help businesses understand and meet their obligations.

Alongside the summary of responses to the consultation, draft legislation for the Plastic Packaging Tax was also published. The Government continues to engage with businesses involved in the manufacture and import of plastic packaging to ensure the legislation is fit for purpose and the tax can be successfully introduced in April 2022.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[131178]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the proportion of plastic packaging used to protect food that will be subject to the plastic packaging tax.

Kemi Badenoch:

From April 2022, the Plastic Packaging Tax will encourage the use of recycled plastic instead of new material within plastic packaging. This will create greater demand for recycled plastic, and in turn stimulate increased levels of recycling and collection of plastic waste, diverting it away from landfill or incineration. Hand in hand with Defra's wider packaging reforms, this tax will provide the necessary incentives for producers to make more sustainable packaging, and ensure the UK does its part in tackling this global issue.

The Government has been clear that the tax should apply to as much plastic packaging as possible in order to maximise its incentives.

Packaging used to protect food makes up a significant proportion of packaging in the UK and many types of food packaging already include recycled plastic or use alternative materials to plastic. Without being included in the tax, the types of food packaging where it is currently challenging to increase the level of recycled content would have fewer incentives to find new ways to overcome issues for including recycled material in the production of plastic packaging. However, the Government will continue to monitor progress in this area.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[131179]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the plastic packaging tax on the production of compostable packaging in the UK.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 12 November, the Government published the summary of responses to the recent consultation on the detailed design and implementation of the Plastic Packaging Tax. This included confirming the consultation proposal to include compostable and bio-based plastic packaging in the scope of the tax. As set out in the consultation, all packaging, including that which is 100% compostable, will be in scope of the tax if plastic is the predominant material by weight.

As set out in the summary of responses to the consultation, the Government believes that alternative plastics can play a role in addressing plastic waste if used in the right circumstances. However, further evidence is needed on the impact of widespread adoption of such materials, and it is right to include them within scope of the tax at this stage. As part of the Bioeconomy Strategy, the Government is working with industry and the research community to better understand the impact of using bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics. Following the conclusion of the Bioeconomy Strategy, the Government will consider further the treatment of these plastics in relation to Plastic Packaging Tax.

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Alongside the summary of responses to the consultation, draft legislation for the Plastic Packaging Tax was also published. The Government continues to engage with businesses involved in the manufacture and import of plastic packaging to ensure the legislation is fit for purpose and the tax can be successfully introduced in April 2022.

■ Research: Finance

Grahame Morris:

[\[134414\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the 2020 Spending Review, whether the £14.6 billion announced for Research and Development in 2021-22 is part of the £22 billion announced in March 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

Spending Review 2020 provides funding to ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of international scientific leadership and a global leader in tackling climate change. To cement the UK's future as a scientific superpower and drive economic growth, the government is providing almost £15 billion for R&D next year.

Science will underpin our response to the greatest challenges ahead, including tackling climate change and delivering transformative economic growth. Recognising this, the Spending Review commits £14.6bn to R&D next year, as well as confirming multi-year funding for certain key R&D priorities.

■ Self-employed: Unpaid Taxes

Claire Hanna:

[\[134623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the 31 January 2021 deadline by six months for the self employed who have taxes to be paid for the tax year 2019-20.

Jesse Norman:

The Government encourages as many people as possible to file on time even if they cannot pay their tax straight away, but where a taxpayer is unable to do so because of the impact of COVID-19 HMRC will accept they have a reasonable excuse and cancel penalties, provided they manage to file as soon as possible after that.

HMRC are looking into potential changes that could be introduced to the process for making a reasonable excuse claim and getting penalties cancelled, in order to make the process easier and quicker for taxpayers, agents and HMRC. HMRC have already given taxpayers and agents more time to appeal by extending the penalty appeal period by three months.

Only by filing a Self-Assessment return will taxpayers and their agents be able to determine the tax due for 2019/20 and the amount of any payments on account for 2020/21. For those taxpayers who will have difficulty in paying all of their Self-Assessment liabilities due on 31 January 2021, HMRC's enhanced Time to Pay arrangements will make it easier to pay over an extended period.

If taxpayers or their agents are struggling to obtain the required information in time for their Self-Assessment return to be submitted by the 31 January filing date, they can provide provisional figures on their return and then provide HMRC with the actual figures as soon as they can. They must state that provisional figures are being provided by ticking the appropriate data item box on the return.

Claire Hanna:

[\[134624\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to remove the simple interest applied on HMRC's Enhanced Time to Pay mechanism for self-employed people with taxes to pay for the year 2019-20.

Jesse Norman:

The purpose of interest is to recompense the party deprived of the use of money that is owed. Interest reinforces the fact that taxes are due for payment on particular dates and brings a degree of fairness into the system where those payment dates are met by some taxpayers but not by others. Interest is not a penalty for late payment.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Mick Whitley:

[\[130837\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending eligibility for Business Support Grants to all small business, regardless of whether they operate in a commercial premises.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that the past few months have been very challenging for businesses in a wide variety of sectors. The various COVID-19 business grants have all been intended to support businesses facing high fixed property-related costs in some of the sectors hit hardest by the fall in consumer footfall caused by COVID-19, on the basis that businesses in this situation would find it particularly challenging to meet their high fixed property-related costs. This is why eligibility for both the original grant schemes and the new Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes is tied to the business rates system.

The Government has additionally allocated all local authorities in England £1.6 billion for the Additional Restrictions Grant, which local authorities can use to support businesses which are not eligible for the one-off or monthly grants for closed businesses, for example because they do not operate from commercial premises.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[134527\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the stamp duty deadline in response to delays in completions resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This will also support the jobs of people whose employment relies on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

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

■ Sugar: Taxation

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[130721\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential revenue accruing to the public purse from expanding the tax on sugary drinks to include sugary foods.

Kemi Badenoch:

All taxes are kept under review, however, we currently have no plans to further extend this levy.

■ Towns Fund

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130704\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to update his Department's guidance, Managing public money, in response to the findings of the Public Accounts Committee on the Town Deals selection process in its report Selecting towns for the Towns Fund, published 11 November 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government welcomes the Public Account Committee's report on this issue and will respond to the Committee's report in due course through a Treasury Minute.

Managing Public Money and associated guidance is reviewed and updated as necessary.

■ Treasury: Databases

Chi Onwurah:

[\[130726\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many information gateways there are in operation in his Department; and how those gateways are managed and monitored.

Kemi Badenoch:

The information requested is not held.

■ **Treasury: Departmental Responsibilities**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130701\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the directorates are in his Department.

Kemi Badenoch:

The information on the directorates in the department is published as part of this year's annual report and account (page 69/70).

■ **Treasury: Discrimination**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130690\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many complaints have been made by staff in his Department of sexist behaviour in the workplace in each of the last five years, by directorate.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury has received no formal complaints in relation to sexist behaviour in the workplace, within the last five years.

■ **Treasury: Racial Discrimination**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[131243\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many complaints have been made of racist behaviour in the workplace by staff in his Department in each of the last five years, by directorate.

Kemi Badenoch:

CALENDAR YEAR	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2015	0
2016	0
2017	0
2018	Fewer than five
2019	Fewer than five
2020 to date	0

HM Treasury takes complaints of racist behaviour very seriously, any form of bullying, harassment or discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated, and all complaints are

investigated and addressed in accordance with the procedure laid out by the Civil Service and in HM Treasury's Dispute Resolution policy.

■ Treasury: Recruitment

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[130689\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) staff, (b) director-level staff and (c) director-general level staff have taken up a post in his Department in each of the last five years.

Kemi Badenoch:

The number of staff joining the department at the levels requested can be found in the following table:

	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21*
All staff	355	443	451	473	347
Director	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5
Director General	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5	Fewer than 5

*The data for 20/21 covers the period April 20 to September 20

■ Treasury: Sick Leave

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[131451\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many working days have been lost to staff sickness in his Department in each month of the last five years, by directorate.

Kemi Badenoch:

We do not report on sick days monthly, we do however have a return that we do annually. The number of sick days by directorate in each of the last 5 years can be found in the following tables:

2015/16

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Business and International Tax	135
Corporate Centre	657
Economics	107
Enterprise & Growth	61
Financial Services	270

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Financial Stability	71
Fiscal	103
International	428
IUK	127
Ministerial & Communications	148
National Infrastructure Commission	Fewer than 5
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	207
Public Services	345
Public Spending	227
Strategy, Planning & Budget	68
Treasury Legal Advisors	Fewer than 5
Department	2954

2016/17

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Business and International Tax	172.5
Corporate Centre	668.5
Economics	102
Enterprise & Growth	76
Financial Services	291
Financial Stability	131.5
Fiscal	68.5
International	318.5
IUK	Fewer than 5
Ministerial & Communications	211
National Infrastructure Commission	27
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	504.5

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Public Services	272
Public Spending	190.5
Strategy, Planning & Budget	99
Treasury Legal Advisors	Fewer than 5
Department	3132.5

2017/18

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Business and International Tax	103
Corporate Centre	595
Economics	119
Enterprise & Growth	133
Financial Services	400
Financial Stability	213.5
Fiscal	250
International	425.5
Ministerial & Communications	347.5
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	178.5
Public Services	190
Public Spending	180.5
Strategy, Planning & Budget	71.5
Treasury Legal Advisors	Fewer than 5
Department	3207

2018/19

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Business and International Tax	170.5

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Corporate Centre	850
Economics	108.5
Enterprise & Growth	116.5
Financial Services	578.5
Financial Stability	135
Fiscal	174.5
International	437.5
Ministerial & Communications	148
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	259
Public Services	268.5
Public Spending	342.5
Strategy, Planning & Budget	50
Department	3639

2019/20

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Business and International Tax	245
Corporate Centre	906.5
Economics	366
Enterprise & Growth	176.5
Financial Services	490.5
Financial Stability	132.5
Fiscal	241
International	607
Ministerial & Communications	326.5
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	176
Public Services	366

DIRECTORATE	SICK DAYS
Public Spending	602
Strategy, Planning & Budget	71
Department	4706.5

HM Treasury takes the wellness of its staff seriously. Wellness is incorporated within the Treasury's Health, Safety and Wellbeing policy. Every quarter, staff complete pulse surveys to assess progress against wellbeing criteria from the annual People Survey. Directors and Deputy Directors take action relating to these results to improve their staff's wellbeing and stress levels.

HM Treasury has the following support in place for those that are suffering due to stress:

- Stress and Mental Health Awareness elearning – learn about stress, what the stressors can be and how to identify and lessen stress
- Stress risk assessment used to identify stressors and implement controls to help reduce/eliminate the stress
- Workplace Adjustments including flexible working
- Stress Management guidance
- Tips to help reduce stress
- Mental Health First Aiders
- Employee Assistance Programme – this is a confidential 24/7 helpline that can offer point people to where
- Occupational Health provision
- Mental Wellbeing Network
- Treasury Supporters, who are employees, trained to help colleagues work through any concerns, however serious whatever their cause
- Wellness Action Plans
- Time to Talk Workshops
- HR Advisers and Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team.

■ Treasury: Staff

Anneliese Dodds:

[131452]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the Library his Department's staff in each directorate by (a) headcount, and (b) full time equivalent staffing.

Kemi Badenoch:

The table below contains the count of paid full time equivalent staffing and headcount per directorate for the most recent quarter end, September 2020.

GROUP / DIRECTORATE	FTE	HEADCOUNT
Business and International Tax	159.6	164
Corporate Centre	183.2	192
Economics	109.8	114
Enterprise & Growth	189.1	191
Financial Services	180.0	181
Financial Stability	70.3	72
Fiscal	82.5	85
International	170.9	173
Ministerial & Communications	117.5	119
Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation	37.0	38
Office of Tax Simplification	7.9	11
Personal Tax, Welfare & Pensions	126.8	129
Public Services	171.9	174
Public Spending	158.9	163
Strategy, Planning & Budget	73.3	74
HM Treasury	1838.8	1880

■ **Treasury: Termination of Employment**

Anneliese Dodds:[\[131450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) staff, (b) director-level staff, and (c) director-general level staff have left a post in his Department in each of the last five years.

Kemi Badenoch:

The number of staff who have left the department from a post over the prior 5 years:

	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21*
All staff	322	293	341	298	107
Director	Less than 5	Less than 5	Less than 5	Less than 5	Less than 5
Director General	Less than 5	Less than 5	Less than 5	Less than 5	Less than 5

*The data for 20/21 covers the period April 20 to September 20

■ Treasury: Vacancies

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[131255\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many days have (a) posts, (b) director-level posts and (c) director-general-level posts been vacant in his Department in each of the last five years.

Kemi Badenoch:

To provide this information would be at disproportionate cost.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Paul Girvan:

[\[134531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether removal companies require a Goods Movement Reference to transport personal effects from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Jesse Norman:

No customs charges are due on personal belongings when moving home to Northern Ireland from Great Britain. Removal companies will need to submit a customs declaration using the Customs Declaration Service (CDS). If they are new to customs processes, they can sign up for the free Trader Support Service which can complete declarations on their behalf without the need for specialist advice or software. They will also need to use the Goods Vehicle Movement Service and get a Goods Movement Reference to use the system.

■ UK Research and Innovation: Finance

Grahame Morris:

[\[134415\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the 2020 Spending Review, when the £350 million of funding announced for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will be made available; and how that funding will be allocated among the seven research groups.

Kemi Badenoch:

The £350 million of funding for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) announced at the Spending Review will be made available from the next financial year.

The allocation of this funding between the Research Councils will be determined in due course.

WALES

■ Freight: Republic of Ireland

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[134592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of direct ferry links for haulage from France to the Republic of Ireland on the Welsh economy.

Simon Hart:

There has been a reduced flow of freight traffic at ports across the UK since the end of the Transition Period and imposition of tighter restrictions to tackle Covid-19, including at Welsh ports. However, traffic is expected to increase in the coming weeks.

Welsh ports, and Holyhead in particular, will continue to be critical routes to and from the Republic of Ireland and continental Europe irrespective of direct links for haulage between Ireland and France. The *land bridge* route has significant advantages for hauliers over maritime routes and I am confident that Welsh ports will continue to thrive as we build on the opportunities provided by being an independent trading nation.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Kevin Brennan:

[\[910500\]](#)

What recent representations she has received on the effect of Government policy on pregnant women during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government knows that the pandemic has been hard for pregnant women, their partners and their families. The NHS continues to work hard to support and care for women safely through pregnancy, birth and the period afterwards, during this pandemic.

Liz Twist:

[\[910501\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on reducing economic inequality and poverty.

Kemi Badenoch:

I have regular engagement with ministerial colleagues across Government on a range of equality and progression issues. Throughout this pandemic, we have sought to protect jobs and incomes by spending billions on strengthening welfare support.

Our long-term ambition is to level up across the UK, helping people back into work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of work in tackling poverty.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[910502\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on supporting older people in accessing pension credit.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government wants to ensure that all eligible pensioners are able to claim Pension Credit. In May 2020, DWP launched a new online claim service. This offers an additional channel through which pensioners can be supported to make a claim with the help of family, friends and organisations.

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[910511\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on encouraging more schools to take part in the period product scheme.

Kemi Badenoch:

Nobody should miss out on their education because of their period. Our Period Product scheme makes free products available for primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England. Our supplier is actively contacting organisations who have not yet ordered products. Period products should be available, if learners need them, even during lockdown. I encourage all schools and colleges to make use of this fantastic scheme.

■ Equality: Training

Ruth Jones:

[\[134126\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of unconscious bias training.

Ruth Jones:

[\[134127\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the devolved Administrations on the effectiveness of unconscious bias training.

Ruth Jones:

[\[134130\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to support businesses to provide unconscious bias training to all employees.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that it is important to tackle bias in workplaces and in wider society. The Government Equalities Office commissioned a review of the evidence on unconscious bias and diversity training. The review showed that there is currently no evidence that this training changes behaviour in the long term or improves workplace equality. In 2018 GEO published evidence-based advice for employers on actions they could take to reduce bias within their organisations. The issue has not recently been discussed with the Devolved Administrations.

An internal review decided in January 2020 that unconscious bias training would be phased out in Civil Service departments. The Civil Service will instead integrate principles for inclusion and diversity into mainstream core training and leadership modules in a manner which facilitates positive behaviour change.

The government is making progress in understanding what works to support diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparities demonstrates this government's commitment to level up opportunity for everyone, to better understand disparities and their causes, and will be making evidence-based recommendations to address them. Employment and Enterprise is one of the four priority areas for the Commission. Further, our recent work with the large insurer, Zurich, demonstrated a 16% rise in female applicants for all jobs when advertising all jobs available as flexible. This is one of many trials in our Gender and Behavioural Insights Programme that is at the heart of our commitment to build workplace equality through insights and evidence.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[\[134140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Access to Work fast-track assessment process is available to all disabled workers to enable them to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work continues to provide support for disabled people to move into and retain employment. To enable support to be put in place at the earliest opportunity, Access to Work has adapted the way holistic assessments are undertaken and enabled disabled people to choose how their assessments are carried out, including virtually or face-to-face. This has very often enabled a quicker service to be provided.

The assessment providers have reported that the virtual assessments can be arranged and delivered more rapidly than the face to face assessments and that the freed up time enables them to spend more time in consultation with the customer.

Access to Work prioritises applications from disabled people who have a job to start within 4 weeks of their application. Recognising the impact Covid has had on disabled people, Access to Work has expanded the prioritisation to include those in the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group and keyworkers.

■ ASW: Pensions

Ruth Jones:

[\[134133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the level of pensions paid to former ASW steelworkers.

Guy Opperman:

The Financial Assistance Scheme was created by previous governments and intended to give financial assistance to relevant scheme members, not to provide a complete replacement of any lost pensions.

There are no plans to change the level of financial assistance provided by the Financial Assistance Scheme.

■ Carer's Allowance**Mick Whitley:**[\[133207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of increasing carer's allowance on levels of poverty experienced by carers.

Justin Tomlinson:

No assessment has been made.

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.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Coronavirus**Ian Murray:**[\[134409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on claimants of the new employment and support allowance of having to wait for face-to-face work capability assessments in order to have their claim processed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ian Murray:[\[134410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the financial effect on claimants with (a) Parkinson's disease and (b) other degenerative and incurable diseases of the new employment and support allowance who will not have their claims processed without a face-to-face interview due to postponed interviews during the covid-19 outbreak; and what arrangements are being put in place to ensure that those claimants can have their applications assessed in a timely manner.

Justin Tomlinson:

We are continuing to process claims for Employment and Support Allowance and refer them for a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). Claimants will receive the

Assessment Rate of benefit for the first 13 weeks as normal. At present, claimants may stay on the assessment rate for longer than usual.

The health and safety of our claimants and staff is our key priority. We suspended all face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits in March. This temporary suspension, brought in to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, remains in place, and is being kept under review in line with the latest public health guidance. Any re-introduction of face-to-face assessments would involve stringent Covid-19 related safety measures, supported by guidance for claimants and assessment providers to ensure compliance with the relevant public health guidance.

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to complete paper-based assessments wherever possible and telephone assessments have been in place since last summer with the number of claims being assessed through this channel increasing. If a claimant qualifies for an additional amount following their WCA, it will be backdated to ensure no long-term loss.

Where an individual's income is reduced because they cannot work due to disability or a health condition and they require further financial support, they may also be able to claim Universal Credit, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Food Poverty: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[134462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to alleviate food poverty levels in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

This Government has taken significant action to ensure families receive the support they need during these challenging times, including boosting welfare support by billions of pounds and introducing the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, which is delivering £170 million of funding to councils in England to provide vital support to the most vulnerable children and families through this winter.

The Holiday Activities and Food programme will be expanded across England next year and the Department for Education will work closely with local authorities to prepare for delivery of the programme to begin at Easter. It is also increasing the value of Healthy Start vouchers by more than a third to help low income families. From April the value of vouchers will rise from £3.10 to £4.25.

■ Housing: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[134614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing support measures for out of work homeowners similar to the support available to renters.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has no plans to change current support available for homeowners.

Support for homeowners in receipt of an income related benefit is provided through the Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) scheme. SMI helps people maintain their existing, reasonable mortgage commitments so they can remain in their homes.

Kickstart Scheme**Fleur Anderson:**[\[134611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will extend the criteria for the Kickstart scheme to include people under 25 who (a) had an Education Health and Care Plan before leaving education and (b) claim Employment Support Allowance.

Mims Davies:

A young person is eligible for a job on the Kickstart scheme if they are aged 16-24, on Universal Credit (UC), and considered to be at risk of long term unemployment by their Work Coach. If a young person has been identified as having an EHCP at school this would not prevent them from being referred to a Kickstart Scheme Job as it is open to all young people who are on UC as long as they meet the eligibility/suitability criteria. Existing ESA claimants cannot be referred at this time and the Department of Work and Pensions has no current plans to extend the eligibility for the scheme but will keep that under review.

Pension Rights**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[132975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on pensioners' consumer rights.

Guy Opperman:

There is no change. The UK will continue to provide the same protections to pension savers, as were in place before the end of the transition period.

Anyone who has accrued benefits in a UK occupational pension scheme in the UK can continue to access their pension savings or pension rights regardless of whether they live outside of the UK in either an EU or a non-EU state. Existing forms of protection for those savings, will continue to be available.

The Pension Regulator will continue to supervise UK occupational pension schemes, taking action where appropriate, so that UK employers, trustees and providers comply with UK laws that protect members' rights and benefits.

The Pension Protection Fund, will continue to pay compensation to members of eligible Defined Benefit pension schemes administered in the UK even if the employer is based in the EU. The PPF pays compensation to eligible pension schemes whose sponsoring employer has become insolvent, and the pension scheme is unable to meet its pension liabilities.

■ Pensioners: Personal Savings

Marion Fellows: [\[133020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on existing protections available to pension savers.

Marion Fellows: [\[133021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on pensioners' consumer rights.

Guy Opperman:

There is no change. The UK will continue to provide the same protections to pension savers, as were in place before the end of the transition period.

Marion Fellows: [\[133022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on pensioners' lifetime savings.

Guy Opperman:

The position stays the same. UK pensions legislation already ensures that any member of a UK pension scheme has a right to transfer their pension, which includes the option to transfer to any overseas pension scheme. Equally UK pension schemes will continue to be able to receive transfers from overseas pension schemes.

■ Severe Disability Premium: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan: [\[134540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will temporarily increase the qualification period for the Severe Disability Premium Gateway to assist qualifying persons who have been made redundant as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

People who are made redundant as a result of Covid-19, or in any other circumstances, are able to make a claim to Universal Credit.

The Severe Disability Premium (SDP) Gateway is currently in place to prevent existing claimants who have been, within the past month, entitled to an award of an existing benefit (Employment and Support Allowance (income related), Jobseekers Allowance (income based), Income Support or Housing Benefit) that includes a SDP, from moving to Universal Credit if they have a relevant change in their circumstances. In cases where the benefit award ended during that month, they must have continued to satisfy the eligibility conditions for a SDP within the relevant benefit.

When the SDP Gateway is removed from 27 January 2021, existing benefit claimants who are entitled to the SDP will need to claim Universal Credit if they have a relevant

change of circumstances and they will be considered for a transitional SDP element to be included in their Universal Credit award.

■ Social Security Benefits

Marion Fellows:

[\[133017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential effect of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on social security spending in the (a) medium and (b) long term.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP will shortly publish an Impact Assessment on the impact of overall changes in DWP areas of social security co-ordination policy, for persons covered by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. DWP will also be providing an estimate of expenditure/savings as a result of these policy changes at a future fiscal event.

■ Social Security Benefits: Wales

Hywel Williams:

[\[134368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimates her Department has made of the number of people who have had welfare payments stopped due to being in receipt of the Welsh Government's special payment scheme for social care staff.

Justin Tomlinson:

For DWP purposes the payments made under the Welsh Government's special payments scheme for social care staff are treated as earnings and are included in welfare benefit calculations. The impact on an individual claimant will depend on their household circumstances and the amount and type of welfare payments they are receiving. For income related benefits their award is calculated on the basis of the set benefit rate against money coming in to ensure fairness of treatment for all claimants against the money they have available. This means that as earnings increase the welfare payment reduces or stops. This is a long-standing principle of means-tested benefits.

Hywel Williams:

[\[134369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) discussions and (b) coordination have taken place between her Department and the Welsh Government to ensure that those in receipt of the special payment for social care staff in Wales are made aware that it is classified as income and included in welfare benefit calculations.

Justin Tomlinson:

There is a well-established working relationship between The Department and Welsh Government at official level, ensuring that DWP policy and guidance is considered. Any further assurances would be a matter for Welsh Government.

Discussions with ourselves and HMRC took place following the Welsh Governments' decision on 1st May 2020 to provide these one off payments to those in the Social Care workforce in recognition of the essential care they provide to our most

vulnerable citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic. The discussions confirmed how these payments would be treated under current tax rules and therefore their treatment within the calculation of any means tested benefits those care workers in receipt of the payment were also claiming.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Females**

Andrew Rosindell:

[133727]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that married women who are state pension age before April 2016 and receive less than 60 per cent of their husband's basic state pension are (a) made aware that they are entitled to an increase up to 60 per cent of their husband's pension, and (b) receive the full amount of their entitlement in a backdated payment.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is aware of a number of cases where individuals have been underpaid State Pension. We are checking for further cases and any that are found will be looked at in line with the relevant legislation and any arrears payments backdated to the point they became eligible.

Those married women who are already getting a State Pension based on their own National Insurance contributions must make a separate claim for the Category BL top up if their husband reached State Pension age after them and before 17 March 2008. The top up payments can, in accordance with legislation, be backdated for a maximum of 12 months before the date the claim is made.

Any individual who believes they are being underpaid State Pension should contact the Department on the Freephone number 0800 731 0469. Further details on how to do this through the Pension Service are available on the gov.uk website.

Ruth Jones:

[134131]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps her Department has taken to (a) investigate and (b) rectify errors made in the payment of the state pension to retired women.

Guy Opperman:

We are aware of a number of cases where individuals have been underpaid Category BL basic State Pension. We are checking for further cases, and if any are found awards will also be reviewed and any arrears paid in accordance with the law.

As soon as any underpayments are identified the individuals affected are reimbursed and their records corrected. Any individual who believes they are being underpaid State Pension should contact the Department on the Freephone number 0800 731 0469. Further details on how to do this through the Pension Service are available on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Charlotte Nichols:

[134228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to stop national insurance contributions made by women who have not yet reached state pension

age, but were born before 1960 and had already fully contributed under the state pension scheme in place before 2016.

Guy Opperman:

We have no plans to change the longstanding National Insurance arrangements.

The National Insurance scheme operates on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis meaning that today's contributors are paying for today's Social Security entitlements and pensions, while those who paid contributions in the past were paying for the pensioners of that time. The National Insurance contributions people make not only go towards the State Pension, but also entitle them to a range of contributory Social Security benefits and bereavement benefits. A proportion of National Insurance contributions also goes towards funding the NHS (around 20 per cent of receipts).

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry:

[\[129060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of extending support for former business owners during the covid-19 outbreak by not including monies paid out by former business owners for business closure costs in their universal credit calculations after a company liquidates.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit treats company directors in the same way as self-employed people who do not choose to structure their business that way and, where someone is treated as self-employed in UC, permitted expenses are deducted from any earnings before UC is calculated. If a person has ceased to carry on a business within the last 6 months, and is taking reasonable steps to dispose of assets which were used wholly or mainly in that business, those business assets can be disregarded from the calculation of that person's capital when entitlement to Universal Credit is calculated.

■ **Universal Credit: Maladministration**

Neil Gray:

[\[134451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department's staff can retrospectively correct information posted on a claimant's universal credit journal without including an acknowledgement of the Department's error.

Will Quince:

Work Coaches and Case Managers are prevented from amending or deleting Universal Credit journal entries made by a claimant.

Staff members can retrospectively amend information they have posted to the Universal Credit journal, however claimants should receive an explanation to justify the amendment.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS703\]](#)

I hereby give notice that the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will draw an advance from the contingencies fund totalling £5,023,479,000 to enable expenditure on Covid-19 support packages for business to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act in March 2021. The funding will go towards the following schemes:

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) (closed) – grants of up to £3,000 per four weeks for closed businesses;
- The Closed Businesses Lockdown Payment - one-off grants worth up to £9,000 per business property
- a £500m top up to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme in England.

	LOCAL RESTRICTIONS SUPPORT GRANT (CLOSED) SCHEME	CLOSED BUSINESSES LOCKDOWN PAYMENT	ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT SCHEME	TOTAL £M
RDEL	1,508.1	3,015.4	500.0	5,023.5

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £5,023,479,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £5,023,479,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation Bill.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Gibraltar

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS705\]](#)

In the UK Approach to Negotiations on the Future Relationship with the EU as published in February 2020, the Government stated that it would act in these negotiations on behalf of all the territories for whose international relations the UK is responsible, which includes Gibraltar.

We have worked side by side with the Government of Gibraltar to honour this commitment. As a consequence of the EU's negotiating mandate which it adopted in February 2020, Gibraltar was not within scope of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). The Commission made a declaration alongside the TCA stating that this would 'not preclude the possibility to have separate agreements between the Union and the United Kingdom in respect of Gibraltar', and that it stood ready 'to examine any request from Spain, in agreement with the United Kingdom, to initiate the procedure for the negotiation of such separate agreements should they be compatible with Union law and Union interests'.

To that end, the UK, working side by side with the Governments of Gibraltar and Spain, reached agreement on 31 December over a political framework to form the basis of a separate treaty between the UK and the EU regarding Gibraltar. We have sent this framework to the European Commission in order to initiate negotiations on the treaty.

The political framework covers issues of key importance to Gibraltar and the surrounding region, including on border fluidity. It creates the basis for a bespoke model for Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU that will permit an absence of physical checks at the land border with Spain, and therefore ensure fluidity of movement of people and goods between Gibraltar and the EU. The Governments of both the UK and Gibraltar judge that this framework provides a firm basis to safeguard Gibraltar's interests.

The UK and Gibraltar are committed to ensuring that cross-border arrangements can continue in the interim, until a new treaty enters into force. Arrangements have been agreed with Spain that include provisions for the border (goods and people), road transport, healthcare, waste disposal, and data. In addition, the UK Government provided financial and other support to ensure that Gibraltar was fully prepared for the end of the Transition Period.

We remain steadfast in our support for Gibraltar, and its sovereignty is safeguarded.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Appointment to the UK Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[[HCWS704](#)]

The Hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth (Cherilyn Mackrory) has been appointed as a substitute member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) has been appointed as a full member in place of the Rt. Hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale). The Hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) has been appointed as Leader of the UK Delegation.